

**Betreff:** Tagber: Narratives of Europe and European Integration. 11th Annual Conference of the History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS)

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History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS)  
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Bericht von:

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The 11th Annual Conference of the History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS) raised a topical subject in contemporary European Union (EU) studies: the production and reproduction of narratives of Europe and European integration. The broad theme brought together a variety of disciplinary perspectives ranging from history to social sciences-with an unsurprising focus from political science and sociology. This allowed the inclusion of different approaches to narratives about and in response to the European integration project, depicted both within the political process (as told by elites or institutional actors themselves) and outside of it (as portrayed in textbooks, films, or the media). The inside-outside dichotomy was also present as a geographic criterion indicating the place of origin of narratives from within the European political construction as opposed to a third party. A recurrent topic was the legitimising function of narratives, discussed in relation to their degree of contestation, and more crucially, to the extent to which the researcher-regardless of his/her discipline-is capable to capture "dominant" narratives and counter-narratives on specific issues in a given time period.

The format of the conference was conducive to in-depth discussions of submitted papers within the broader theme of narratives. The conference began with a short welcome by the organisers, SYLVIA BALGARINOV (University of Portsmouth) and KOEN VAN ZON (Radboud University Nijmegen). The first day of the conference consisted of three sessions; during each session, two panels ran simultaneously and three papers were presented during each panel, making a total of 18 papers. The second day consisted of a roundtable discussion which addressed the implications of studying narratives, in conjunction with the presentations of reports from each panel.

The first panel of the first session (Panel 1A) entitled "Narratives in Education and Academia" focused on how certain moments of European integration were presented in educational and research projects, more specifically on the validity and the importance of textbooks and

information films as historical archives to study narratives of European integration. MARRET KATHARINA BISCHESKI (Georg Eckert Institut, Braunschweig) presented the research design and the preliminary results of a comparative analysis of European textbooks. She compared the content of secondary-education textbooks in Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands with respect to the information they provide about the reform process following the Laeken Declaration and the ensuing referenda. SYLVIA BALGARINOV (University of Portsmouth) gave an outline of her doctoral project and talked about her chapter on how the Yalta Conference and Europe are represented in Polish post-communist history textbooks. She compared textbooks from three different historical periods in order to understand how the image of Europe has changed over time and how strong the "betrayal of Europe" narrative was at different points in time. Then ANNE BRUCH (University of Hamburg) spoke about her research on European information films produced in the 1950s and 1960s; she also explained the difficulties as well as the adventures involved in trying to find copies that are now scattered all over Europe.

The second panel of the first session (1B) was very diverse, examining "Narratives as reactions to EU policy" from three different viewpoints: local actors from member states having to implement EU policy, political elites from third countries positioning themselves in relation to the EU accession process, and governmental and non-governmental actors talking in the mass media about values central to the European political construction. Accordingly, ULRIKE KADEN (University of Leipzig) opened the panel with a discussion on current cross-border practices in the Polish-German and the Danish-German borderland, focusing on how EU spatial policy shapes not only activities but also understandings of local and regional actors regarding transnational cooperation. Next, CLÉMENTINE CHAIGNEAU (BIGSSS Bremen) introduced a comparative study of collective narratives from Serbia and Croatia concerning the accession process to the EU, which can potentially account for their different paths to European integration. Finally, CHLOË DELCOUR (Ghent University) problematized the issue of human rights violations by EU member states, disentangling different narratives that actually reveal the transformation of the nation-state in today's globalised environment. The ensuing debates were dominated by methodological questions on how researchers can engage with narratives from different actor groups and which are the most appropriate means to this end.

Panel 2A on "Narratives of Identity and Otherness" revolved around the identity-constitutive and legitimating features of historical narratives. It started with NAOMI TRUAN (Centre Marc Bloch) presenting her case study of the Villa Global exhibition in which she explored possible new ways of presenting an image of Europe that may bring it closer to citizens. OLGA ROMANOVA (Cranfield University) examined how Europe is represented in Russian foreign policy discourse. MANO TOTH (University of Cambridge) talked about the most prominent scholarly conceptions of the idea of European memory and argued for the need of a more critical approach to the concept.

Panel 2B was exclusively composed of historians and problematized the study of European integration from the inside out by looking at "Narratives of networks and political elites". The background questions referred on the one hand to how biographies can be used to narrate the history of European integration, and on the other hand to how beneficial it is to employ this (re-)source from a methodological standpoint. Two



of the papers-authored by DANIËL STINSKY (Maastricht University) and MATHIAS HÄUSSLER (University of Cambridge) - historicised the legacies of two German chancellors, Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt respectively, thus allowing for an intriguing comparison between two generations of European politicians. The third paper, presented by LENNAERT VAN HEUMEN (Radboud University Nijmegen), put forth the outline of a doctoral project focused on the activities and the role of American state-private networks in the relationship between European integration and Atlantic cooperation during the informative phase (1945-63). The panel concluded that biographies can be used as an analytical prism, "a history of the time with a bit of life into it;" as such, their purpose is not necessarily to challenge dominant narratives but to provide nuance to existing ones, thus complementing the understanding of a certain historical period.

