European Science Foundation

Research Networking Programme

Responding to Complex Diversity in Europe and Canada (RECODE)

Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS)
Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)

This interdisciplinary, comparative research programme is intended to explore to what extent the processes of transnationalisation, migration, religious mobilisation and cultural differentiation entail a new configuration of social conflict in post-industrial societies. Such a possible new constellation we here label *complex diversity*. The leading idea is that such diversity is developing at a global level, but particularly in European-style societies, where social entitlements, supranational policies and cultural diversity enjoy a considerable, but often contradictory degree of legitimacy. In this perspective, Canada offers some interesting similarities and contrasts with Europe. Our project tries therefore to identify the cleavages and normative issues that this new constellation raises on both sides of the Atlantic, and to develop expertise in the institutions, public policies and cultural resources that can respond to them. The thematic focus of the programme covers the areas of linguistic diversity and political communication, religious pluralism, transnationalism and, finally, multiculturalism and welfare state policies.

The running period of the ESF RECODE Research Networking Programme is for five years from June 2010 to June 2014.

Logo designed by Chema Román

Aims

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The process of nation building has generally been described in terms of struggles for territorial concentration of power, political participation and social rights. Many of these conflicts can be equated with the development of industrial society. Since then social and political alignments have experienced a great change. What could be deemed the *simple diversity* of industrial societies – allocation struggles along class lines within sovereign states – has given place to a new, *complex diversity* in which a variety of social, political and cultural cleavages overlap and compete for political legitimacy at a national and supranational level. This process draws on a range of related developments. One is how struggles for recognition replace or are imbricated with distributive struggles. Our concern is that within a context wherein the nation state may no longer sustain its role as the dominant social organisation and mode of community, these cleavages may interact in such a manner as to pose particularly demanding challenges (but also offer possibilities) for the political authorities. Contemporary debates on multicultural citizenship, new civil rights, asymmetrical federalism, fundamentalism, etc. merely define the theoretical perimeters of such diversity. In addition, globalisation and the long-term crisis of the welfare state have eroded the social and political alliances that helped to create the welfare state as the expression of a *European way of life*, with its understanding of social entitlements and publicly run schemes of social redistribution as an extension of the idea of *citizenship*.

The project has singled out four issue areas which will be examined in depth in order to achieve a clearer sense of *complex diversity,* its implications for public policy, and policy suggestions/ prescriptions: 1) linguistic diversity, 2) de-territorialised diversity, 3) religious

Figure 1. Tile • ©Cole Vineyard, iStockphoto

diversity, and 4) diversity and redistribution. Although none of these issues is strictly a new field of study, our comprehensive and comparative approach gives the programme an innovative edge.

At the same time, the programme is organised in a way that makes for a high degree of inter-connectivity between the four thematic sections. Thus, it will be an important task to reflect on the differences between languages and religions (sections 1 and 3) when it comes to articulating a common public sphere based on liberal and democratic principles. In a similar way, the issue of language is closely related to the cultural dynamics which underlie the formation of de-territorialised social and political spaces (section 2) and are relevant for articulating transnational and subnational collective actors (section 4). In order to allow an autonomous flow of research, each section has a coordinator and a core group of collaborators, plus guest specialists from the other teams and a changing set of external speakers. The Euro-Canadian focus of the programme will be made possible through the participation of Canadian specialists in each team, either as coordinators, research members or as guest speakers.

The research sections and topics to be covered

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Section 1:
Linguistic Diversity and Political Communication

The purpose of this section is to assess to what extent a common public sphere has to be based upon one common language. The claim is often made that European multilingualism works against the emergence of a communicative space sustained by interlocking media. Language played indeed a central role in the formation of European nation states: all over Europe, we find a strong link between political integration and the idea of the national language. Thus, generally speaking, the consolidation of nation states was reached at the expenses of linguistic minority groups. In Canada, we get a somewhat different picture, as the Canadian state was built from the beginning on the basis of an agreement between two distinct linguistic communities. In this respect, to what extent does Canada's basically bi-polar linguistic structure make for a more integrated setting for political communication?

