

Call for papers

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Identity, culture, and intimacy Stereotypes in everyday life

Guest editors: Benjamin Rubbers and Pierre Petit

Although their description as timeless and essential categories has been definitely questioned in social sciences, national, ethnic, racial, or regional identities remain topical issues. A major challenge for social sciences is to understand how these identities are perpetuated and transformed in our more and more globalized world, and this even in contexts where any form of discrimination is officially condemned. Anthropology, sociology, and history all have a role to play in the analysis of such processes.

The existing literature on these issues, especially on nationalism and racism, includes many researches with a top-down approach, that do not pay much attention to everyday deeds and words. Whether interested in discourses or in structural inequalities, most of these studies replace the formation of cultural identities in large historical processes such as colonialism or neoliberalism, give priority to the discourses and practices of elites (like politicians or colonizers), and rely mostly on archives, newspapers and interviews.

By contrast, research based on participant observation to investigate how cultural categories of belonging and exclusion are negotiated on a day-to-day basis is far less common. Authors developing this type of perspective have been mainly interested in the use of cultural symbols, in the building of minority networks, and in the lived experiences of social actors. They try to understand how national, ethnic, or racial identities are produced and reproduced in the routines of ordinary people (with non intent, however, to assert the primacy of the micro over the macro).

In line with this position, this issue of *Civilisations* focuses on the practical use of stereotypes in everyday interactions. Taking the question of social intimacy as a starting point, it aims at developing some of Herzfeld's insights about the relationship between a) official discourse, b) stories and conversations in everyday life, and c) actual interactions – more or less common, more or less familiar – between 'us' and 'them'. To study the relationship between these three dimensions is an opportunity to reflect upon larger topics such as trust, social ties, or the ambiguous character of confrontations with the 'Other'.

The following are possible areas of investigation: How people learn and use stereotypes according to context? Why are such 'essentializations' the stuff of a specific humour? How are moral expectations and evaluations towards strangers transmitted and expressed? What is the place of memory, nostalgia, or trauma in such interactions? How do people appropriate official discourses in their own life stories? What uses are made of accusations of racism, tribalism, or nationalism in everyday life? How is cultural difference

produced, negotiated, and reproduced in intimate circles (e.g. between husband and wife, adopting parents and adopted children, between neighbours, and so on)?

The above list of questions is not exhaustive. The aim of this issue is to offer empirical data and theoretical insight to study the practical use of ethnic, racial, national, or regional stereotypes in everyday life. All articles based on original research dealing with this subject are welcome.

Propositions of articles in English or French (title + abstract of no more than 400 words) should be sent before 30 May 2011 to the editorial board of the journal (civilisations@ulb.ac.be and jnoret@ulb.ac.be), and to the guest editors of the issue, Benjamin Rubbers (brubbers@ulb.ac.be) and Pierre Petit (pipetit@ulb.ac.be).

Civilisations is a peer-reviewed journal of anthropology. Published continuously since 1951, it features articles in French and English in the various fields of anthropology, without regional or time limitations. Revived in 2002 with a new editorial board and a new subtitle (*Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines*), *Civilisations* particularly encourages the submission of articles where anthropological approaches meet other social sciences, to better tackle processes of society making.