At the end of the day, Panel 3A entitled "Narrative Production: Public Opinion and Public Image" looked at how narratives of European integration were constructed in different historical contexts. QUENTIN JOUAN (Université Catholique de Louvain) explained how European integration was narrated in times of crisis, specifically in the 1975 Tindemans report on the European Union. TOMMASO MILANI (London School of Economics) talked about the European unity and the supranational economic planning that British left-wing federalists envisaged in the interwar period. Finally, MARTIN HERZER (European University Institute) presented a case study from his dissertation which deals with the internal debates of the editorial department of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" in the 1960s about the form European integration should take.

Last but not least, Panel 3B "Narrative production: institutional narratives" touched upon the legitimising function of narratives, broadly discussing how researchers can conceptually and methodologically approach the issue of "dominance" or "hegemony" of specific institutional narratives. At the same time, the panel questioned whether it is possible to look at narratives without simultaneously examining counter-narratives. The debate started with an account by ADINA MARICUT (Central European University) of how the main EU institutions positioned themselves vis-à-vis the 1985 Schengen Agreement in order to construct different institutional narratives about the nature and scope of EU action in the area of freedom, security, and justice, as well as of their own role thereof. KOEN VAN ZON (Radboud University Nijmegen) examined narratives of the early days of the High Authority, the Common Assembly and the Consultative Committee in order to demonstrate that the question of legitimacy was contested from the very beginning of the European integration project from within the Community, where different "repertoires of legitimacy" can be identified. Finally, VANESSA BILANCETTI (Sapienza University of Rome) proposed a critical exploration of the "good governance" narrative of the European Commission as present in the 2001 White Paper, which raised crucial questions about the temporality of narratives (e.g. is it necessary to capture the origin and evolution of narratives, or is it sufficient to look at how they are employed at a given moment in time?), as well as about the extent to which researchers can study narratives without also investigating the institutional practices accompanying them.

The roundtable session on the second day was chaired by BRIGITTE LEUCHT (University of Copenhagen) and started with brief contributions of three

experts on the subject of narratives. CATHERINE GUIBAN (University of Minnesota) applied Hannah Arendt's concept of the "lost treasure" to the study of European integration; in her research, she intends to uncover the original intentions and principles of the founding actors which may have been forgotten by these actors themselves with the passage of time. She aims to debunk the myth of the European Coal and Steel Community seen as a primarily economic and technocratic project and to show that it was regarded as a new place for action and reconciliation even at the time of its foundation. ORIANE CALLIGARO (Maastricht University) talked about the strategy of European institutions to involve other actors in the narration of European institutions who are more legitimate than they are (such as artists). She emphasised the importance of multi-perspectivity and explained how studying "failed narratives" (narratives that were not told in the end) can shed light on struggles over legitimacy that centre on the issue of who has the right to tell the story. Lastly, RICHARD MCMAHON (University of Portsmouth) talked about different aspects of the research process of his forthcoming book, "The Races of Europe: Construction of National Identities in the Social Sciences". He stressed the importance of identifying the main actors in different historical contexts and of paying attention to the shared cultural patterns that affect their behaviour.

The roundtable discussion continued with reports from the panels of the previous day. Specifically in relation to Panel 1A on "Narratives in Education and Academia", we agreed that it is crucial to determine who the target audience of educational and propaganda projects is and who the main actors in the construction of narratives are. These are indispensable for understanding the processes through which narratives are constructed and for assessing the impact of these narratives on the general public. It is also important to consider how material and practical factors can influence social outcomes (for instance, how the cost of textbooks or the budget for educational film production may have wider social repercussions). In the general discussion that followed the report, an important issue that was raised was the difficulty of determining which narrative (or which set of narratives) is dominant at a certain point in time. This raised the comment that not only the content of a narrative can have inclusionary and exclusionary effects, but the process of narrative construction itself is a struggle over inclusion and exclusion.