In Europe, recent developments seem to have entailed significant changes regarding the relationship between political and linguistic identities which may be considered as typical of the age of nationalism. The dynamics of *Europeanisation*, observable at different levels and in different institutional contexts have led to defining an approach that advocates *unity in diversity*, being thereby more open to multilingualism. Ultimately, one could argue that the process of building European institutions and the reciprocal recognition of the equality of state languages in the context of the EU have had some spill over effects for the languages of minorities too. In this respect, Europe may ultimately have moved in a *Canadian* direction and become more *multicultural*. But to what extent is the use of English as a lingua franca, which rests upon very different socio-linguistic conditions in Canada and Europe, compatible with a strong institutional commitment to promoting cultural diversity?

At the same time, there are also symptoms that language issues are regaining some of their former political salience. The steady influx of immigrants and the increasing importance of *new* minorities have an obvious linguistic dimension. We can observe a growing emphasis on linking the acquisition of citizenship rights to language proficiency (in the 'national' language) in many European states. Apparently, there is great reluctance to grant the languages of numerically significant immigrant groups, such as Turkish or Arabic, any kind of institutionally recognised minority status. In this regard, contrasting Europe and Canada, with its more open attitude towards the linguistic claims of immigrant communities, would offer valuable insights for assessing the connection between language, citizenship and integration.

Finally, the process of European integration begs the question of the linguistic foundations of transnational politics. How are the objectives of protecting diversity, i.e. keeping up multilingualism, and of achieving political unity, i.e. creating an integrated communicative space, to be balanced against each other? In this regard, the comparison between Europe and Canada may show that achieving such a balance is not primarily a question of the number of languages involved, but rather contingent upon socio-political factors.

Section 2:
De-territorialised Diversity: Global and Transnational Dimensions

In 1992, at the signature of the Maastricht treaty, when the European Union numbered twelve member states, some leaders of immigrants' voluntary associations involved in building transnational solidarity networks talked about themselves as the *thirteenth state* or even the *thirteenth nation*. Such a formulation suggests a feeling of collective belonging that is de-territorialised with regard to a member state and to any nation. The *thirteenth* idea points also to the emergence of *transnational communities* on a European level, that is, communities structured by individuals or groups settled in different national societies who share some common references that are not territorially bounded. In a broader sense, such transnational communities take into account the context of globalisation and economic uncertainty that facilitates the construction of worldwide networks.

Their institutionalisation requires a coordination of activities based most often on common references (objective or subjective), a coordination of resources, information, technology, and sites of social power across national borders for political, cultural, and economic purposes. The mode of action of such a community is de-territorialised even if the references remain territorial. The rhetoric of mobilisation recentralises, in a non-territorial way, the multiplicity of identities that make for the internal diversity that is fragmented yet represented in such a structure.

The new transnational community, imagined either out of a religion or an ethnicity that encapsulates linguistic and national differences, seeks self-affirmation across national borders and without geographic limits, as a de-territorialised nation in search of an inclusive (and
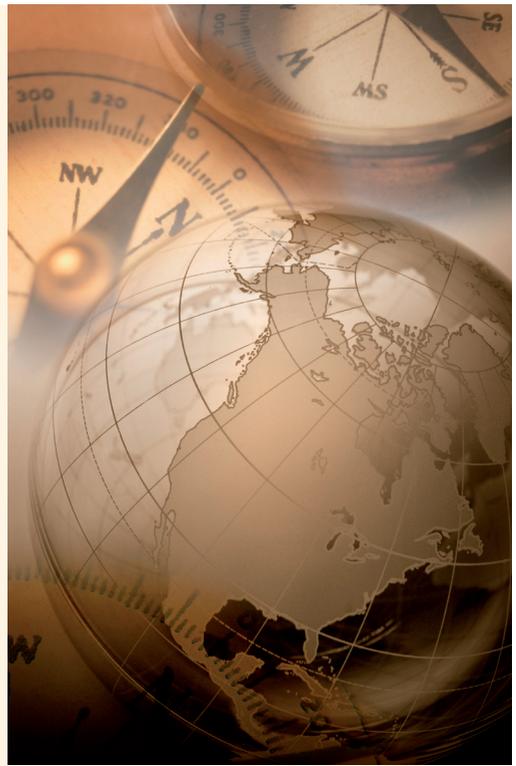

Figure 2. World Traveller • © iStockphoto

exclusive) centre around a constructed identity or experience (immigration, dispersion, minority). It aspires to legitimacy and recognition by both the state and supranational or international institutions.

