3 Panels for 2nd Euroacademia International Conference (Pisa, 7-8 Mar 14)

Pisa, Italy, Mar 7–08, 2014
Deadline: Feb 6, 2014

Euroacademia, Euroacademia

Second Euroacademia International Conference 'Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities'

Pisa, Italy, 7-8 March 2014

If interested in participating, please send a maximum 300 words abstract together with the details of your affiliation until 6th of February 2014 at application@euroacademia.eu

For full details of the conference and on-line application please see:
http://euroacademia.eu/conference/second-identities-and-identifications/

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1. Panel: Identities and the Cities: Urban Transformations, Transition and Change in Urban Image Construction

Panel Organizer: Tihana Puc, IMT Institute for Advanced Studies, Lucca, Italy

Elasticity of the label identity accommodates everything that does and does not surround us, thus finding its place in every discourse on making and re-making, invention and re-invention, destruction and construction. Every transition is synonymous with said processes, be it a tectonic change or a peaceful shift. As political systems and countries disintegrate and new ones rise, as they become more entangled in the global hyperspace, their skin changes in a manner of theatrical scenery change after each act, sometimes with discrete adaptation, sometimes with radical interventions. If the scenery is composed of streets, parks, roads, museums, monuments, shopping malls and buildings connected through the intricate network of the perpetual and cumulative actions of its inhabitants and the burden of their existence, if this setting is a city, every adaptation and intervention affects its multi-dimensional identities. However, can one speak of an identity of the urban space in the singular form?

As the chaotic canvases of cities are being stretched over a framework of identity, its further exploration seems more than appropriate. Amidst the incredibly rapid urban growth crowding more than half of the world population in towns and cities, the questions are only going to keep multiplying. How are city identities made and re-made, used and abused, imagined and narrated, politicised and communicated, expressed and projected, imposed and marketed? And above all,

how do they thrive within the dynamic interpolation of the nexus of East-West, Europe-Balkans, centre-periphery, urban - suburban, old and new. As out-dated as these dichotomies sound, in many places their daily life is far from over. As old cities became new capitals and new capitals struggle for more capital, the challenges of maintaining state-driven collective identities in the face of cultural fragmentation and diversification, coupled with consumer-attractiveness is turning them into urban palimpsest. This transformation is ever more complex in the cities of Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. In these last decades, during the period of socio-political and cultural deconstruction, the redefinitions of their urban space reflect the need to refashion, consolidate or even establish their new/old identities. Flooded with imported 'non-places', (not) dealing with the material legacy of memories of the recent past that seem unable to resolve, trying to accept or reject the rest of Europe in the race towards 'Europeanization', these cities adopt different approaches in their aim to resemble and at the same time, differ. Zagreb generously welcomed its marketing nickname "pocket size Vienna", while regenerating itself with the mega Museum of Contemporary Art tailored up to an imagined 'Western European' standard. Skopje's attention seeking project transformed the 'open city of solidarity' into a literal national identity construction site. The list goes on. Queuing to win the old continent's capital of culture contest and eager to squeeze into the ever-enlarging itinerary of the consumerist Grand Tour, the only thing cities are not allowed to be, is invisible.

As the research on cultural identities of the city is becoming more abundant, this panel aims at adopting a wide-lens inter-disciplinary approach, while focusing on various transitional processes affecting identities in the urban context in its global-regional-national-local interplay.

Some example of topics may include (but are not limited to):

• Collective memory, identity and urban image construction
• Appropriation, instrumentalisation and functualisation of public space
• Contemporary nomadism and the city as a common denominator for collective identities
• Architecture as 'politics with bricks and mortar'
• Is there a new rise of the city-state?
• Urban regeneration projects, landmark buildings and 'starchitects'
• Non-places and (non)identity
• Immigrants and the cultural identity of cities
• City marketing and city branding in transition
• European capitals of culture and European identity
• Identity creation and the cultural offer of the city
• Urban cultural heritage as identity-anchor
• Creative Changes of the cities
• Art and industry in urban development
• Urban aesthetics
• Ugliness, kitsch and value in shaping contemporary urban spaces
• Post-communism and the shape of urban change
• East-West nexuses in urban development

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2. Panel: Identity in the Visual

Panel Organizer: Daniela Chalániová (Anglo-American University, Prague)

