Religious Migrants and European Identities, 1400-2009

Veranstalter: European Science Foundation (ESF); Susanne Lachenicht, Universität Bayreuth; William Gallois, Roehampton University, London
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For centuries historians have studied the distinctiveness of the European historical experience from the Middle Ages to the present day and have analysed the ways a) in which Europe and its (nation-)states have been formed and b) how national and European identities evolved over time and space. Today, Europe faces the challenge to integrate a growing number of nation-states into what is meant to be 'one Europe'. However, Europe at large and each of its participating nation-states face the presence of other 'nations' within the nation-state that – from most politicians' perspective - need to be accommodated, integrated or assimilated to the normative systems of state and society.

While it seems to be common sense that identities always evolve in close contact with and, more often than not, as a 'rejection' of the 'other', Europe's experience from the early middle ages onwards has always been focused around the relationship of Christianity with the two other monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam. With the Reformation, the formation of identities comprised the antagonism of Catholicism and Protestantism (and Protestant and Catholic states) as well as a growing number of Protestant 'sects'. With the building of the nation-state and processes of secularisation within 'modern Europe' religious identities seemed to matter less than they did up to the late eighteenth century. However, the 21st century seems to face a new challenge centred around the presence of religious migrants and conflicting religious identities both on a national and a European level.

Discussions about religion and tolerance have become central to twenty-first-century European politics – from debates on the veil and the relationship between contemporary Islam and the secular state, to discussions of the treatment of asylum seekers in a society of riches. The European Science Foundation (ESF) Exploratory Workshop added the voices of historians to discussions which, more often than not, take place between sociologists, political scientists, lawyers and policy makers. Identity formation is, after all, a phenomenon which develops over the 'longue durée', and it is to historians to whom we might turn to learn more of the basic categories which inform contemporary discussions, such as the refugee, identity, the nation, asylum and Europe. It seems vital that such discussions should take place on a trans-national, European level: in part because such crossing of borders and boundaries is intrinsic to the subjects being studied, and partly because the opening up of new perspectives might be afforded by a comparative approach which seeks to interrogate the ways in which both European identities and national identities have evolved and changed over time. From the two convenors' perspective, SUSANNE LACHENICHT's and WILLIAM GALLOIS', constructing 'one Europe' and 'European integration' is about understanding Europe's past and the effects of co-existing and rivalling identities.

The ESF ExploratoryWorkshop's papers developed knowledge in four distinct spheres, which were in dialogue with each other throughout the workshop: broad theoretical studies of themes such as the history of cosmopolitanism, detailed historical accounts of the lives and identities of migrant communities across Europe and the Atlantic World, a special consideration of Islam and Judaism (and Muslim and Jewish communities) within Europe from the late medieval ages to the present; and a consideration of the political and legal treatment of refugees and religious minorities in contemporary Europe.

Beginning with broader questions of concept and theory, the idea and ideals of cosmopolitanism are evidently one key to discussions of identity and the treatment of minorities. How, PAULINE KLEINGELD asked, can late early modern cosmopolitan ideals – as expressed by Kant and associated with Germans and German culture up to the late 18th century – impact on the seemingly contradictory

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rise of the unitary nation-state with its tendency to focus on singular forms of national, religious and ethnic identity? Kleingeld made evident that Kant's „cosmopolitanism is a moral attitude: an attitude of recognition, respect, openness, interest, beneficence and concern towards other human individuals, cultures, and peoples – wherever and whoever they are". This late 18th century cosmopolitanism also included non-Europeans and was meant to unite mankind in a global society.

Moving to a series of historical case studies, the speakers' subjects ranged from Irish Catholic migrants in eighteenth-century France (LIAM CHAMBERS), the shaping of Quaker (SÜNNE JUTERCZENKA) and Sephardic (NOAH GELFAND) identities in exile communities to the essence of multiculturalism and the formation of new cosmopolitan and hybrid identities in modern Britain (DAVID FELDMAN and JOHN EADE). Chambers', Gelfand's and Juterczenka's papers showed that not only Irish Catholics, Sephardi Jews or Quakers but many other (religious) migrant communities in Europe (and the Atlantic world) „played an important role in reconfiguring identities in [...] Europe" (Chambers). These migrant communities do form Europe up to the present day beyond the national history paradigm.

