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*Taiwan Studies Programme Annual Conference*

**IN SEARCH OF NEW PERSPECTIVES, METHODS, AND FINER  
FACTORS OF IDENTITY FORMATION—  
FROM EAST ASIA TO THE WORLD**

***4 and 5 September 2015***

St Antony's College, University of Oxford, UK

Deadline of abstract submission: Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> April

Notification of acceptance: Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> May

Deadline of Registration: Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> August

**Conference Objective**

Multiple, mercurial, flowing, strategic, transcultural and transnational, context-dependent and socially constructed—these are characteristics of contemporary identity observed by postmodernist theorists. Yet, a chronic debate is that these attributes can neither entirely fit into individuals' perception of self-identity, nor thoroughly correspond with their sense of subjectivity when individuals take political actions or fulfil their particular roles in identity politics. More precisely, when the significant influence of social contexts—i.e., perceived history, social structure, the operation of state apparatus, etc., which mainly contribute the postmodernist characteristics of identity—has been widely recognised, how should we explain the heterogeneity of identity emerging in similar contexts? How should we account for the diversity of political action taken by individuals who are supposed to share the same identity?

East Asia can be a good starting point to deal with this analytic dilemma. It is often perceived and presented as a rather simple region—in comparison with others like Southeast Asia and Europe—consisting of four major peoples (arguably, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese and Chinese) with both intensive and long histories of mutual cultural exchange. However, the composition of ethnicity, language, culture and custom is far more diverse than this simplified, quadruple categorisation. The internal heterogeneity of a region not only consumes great energy of states or other social institutions which attempt to create a certain common collectiveness, but also presents a valuable field for researchers to further look into the struggle in one's identity formation, and to explore various factors behind it. Taking national identity as an example (yet, the scope of this conference is not limited to this type of identity; we welcome researchers who focus on the way in which individuals

locate themselves and their identity in their economic and social lives and so forth, especially from the geopolitical perspective), as China is increasingly cultivating a strong nation-image both domestically and internationally, it is also creating a homogeneous cultural and national identity—that is, to be culturally ‘Chinese’ is to recognise the communist regime. Meanwhile, the exclusive Taiwanese and Hong Kong identities, in spite of the two governments’ pro-China and pro-neoliberal tendencies, have increased to a historic high, arguably catalysed by large-scale student movements during the last year which aimed to pursue values of democracy and social equality. Apparently, unconventional factors other than, for instance, the recognition of one’s nation and ethnicity and the state’s effort and measure of nation building, forge and shape people’s national identity of these cases.

### Conference Themes

This conference calls for papers that share the common goal of exploring new constitutive factors and developing new perspectives of identity research. Several themes are designed (but not limited to) as follows:

**Theme 1. Theorising and Measuring Identity:** One of the main themes of the conference is to deal with the above-mentioned inconsistency between the postmodern characteristics of identity and the common perception of self-subjectivity. We encourage applicants to submit works that critically review current theories or methodologies, or that venture to develop new analytical frameworks for identity studies.

**Theme 2. State and Identity:** When a state’s authorized power has always played a significant role in constructing people’s (national) identity, it is more intriguing to further look into the state’s purpose for identity construction—is it to mobilize people’s sense of solidarity to fight against enemies or compete with rivals; is it to distract people’s attention from domestic problems such as class conflict; or, is there any other reason? Moreover, using national resources apparently does not guarantee that all people possess the one and only type of identity; then, what makes identity construction fail? What leads to the heterogeneity in identity construction? This theme aims to further probe into the relation between state and identity construction.

**Theme 3. Society and Identity:** Since the state’s operation does not guarantee a successful interpellation of identity, other institutions or structures definitely exercise influence. In fact, various identities other than national identity—such as class, gender, social role, etc.—are deeply related to morality, social norms, cultural values, religion, family types, economic conditions, and so forth. We welcome submission of empirical

research that aims to explore and clarify the operation of these finer factors in identity formation.

**Theme 4. Individual and Identity:** The purpose of this theme is twofold. First, it is to look at identity formation at an individual level: Being affected by numerous social factors, how does a person claim one particular identity instead of others? Second, by comparing various cases of people's identity preference (i.e., factors that prompt individual for a specific identity), it offers potential for researchers to deduce or to explore new common elements in explaining identity formation.

This is only a preliminary design which attempts to offer broad guidance in our journey of studying identity. We are indeed excited to see research, not only using various research materials—either individual ones like autobiography, diary, novel, music/art work, online comments/articles, or general ones like newspaper, textbooks, advertisements, state propaganda, etc.—but also covering diverse types of identity, such as national, ethnic, political, class or gender identity, or identities based on the classification of social roles or virtually created in the Internet.

### **Rules of Submission**

The submission deadline is Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> April. The abstract (up to 300 words) is expected to succinctly include research objectives, theoretical frameworks, research methods, summary of research findings and main arguments, and intellectual contributions or social and political implications. Please also list three to five keywords and attach a short biography of the author. All abstract should be emailed to: [\*\*asian@sant.ox.ac.uk\*\*](mailto:asian@sant.ox.ac.uk) with the subject heading **'TSP 2015 abs'**, which ensures the submission will not go to spam folder. We will shortly reply with confirmation of receipt.

Funding for travel and accommodation may be available to authors whose papers are selected. The full papers with a maximum length of 8,000 words must be submitted by 20 August 2015. A selection of accepted papers will be considered for publication in either an edited volume or a peer-reviewed journal special issue. Once again, priority will be given to focuses on Taiwan and East Asia, but papers dealing with identity issues in other parts of the world are equally welcome.

Enquiries: [asian@sant.ox.ac.uk](mailto:asian@sant.ox.ac.uk) or tel: (+44) 01865-274559

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This conference is sponsored by Taiwanese Studies Programme, Asian Studies Centre,  
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