Ever since the so called ‘linguistic turn’ in the 1970s, majority of research on identity in political and social sciences has been focused on language and text - as language has been considered the primary tool for meaning formation, and ideas exchange. Today, we are twenty years from a digital revolution of the 1990s, which on the one hand, made communication faster, more efficient and more global, on the other hand made the linguistic exchange just one of many possibilities. While arguably some visual elements such as symbols and flags have been recognized as important for collective identification, the impact of journalist, fashion and travel photography, films, comic books and documentaries, billboards and brands, sports and arts,has largely been neglected by mainstream political science scholars, who viewed images as something rather suspicious. However, with increasing interest in the visual/aesthetic aspects of political and social life (the so called ‘visual/aesthetic turn’ of the late 1990s) it is only logical to take a hard look at identity beyond language, that is, from an interdisciplinary visual perspective.

Images, just like words, are able to communicate norms, meanings and values, they polarize as well as unite communities, identify who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’. Images communicate meanings through logic of association, rather than logic of argumentation as texts often do, appealing to our emotional rather than logical cognition. Images trigger the unconscious processes of stereotyping and value judgments associated with them, effectively constructing affiliation or differentiation, a Self and the Other, with behavioural consequences. Therefore, analysis of visual material in connection to identity should occupy a more prominent place among identity scholars. Political and social science, however, lacks in tools of visual analysis, therefore it needs to broaden its scope into other disciplines such as communication studies, artsand history, cultural studies, media studies, theatre, iconography, semiotics, marketing and advertising, public relations, fashion, photography, cinematography, etc.

Thus, this panel aims at a more inclusive interdisciplinary approach to identity building, especially in terms of the empirical scope. The goal is to collect empirical as well as theoretical and methodological papers on political and social identity, focused on visual aspects of identity construction.

Suggested topics may include/but are not limited to these:

• Role of images in multilingual collectivities’ identity construction
• Role of images in multicultural/multinational collectivities’ identity construction
• Role of sports as visual performance in identity narratives
• Emotional appeal of images, symbols and representations
• American presidential election and the public ‘image’ of the candidates
• Czech presidential election and the public ‘image’ of the candidates
• Constructing the democrats/the republicans in the media
• Political branding and electoral campaigns
• Media campaigns of the European Parliament
• Statues and monuments of national identity
• Treatment of minorities in films – visualizing the Other
• National cinema and national identity
• Images of patriotism
• Fashion statement as a declaration of belonging

• Folk costumes and clothing in contemporary national identity narratives
• Visualising the gay

While the papers suggested here approach identity from a social-constructivist perspective, other approaches and criticisms are welcome.

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3. Panel: Performing Identity: The Relationship between Identity and Performance in Literature, Theatre and the Performing Arts

Panel Organizer: Dr. Panayiota Chrysochou, The University of Cyprus

Identity is often seen as being a controversial topic. Whether it is fictive or real, (de)politicized and/or aesthetic, gendered or engendered, identity is often seen as being a powerful political tool and an essentially social construct. It also allows individuals to define themselves. In a sense, we perform our own identities everyday - or, perhaps, we perform a wide range of different identities at any one time. We implicitly live in a society which constructs various definitive identifications, and which often sees the rigid maintenance of hierarchical systems and exclusive ideological constructions of gender, identity and sexuality, or what Judith Butler defines in her work Bodies that Matter as an 'exclusionary matrix.' This has often resulted in the displacement of any discursive systems which resist these exclusionary systems. This panel seeks to give voice to discursive systems which have so often been displaced by exclusionary systems of identification. The main exclusionary focus in culture and the arts has often been on the white, heterosexual and supremacist male (or female). To rectify this oversight, this panel seeks to address any works of art and culture which are directly and explicitly related to the performance of identity from a different standpoint - that is, one which is not exclusively heteronormative and heterosexual.

We welcome any papers which focus on the following topics:

1. Identity as a performative and political tool and/or as a site of political resistance and change
2. The work of gay/lesbian or drag performance artists who do not form part of the white, male/female and heterosexual/heteronormative matrix
3. Identity as a fluid and shifting construct in the theatre, the performing arts and literature generally
4. Cultural and literary works or works of art which resist fixed identifications and engender performative meanings/ways of 'reading'
5. The abject as a site of identification
6. Gender and identity formation
7. Sexuality as a performative and identificatory construct or mode of identification.

Reference:
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