The exchanges following the other panels put forth a multiplicity of pertinent points. One aspect discussed was the difficulty of finding reliable sources, especially in relation to narratives "from below." The issue of representativity, of which voices should be represented in our research and how/whether artistic projects should accurately represent social and historical reality, was also raised. This gave way to a long general discussion about how we, as academics, should position ourselves towards value-laden narratives. Indeed, one should be very cautious when claiming that one narrative is dominant at a certain moment in time, since it is very likely that the group of actors sharing the respective narrative has an interest in framing it as "dominant." While it is almost trivial to say that one cannot study narratives in a vacuum, without identifying where and from whom they came from, the point researchers should constantly keep in mind is that political situations have different ecological systems: in some cases, a narrative can be dominant, in others there are two competing narratives, in yet others we have competitive narratives from the outside; simultaneously, in some



instances there is a top-down trickle effect (from political elites to citizens) while in others there is a ping pong game between the two in the construction of narratives.

In this context, the conference participants debated what narratives are and whether we should continue using the widespread "producer-consumer" language with respect to historical narratives. Some believed that the internet might empower groups whose voices have not been heard so far and thus might open the possibility of more participatory narratives; some argued that what appear to be grassroots narratives are actually highly influenced by the political elite and are in fact top-down narratives in a new form; others thought that this type of discussion relativizes the value of narratives as telling good stories is also an art. We then returned to the point about dominant narratives and debated whether it still makes sense to talk about dominance in the age of the rise of non-state actors. Finally, we made an important distinction between the dominant status of a narrative and its acceptance by the public.

Overall, the 11th HEIRS Conference provided a fruitful arena for a multi-disciplinary discussion about the continued relevance of studying narratives of Europe and European integration. While there can be no conclusion about the "right way" to engage with narratives, it is crucial for researchers to reflect on the origin of the narratives under analysis, on the question of legitimacy as well as on the possible social repercussions of their work.

#### Conference Overview:

#### Narratives in Education and Academia

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Marret Katharina Bischewski (Georg Eckert Institut, Braunschweig): From Laeken to Lisbon: Narratives of the EU Reform Process in European Textbooks

Sylvia Balgarinov (University of Portsmouth): New Myths? Yalta and the Image of Europe in Polish Post-communist History Textbooks

Anne Bruch (University of Hamburg): Will Europe Unite? The Construction of European Identity and Citizenship Through European Information Films in the 1950s and 1960s

#### Narratives as Reactions to EU policy

Ulrike Kaden (University of Leipzig): Exploring Cooperation Rhetoric: Transborder Practices and the Promotion of European Cross-border Regionalism

Clémentine Chaigneau (BIGSS Bremen): The Impact of Collective Narratives in the Process of European Integration: A Comparison Between Serbia and Croatia

Chloë Delcour (Ghent University): Constructions of Globalization, Human Rights and the Nation State: Public Narratives in the Aftermath of a Human Rights Violation for Roma Migrants

#### Narratives of Identity and Otherness

Naomi Truan (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin): (Re)Constructing the Legitimacy of the EU: Narratives of Proximity and Authenticity. The Case Study of the Exhibition "Villa Global," Berlin

Olga Romanova (Cranfield University): External View on Europe: The Image of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse  
Mano Toth (University of Cambridge): Myths of European Integration and Critique

#### Narratives of Networks and Political Elites

Daniël Stinsky (Maastricht University): For Europe, Democracy and Peace. Social Democrat Blueprints for Postwar Europe in Willy Brandt and Gunnar Myrdal's Correspondence, 1947  
Lennaert van Heumen (Radboud University Nijmegen): 'Confused by an Alternative and Greater Federation'. American State-Private Networks and the Interplay Between a European and Atlantic Community, 1945-1963  
Mathias Häussler (University of Cambridge): A 'Cold War European'? Helmut Schmidt and European integration, c. 1945-1982

#### Narrative Production: Public Opinion and Public Image

Quentin Jouan (Université Catholique de Louvain): Narratives of European Integration in Times of Crisis. Images of Europe and the Tindemans report on European Union (1975)  
Tommaso Milani (London School of Economics): Progressives in Wonderland: European Unity and the "New Statesman & Nation", 1930- 1945  
Martin Herzer (European University Institute): Integration and Ordoliberalism. Ideas of European Integration in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's Editorial Department in the 1960s

#### Narrative Production: Institutional Narratives

Adina Maricut (Central European University Budapest): Different Narratives, One Area of Freedom, Security and Justice: EU Institutions and the Schengen Agreement  
Koen van Zon (Radboud University Nijmegen): Repertoires of Legitimacy. The Authority of the European Community Contested (1947-1960)  
Vanessa Bilancetti (Sapienza University of Rome): The European Commission's Narrative on Good Governance

#### Reports and Roundtable Session: How to Study the Narratives of Europe and European Integration

Brigitte Leucht (University of Copenhagen)  
Oriane Calligaro (Maastricht University)  
Catherine Guisan (University of Minnesota)  
Richard McMahon (University of Portsmouth)

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