The de-territorialisation of diversity is best perceived juridically through the Citizenship of the Union, a status defined by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. Although the treaty maintains the link between citizenship and nationality, as is the case in nation states, the practice of citizenship of the Union (direct participation through voting rights) brings an extraterritoriality with regard to nation states. But it introduces at the same time an extra-territorial element into the concept of citizenship, extending its practice beyond territorially limited nation states,

therefore de-territorialising the national community and re-territorialising the European space. From this perspective, territory becomes a broader and unbounded space where nation states and supranational institutions interact, and where transnational networks build bridges between national societies and Europe.

This development raises many questions with relation to citizenship, nationality and identity, territory and space: that is, a space for political participation going beyond national territories that re-map a transnational *political community*, thereby turning it into a de-territorialised and/ or re-territorialised one. The question therefore is: is de-territoriality the ultimate source of new tensions between states and communities or, more generally, a source of tensions within the international system?

Section 3:
Religions and the Public Sphere: Accommodating Religious Diversity in the Post-secular Era

The *public sphere* has been theorised as a space for political communication in which social actors, political discourse and cultural perspectives interact and give form to competing legitimacy claims on the arrangements of the common life. In its classical liberal version the public sphere was closely connected to the cultural identity of the *demos* and presupposed a high degree of cultural homogeneity regarding linguistic competence and religious affiliation. Monolingualism and secularisation were not only perceived as the standard path to be followed by modern societies, but also as a structural prerequisite for a successful democratic process. In conventional approaches, modernisation was conceived of as intrinsically connected to secularisation, i.e. as a process in which the religious foundations of political power would
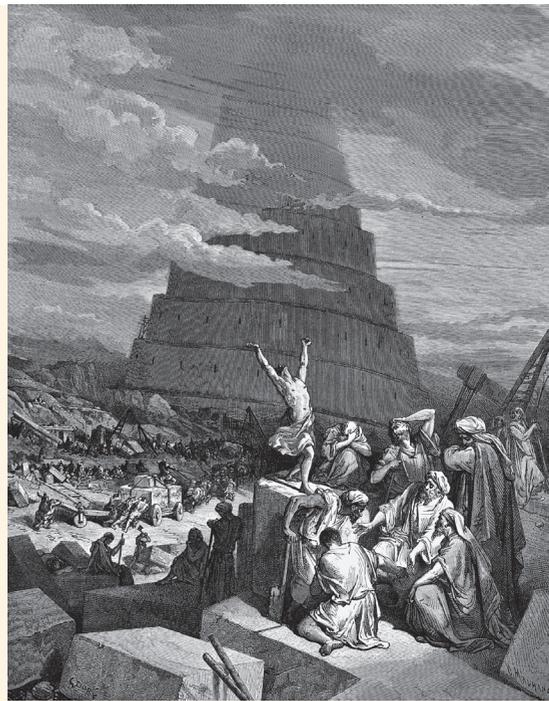
be increasingly replaced by alternative and secularised forms of legitimacy (e.g., democratic, populist, nationalist). Accordingly, cultural change in modernising societies would induce the privatisation of religious belief, diminish collective religious practice and push for secularised moral references.

However, during recent decades we have witnessed how the relationship between politics and religion has become, once again, a matter of public attention. The aim of this section is therefore to explore the changing relationship between the religious and the political spheres in democratic societies. The underlying hypothesis is that, against the prevailing Weberian idea of modernisation as religious "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) of the world, we are facing a profound change in the functional parameters of religion. On the one hand, the emergence of a new form of politically and culturally belligerent Islamism has challenged not only the

post-Cold War system of international relationships, but many of the basic tenets of Western democracies as well. We may indeed be witnessing a non-Western process of modernisation in the Islamic world in which religion would work as a global frame for social mobilisation and incorporation. On the other hand, religious values continue to play an important political role in the United States and in many non-Islamic Third World countries. Even in the largely secularised Canadian and European societies the debate about laicism/secularism in relation to public education and the meaning of marriage, or about the accommodation of religious pluralism and the role of Christian heritage, has strongly re-emerged, sometimes around ethnic and multicultural issues. Behind all of this we recognise a need to re-evaluate the social role of the religious element in modern societies and the normative principles needed to manage it in the public sphere.

