

Identities

Motivation

The concept of identity is not only of central concern to a number of disciplines within the Humanities, Theology and Social Sciences. Visions of identity have also played – and continue to play - an important role in the historical constructions of national, religious and other types of collective identity. Collective identity has served as lever for the formation of states and the progress of civilization; however, it has also triggered wars and caused the repression of minorities.

In a period of economic, political and cultural globalisation, an understanding of the historical and contemporary role of ideas of identity seems to be of crucial significance – particularly in Europe.

Ambition

This research platform presents a number of critical enquiries into the notion of identity and how it is used – and misused – for scientific or political interpretation of historical and cultural phenomena.

The Identity research platform aims to:

- Present the historical background for the conceptions of identity that influence current debates in individual nation-states and in Europe in general.
- Enhance the level of research, education and public debate on national, religious and cultural communities – real or imagined – in a rapidly changing world.
- Analyse the historical background for identity issues related to the meeting between European culture and the Islamic world (including the growing Muslim minority in European societies), with a view to developing more precise concepts and theories for the identity-related aspects of this encounter.
- Create a better basis for the public debate – and for political decision-making – on how to handle our genetic identity legally, ethically, philosophically and medically.

Structure

The Identities research platform is organized into five sub-themes:

The cultural history of European identities

A study of the distinctly 'European' in a global context, focusing on some of the dichotomies that have crucially influenced Europe's development and the visions of European identity (for example, secularisation versus religion, tradition versus modernity and inclusion versus exclusion).

Identity, nationalism and cultural policy

An analysis of the role cultural politics has played - and still plays - in Europe. Under scrutiny is the political, institutional, and ideological framework for cultural initiatives as well as the significance of national identity in a globalised world.

Islam in European culture – Historical and contemporary perspectives

An enquiry into Islam's historical and current role in European culture. This sub-theme looks into the interaction between European self-perception and Islamic culture and politics through the ages, and studies current aesthetic expressions of migrant experience from writers and artists with Islamic backgrounds.

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- The cultural history of European identities
- Identity, nationalism and cultural policy
- Islam in European culture
- Picturing Scandinavia
- Genetic identity

Picturing Scandinavia

This sub-theme examines the formation of Scandinavian culture, values and experience from both a European and a global perspective. Specific attention will be given to the outsider's view of Scandinavia – particularly the socio-political impression (e.g. the Welfare State) and the cultural image (e.g. design).

Genetic identity

An interdisciplinary enquiry into the concept of genetic identity, taking as its point of departure recent scientific acknowledgement of genetic individuality and what this means for our conception of individual and collective identity.

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