John Eade's paper made evident that „although Britain has become markedly more culturally diverse since the Second World War, discourses and practices surrounding this diversity bear the impress of Victorian nationalism, which brought together a burgeoning population divided by class, gender, sexuality, regional nationalism (the four nations), regionalism, urban and rural life". Despite the practice of multi-culturalism, which means that „individuals clearly can move between boundaries and pick and mix identities through a creative engagement with others" even cosmopolitan cities such as London are „shaped by inequalities and exclusions".

David Feldman found that, in Britain, „multiculturalism arrived as an oppositional movement in the late 1970s and 1980s" and that the assimilation of religious migrants used to be taken for granted. Nonetheless, he argued that Britain, as a „multinational Kingdom, in the empire and in regulating the relations between Church and state" „developed pluralist solutions". Britain thus has a tradition of „conservative pluralism" which was „designed to preserve English dominance within the United Kingdom; to govern subject peoples within the empire; and to preserve the privileges of the established Church". Thus, Feldman stated, „in Britain, the particular role of the state in promoting multiculturalism means that the politics of multiculturalism have often been conservative – indeed they have been doubly conservative".

The workshop tracked across time to consider the pressing issue of the history of relationships between European and Islamic and Jewish identities. Some papers asked to what extent national and European identities have been constituted from Arab-Islamic culture, particularly with regard to al-Andalus and the migration of Iberian Muslim and Jewish refugees (Carlos ESPÍ-FORCEN). Should Europeans begin from a position which posits Islamic 'alterity' or 'otherness', or might a historically-driven case be developed to argue for a connected European-Islamic sense of selfhood (MICHAEL WINTLE)? The speakers looked at such questions through historical considerations of the ways in which Muslims have been represented in 'European' art, to the lives of contemporary migrant communities in France, Germany and Britain (MOHAND TILMATINE, HAYRETTIN AYDIN).

Lastly, the workshop's papers looked at current European policies with regard to refugees and religious minorities, investigating the legal framework for the integration of refugees and its effects on the formation of identities. Through case studies from Greece and a number of other countries (ALTANA FILOS), the workshop moved into a reflective mode to interrogate how national and Europe-wide realities of the present both differ and draw on the history of refugees and religious minorities.

The workshop's preliminary results were:

1. The history of Europe looks very different when it is not written from the nation states' perspective (or through national historiography) but from the perspectives of Ashkenazi Jews, French Calvinists, Irish

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Catholics in France, Quakers and other migrant groups studied at this event. Curiously such a history of European minorities does not necessarily imply a history of the margins, for many of the communities considered during the workshop lived across national boundaries and their trade and settlement patterns reveal both 'European' AND 'national' traits which are underacknowledged in most of the broader understandings of European history.

2. There was a concerted move against the notion of the nation lying at the heart of the European story. While a narrative of nations may seem appropriate for the final section of the workshop, it is inadequate as a means of describing much of the early modern and modern period, and indeed the power of the centralising state is increasingly called into question in historical, anthropological and sociological accounts of modern life.

3. Pluralism and 'othering' are at the heart of the European experience. They create a multitude of identities which form a distinctive feature of Europe herself.

4. A sustained questioning of the concept of 'identity' ran across the event. How did historical actors at different moments think about themselves and their identities? How do scholars avoid essentializing minority groups? How can discussions of identity take account of lived identities, plural identities, contradictory identities, fluid identities, and so on? What role do others play in making the identities of minority groups?

5. Debates about identity were also seen as being exemplary in the sense that they crossed time periods and validated the long-range approach of studying the medieval and the early modern alongside the modern and the contemporary, so that historians and others might see long-range continuities as well as identifying specific questions at certain moments in time. An example of a contemporary debate which exercised the group was David Feldman's analysis of the curious conservatism of multiculturalism as a political force, in its tendency to impose communitarian norms on minority groups, which then often come into conflict with rights cultures which stress the sovereignty of individuals.

