

## Modernization, Europe and Nation-State



*William Blake, Newton*

**15 - 17 April 2016, Athens**

**Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences  
This workshop is organised in collaboration with the Research Centre for Modern History (KENI)**

Day 1. Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## **Modernization: History, Theory, Ideology and Utopia**

Does the experience in today's world challenge the dominant explanatory paradigms for history and put into test their competence for understanding both, past and present, their relationship, as well as the interplay of historical continuities and discontinuities? Over the last decades, through a critical examination of classical modernization theories, the notion of 'Multiple Modernities' was developed. By historicizing modernity and framing modernization in a wider, trans-national global context, the theorists of multiple modernities challenged the Convergence Thesis and launched a critique of the evolutionism and Eurocentrism of teleological modernization narratives.

**Modernization: History, Theory, Ideology and Utopia** invites historically contextualized approaches to modernization theories and the relevant debates. Herein are some focus questions that may prompt our discussion:

- How could we approach the discourses about 'failed modernities' which, disseminated from academia to the media, have proliferated over the last decades and especially during the crisis years'?
- Could we discern a shift of scholarly attention from the 'diseases of transition' ('failed', 'aberrant', 'deviant' or 'ersatz' modernities) to the failure of the dominant modernization theories in addressing the 'dark' or sinister sides of modernity, its so called Janus face?
- Should we now approach the 'pathologies' of modernization through a new lens, especially after the British Disease Thesis, that is, the arguments about the British failure, incomplete development and economic decline due to the cultural hegemony of pre-modern, gentry values over the industrial spirit?
- Is there a need for drawing a distinction between modernization as a problem in the field of social studies, and modernization as a rhetorical tool in the journalistic field, put into service of specific policies?
- How useful is the notion of 'multiple modernities' in making sense of political, social and economic differences between nation-states across the EU?

Day 2. Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016

### Questioning the concept of “Europe”

Engaging with the debate on ‘multiple modernities’ and the particularities of individual nation-states, the second session raises questions about ‘Europeanization’ and the crisis. Here the case of Greece is particularly significant for our understanding of both Europe and the current crisis.

The question raised regarding the countries of the European periphery (PIGS) within the academic field as well as the public domain is ‘why a nation fails to follow a *soi-disant* «common European norm of modernization?». In this context, certain large and contradictory narratives developed during the years of the crisis. Some argue that the (national) crisis reflects either a macro-historical or a conjectural national particularity, while others include all varied (national) crises within a common European trend with common features.

**Questioning the concept of “Europe”** attempts to mobilize a reflection on questions such as:

- Is there a ‘Greek crisis’? How are nation and economic crisis articulated together with such a clear geographical boundary? What does it mean to think that crises are somehow nationally circumscribed in C21st Europe? Is there not a crisis unevenly articulated across the EU and experienced in regions where no crisis is currently acknowledged? Is the ‘Greek crisis’ some kind of ideological diversion from the bigger crisis? What kinds of interests do the construction of a ‘Greek crisis’ serve?
- How is the ‘Greek crisis’ represented and understood/interrogated within the nation-state of Greece? Is the ‘Greek crisis’ represented in different ways in different parts of Europe?
- Does ‘Europe’ in 2016 constitute a cohesive cultural and imaginary community founded on material realities and socio-political relations? Or is it imposed ‘from above’ by a transnational EU bureaucracy?
- ‘*We are all Greeks/Irish/Spanish etc.*’: How far do such developing solidarity movements, putatively opposing ‘austerity’ regimes, transcend national boundaries? Do they mark the emergence of a common political space? Could transnational mobilization against ‘austerity’ generate new conceptualizations of ‘Europe’ and ‘European modernity’?

Day 3. Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2016

### **Nation-State, Civil Society and Immigration**

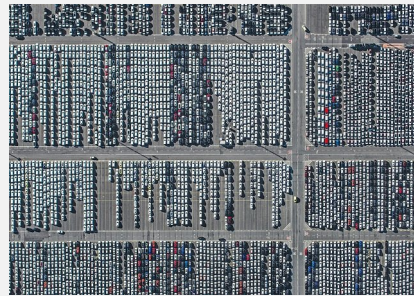
This session raises a different set of questions about the status of the nation-state within Europe. In many EU states new physical, political and cultural borders are being imposed, or old boundaries are being reintroduced to break up transnational spaces.

By encouraging authoritarian policies regarding immigrants and refugees, European states challenge established perceptions regarding civil society, minorities and ethnic groups, the idea of secular states and modernization theories. Furthermore, left-wing movements and political powers across Europe gradually become accustomed with national rhetoric in their effort to create defense mechanisms against neoliberal EU policies.

**Nation-State, Civil Society and Immigration** invites approaches to the debates on nation-state, nationalism and civil society with emphasis to documented case studies. We invite approaches associated with the following questions:

- Are policies arising from anxieties about security and immigration effectively leading European states to abandon established perceptions of a diverse civil society and of the secular character of the state? Is Europe a Christian polity? Is there a European 'nationalism' rather than a 'transnational' Europeanism?
- Are there significant connections between discourses of border and security and new forms of internal political surveillance and policing?
- What explains the persistence and growing influence of extreme-right and neo-fascist movements across Europe in recent years? Are these transient phenomena or signals of a decisive shift in the political landscape?
- Are left-wing movements across Europe turning towards nationalist rhetoric as a defensive strategy against transnational and neoliberal EU policies? Or have such movements been complicit in generating and sustaining nationalist discourses?
- Is the so-called centre/centre-right a hegemonic neoliberal formation or the natural path of compromise between 'extreme' ideologies? What is its relationship between nationalism and the transnational?

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