

Call for papers - A narrative turn in EU studies?

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Convenor: Luis Bouza García (luis.bouza@coleurope.eu)

“Narratives” have become prominent in political discourse and practice in recent years. This emergence is closely related to the global crisis of 2007-2009, that is still going on in parts of Europe. One of the stronger criticisms of democratic politics on the wake of the great crisis is that politics are no longer able to govern the economy and that instead it can only adapt to the situation. The “political narrative” in much of the Western world has been quite stable since the 1929 crisis, and can be summarised in the notion that the state can regulate the economy and society to achieve goals democratically defined by citizens in a context of free elections and the respect of the law and fundamental rights. Distrust towards politics grows because of perceptions that democracies are unable to manage the economy, reduce inequalities and produce public policies meeting the expectations of voters. Could this increasing difficulty of governing societies be the result of a cognitive disconnection between the public expectations and the current political environment? Is this crisis and its political manifestation a sign that globalisation has grown so complex to make politics virtually unintelligible to parts of the public? However the workshop also aims at discussing the legitimacy implications of this discursive turn, in that the notion that the reason of the disconnection of the public is due to the incapacity to overcome narratives of political engagement in the economy is in itself a political interpretation of globalisation as a natural fosterer of economic deregulation.

The manifestation of this disconnect is particularly clear for the EU, as evidenced in falls of support for European integration and support for eurosceptic parties. Some argue that the EU is seeing the end of the "permissive consensus", the public's benign neglect of the EU until the early 90s, while it produced almost Pareto-efficient results. However when the EU decisions to manage the crisis have hit at home public opinion has shifted, in particular in some of the most affected countries. Some scholars, intellectuals and the Commission president Barroso are arguing that the traditional narrative of the permissive consensus period - the EU is a device to guarantee peace - is fading out because of generational changes and the impression that peace is now guaranteed in Europe.

The question that raises immediately is whether this fading narrative is being replaced by an alternative and if the EU is living a narrative turn? This is however extremely complex. Can we speak of an existing narrative of the EU in the first place? The thin public sphere and elitist nature of the EU integration process makes it difficult to argue that the EU has had all-encompassing narrative so far. Nevertheless the elite mode the “permissive consensus” seems to be coming to an end as the EU stands at a historical crossroads where decisions on a “genuine political union” - a consequence of the monetary integration - can no longer be taken with the benign neglect of the public.

Has there ever been a single narrative or are there competing - complementary narratives? What are the elements of the emerging narratives on European integration? Who are the producers of these narratives, what are their content, how and in which public spaces are they circulated? Are the narratives of European integration the product of a strategy by political, social and economic actors or emergent devices produced by popular press, historical memories and party competition? What is the

place of instrumental rationality discourses versus emotions, myths and identities? Do the institutions of the EU contribute to create official myths, patrons and saints of European integration?

The aim of this interdisciplinary workshop is to create a forum for academics working on the EU public sphere, the EU's legitimacy crisis, European identity, history and historical memory and other approaches to come together to discuss the potential and limits of the narrative turn to analyse the current crisis of the EU.

Panel number 1: A narrative turn in EU studies? 9-10:30 AM

Richard McMahon (University of Portsmouth) Normative geographies: EU scholars and differentiated integration

Monica Sassatelli (Goldsmith University London) 'The European Union in your hand': Euro-aesthetics as narrative of European identity

Kostas Kanellopoulos (University of Crete); Angelos Loukakis, (University of Crete); Moritz Sommer, (Freie Universität Berlin); Franziska Scholl, (Freie Universität Berlin)
Narrative dimensions of stability and solidarity in the Euro Crisis

Discussant: Christophe de Voogd (Institut d'études politiques de Paris, Fondation européenne de la culture)

Coffee break 10.30-11 PM

Panel number 2: The narratives turn of the EU institutions 11 – 12:30 PM

Luis Bouza Garcia (College of Europe) The narrative turn and the politicisation of the EU

Professor Wolfram Kaiser (University of Portsmouth) Clash of Cultures: Two Milieus in the European Union's "A New Narrative for Europe" Project.

Manuel Franzmann (Frankfurt am Main University) The mythical construction of the future Europe in the annual debates on the "State of the Union Address".

Discussant: Jorge Tuñón Navarro (Universidad Carlos III Madrid)

Lunch break 12:30 - 14:00 PM

Panel number 3: History and memory in the EU narrative constructions 14:00 – 15:30 PM

Quincy R. Cloet (College of Europe) Competing Narratives of European Integration. Lessons from the inter-war period for the EU's narrative turn

Celine Cantat (Université de Poitiers) Narratives and counter-narratives of Europe. Constructing and contesting Europeanity.

Philippe Perchoc (European Parliament Research Service) European "lieux de mémoires" in Brussels?

Discussant: Valerie Rosoux (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Concluding debate and next steps: 15:30-16:00