6. The question of relationships between 'Europe' and 'Islam' ran across the event, and might be succinctly summed up by the question 'Is and has Islam been Europe's other or a part of its self?' which needs to be answered positively.

7. Historical models of sanctuary, asylum and integration should inform a European framework of laws that both protect pluralism as an essential feature of Europe AND foster a possible integration of the 'other'.

8. European policy makers need to discuss – based on the knowledge of Europe's history – to what extent Europe will be about pluralism and cosmopolitanism and how much and through which means it is inclined to guarantee pluralism and religious freedom in Europe. Up to the present day religious pluralism in Europe and the accommodation of religious migrants is – in some countries such as Greece – not possible because of national refugee law.

9. The 'return of religion' (if it has ever been absent from Europe and European identities) was much commented-on at the event and a sense developed that, as a collective, historians ought to explore how the histories presented during the workshop might add to the growing understanding of life in a so-called post-secular world.

10. One very specific history – that of cosmopolitanism – was seen to change radically when it was viewed in specific historical contexts, such as Kant's Germany, and considerable interest was generated in the idea of extending such readings of this key idea to other key moments in the history of this idea.

Conference Overview:

Welcome by Convenors
Susanne Lachenicht (Hamburg University, Germany) and William Gallois (Roehampton University, London, UK)

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Kostas Gouliamos (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities - SCH)

Afternoon session: Cosmopolitanism and European Identity
Chair: William Gallois, Roehampton University

Presentation 1 „The Cosmopolitan Identity of

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the Germans“
Pauline Kleingeld (Leiden University, Netherlands)

Presentation 2 „Migration and Religion – Diasporas and the emergence of cross-cultural social and commercial networking and identities in early modern Northern Europe“
Dagmar Freist (University of Oldenburg, Germany)

Presentation 3 „Do Cosmopolitan and Hybrid Identities Exist in Contemporary London“
John Eade (Roehampton University, London, UK)

Discussion

Morning Session: European Identities in Early Modern Atlantic Diasporas
Chair: Susanne Lachenicht, Hamburg University

Presentation 1 „An 'Innocent People' Abroad: The Influence of Persecution and Migration on the Shaping of a European Quaker Identity“
Sünne Juterczenka (University of Rostock, Germany)

Presentation 2 „The Situational Privileges and Rights of Sephardic Jewish Mercantile Communities in the Southern Atlantic World of the Early Modern Era“
Noah Gelfand (NYU, New York, United States)

Discussion

Afternoon Session: Refugees, Religion and Identities in Modern and Contemporary Europe
Chair: William Gallois, Roehampton University, London, UK

Presentation 1 „Why the English Like Turbans: The Surprising History of Multiculturalism in One Country“
David Feldman (Birkbeck College, London, UK)

Presentation 2 „Les berbères en contexte d'immigration : vers une identité transfrontalière et transnationale ?“
Mohand Tilmatine(University of Cadiz, Spain)

Discussion

Presentation 3 „Islam, Education and Muslim Identities in Contemporary Germany“
Hayrettin Aydin (University of Bremen, Germany)

Presentation 4 „Islam as Europe's Other throughout history: external and internal“
Michael Wintle (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Discussion

Morning Session: Contemporary European Governments and Religious Refugees: Legal Perspectives
Chair: Susanne Lachenicht, University of Hamburg

Presentation 1 „The Freedom of Religious Minority Groups in Greece: Their Legal Status and Treatment by the State and the Authorities“
Altana Filos (MPI for Comparative Public Law and Int'l Law, Heidelberg, Germany)

Discussion

Afternoon session: Religion, Refugees and European Identities in Early Modern Europe
Chair: Natalia Muchnik, EHESS, Paris

Presentation 1 „Anti-Judaism in the Visual Culture of Late Medieval Spain“
Carlos Espi-Forcen (University of Murcia, Spain)

Presentation 2 „Irish Catholic Migrants and the Irish Past in Eighteenth Century France“
Liam Chambers (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland)

Discussion

Wrap up

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