Section 4:
Solidarity beyond the Nation State

The politics of the welfare state have been reshaped by the complex diversity that lies at the heart of this project. Historically, the development of the welfare state took place within the framework of the nation state, and was driven by the simple diversity of industrial society. The politics of redistribution were rooted in class-based politics, with the most expansive welfare states emerging in societies with high levels of union density, strong labour organisations and dominant parties of the left. The primacy of class politics was never absolute, as religion left its imprint on the social policy regime in many countries, often through the influence of Christian Democratic parties. But the centrality of class was clear.

The contemporary politics of redistribution has been redefined by complex diversity. At the level of political institutions, new patterns of multi-level governance multiply the number of authoritative decision sites. At the level of political coalitions, historic class alignments have weakened, and cultural differences cut across traditional economic divisions. At the level of policy debates, new agendas focusing on the recognition and accommodation of cultural difference compete for attention. As a result, the politics of recognition seem to be in tension with the politics of redistribution. Multicultural diversity is central to this debate. Many analysts argue that immigration and ethnic diversity erode trust and solidarity among citizens, fragmenting traditional redistributive coalitions. As a result, they insist, contemporary democracies face a trade-off between the accommodation of ethnic diversity on one hand and support for redistribution on the other. This concern has been labelled the "progressive's dilemma."

Complex diversity represents a compelling challenge in Europe. Canada, however, offers an instructive comparator on two levels. First, the highly decentralised Canadian federation reveals striking parallels to European institutions, and comparison between the two cases can increase our capacity to understand the relationships between institutional complexity and social policy outcomes. Second, Canadian experience can contribute to the assessment of the political sustainability of a multicultural welfare state. Canada is no multicultural Utopia. Tensions rooted in complex diversity shape its politics as well. Nevertheless,

the evidence about public attitudes there stands as a challenge to assertions that ethnic diversity inevitably weakens support for social programs. In this, Canada can represent a useful counterweight to the US experience. Many European commentators see the United States as the key test case of the relations between ethnic diversity and solidarity, and there is certainly considerable evidence that the politics of race does erode support for redistribution in that country. But the United States has a distinctive history of race relations, and it is important to expand the range of countries under consideration, in order to explore the variety of possible relationships between diversity and solidarity. Canada provides one such contrasting narrative.

This section of the project addresses one of the most compelling challenges facing western democracies. How can we maintain and strengthen the bonds of community in ethnically diverse societies. How can we reconcile growing levels of multicultural diversity and the sense of a common identity which sustains the norms of mutual support and underpins a generous welfare state? Can we find a stable political equilibrium among immigration, multiculturalism policies and social redistribution?

Figure 7. Cross & Crescent V
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Activities

RECODE will address its objectives through a series of integrated scientific activities. These will take place at various locations within the participating countries, leading towards further research initiatives.

Publications

Each section will have a series of working papers to be published on the website for the duration of the Programme. The working papers will be evaluated by the Steering Committee and an external commission in order to prepare an editorial series. Each of the four work teams will produce a comprehensive research report which will lead to an edited volume for its topic area. In addition, one general book will be published at the end of the programme.

Workshops and summer school

The programme will organise two workshops each year to bring together researchers from the contributing countries. These workshops will be held in different participating European countries, as well as in Canada. Each workshop will elaborate on a specific theme from one of the four research sections of the programme. The series of activities will begin in 2011 with two workshops: *Linguistic Diversity and the Changing Dynamics of Political Integration*, in Helsinki, Finland, and *The Public Management of Religion: from State Building to New Forms of Minorities' Mobilisation*, in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

A two-week summer school for up to 50 postgraduate students is scheduled for 2012. The thematic focus of the school is on *The Challenge of Complex Diversity: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives from Europe and Canada.*

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