

Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies

University of Exeter, 28-29 June 2012

Workshop

The ‘diversity turn’: Cultural policies, governance, and national minorities

‘Cultural diversity’, through distinct yet related processes, has become a norm in public policy, rapidly and widely adopted in areas as different as labour, education, culture, social policy, etc. (Titley and Lentin 2008). In the 1990s, negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades gave rise to debates about cultural industries and the commercialisation of cultural goods, leading to the emergence of the notion of ‘cultural exception’. At the end of the decade, the UNESCO stressed the necessary recognition of the diversity of cultures against the unifying processes of liberal globalisation; the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was drafted in 2001 and later backed by the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Cultural Expressions (2005). Progressively the term ‘cultural diversity’ became dominant while contributing to blur further the notion of culture. In parallel, cultural industries and policies were designed and/or used to manage the social, to encourage ‘democratisation’ or ‘peace-building’, and to foster economic growth. Their territories have expanded in the realm of economy (Yudice 1993), development, and, more broadly, governance (Karaca 2009). Yet Bonet and Négrier (2008) rightly reminded that this is not a new phenomenon: cultural policies have always been justified by broader finalities that evolved according to fluctuating historical and socio-political contexts.

This workshop proposes to question the role of cultural diversity in the transformation and/or reproduction of cultural policies in countries where the presence of national minorities, indigenous or autochthon peoples (and the movements or organisations representing them) have challenged states’ definition of national identity, and sometimes state sovereignty and borders. It proposes to investigate, on the one hand, how cultural diversity as a norm of public policies transforms (or reproduces) the policies towards national minorities and autochthon peoples; and, on the other hand, how cultural diversity is appropriated by autochthon and minority movements’ organisations, activists, representatives and reproduced, mobilised or challenged in their claims, policies or politics.

The transformation of public policy and governance will also be at the core of the questioning: indeed ‘partnership’ and ‘consultation’ increase the number and diversity of actors as well as the scales of public intervention (Bonet and Négrier 2008; Gaudin 2007). One can therefore examine how minority actors take part in the design of cultural policies; and how the intertwinement of the different scales affects the design and implementation of public action. The question of ‘policy transfer’ will also be scrutinized as international organisations, international companies, or other national states or enterprises become increasingly involved in national policies (through funding, specific programs, training, etc.). As underlined by Gaudin (2007), one should not put aside the question of power asymmetries and domination in the study of the new modes of governance. The issue of domination is

particularly important when scrutinizing the case of national minorities and will also be at the core of this workshop: does cultural diversity modify power relationships?

This workshop aims at bringing together case studies from around the world as to foster a comparative dimension. Indeed, it is important to pay attention to the specificity of histories of national integrations and institutions that can affect the possible rootings of cultural diversity. Besides, one may wish to follow the proposition of Soysal (1999) to “take ‘projects of culture’ as a way to enter into the burdensome territory of culture today”. “Projects as such”, he follows, “are identifiable, tangible, and comparable” as well as opening-up “space to account for agency – be it collective, individual or institutional” (Soysal 2009: 8). In this workshop, one may wish to examine the practices of cultural diversity with particular attention to the design and implementation of specific cultural policies, programs or projects. However attention to the production and diffusion of narratives of cultural diversity is also necessary in order to understand the broad discursive space that participates in shaping policies and practices.

This workshop will take place on 28-29 June 2012 at the University of Exeter, UK. It will be followed by a collective publication. Funding for travel and accommodation will be available for participants.

Abstracts (around 1000 words) should be sent to Clémence Scalbert Yücel and Anaïd Flesken (c.scalbert-yucel@exeter.ac.uk; a.flesken@exeter.ac.uk) before 15 January 2012. Notification of acceptance will be sent on 15 February 2012.

References

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- Titley, G.; Lentin, A. (2008) *The politics of diversity in Europe*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe.
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