

Centre for Modern European Studies (CEMES)

General purpose

The primary task of the Centre for Modern European Studies is to explore the profound transformation of the political, cultural and intellectual contours of Europe that has taken place over the last centuries. In order to understand the emergence of contemporary Europe, the analysis of European political, economic and social history, including the origins and evolution of the European Union, is central. Likewise, studies of culture, religion and identity, which are increasingly considered integral parts of any study of society and politics, constitute a particularly important field of research. Finally, Europe has until recently been at the centre of an ongoing process of globalisation, the impact of which has not only greatly shaped contemporary Europe but also the entire world. Exploring this heritage and analysing the changed position of Europe in the world is the third research theme of the centre. It is a fundamental assumption underlying these research agendas that most contemporary problems such as the fate of the nation states, the changing cultural dynamics of European societies, or the new global pressures on European conceptions of democracy and human rights have deep historical roots and can only be properly understood with a view of the *longue durée*.

The centre will actively work to coordinate and develop research and teaching in European studies based on *interdisciplinary* collaboration between researchers at the Faculty of Humanities from the following sections and departments: Film and Media Studies, Philosophy and Rhetoric, History of Religions, History, European Ethnology, Literature, Modern Cultural Studies and European Language Studies. Aiming to overcome the tendency towards disciplinary fragmentation within the humanities as well as between the humanities and the social sciences, the centre will offer a focal point for the establishment of national and international networks with other centres for European studies and with prominent researchers, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of humanities researchers in the context of both national and international research applications. It is a specific priority for CEMES to develop and sustain national and international networks for PhD scholars in European studies.

The Centre will work actively to:

- Develop interdisciplinary research in European studies within the humanities
- Develop collaboration with other Danish centres for European studies
- Create international networks within the field of European studies
- Develop stronger national and international networks for PhD scholars in European studies
- Initiate and support individual and collective research projects in European studies with external funding
- Create synergy between individual researchers and projects in European studies
- Make European studies research activities visible to a broader public via the centre homepage
- Initiate seminars, conferences and lecture series
- Develop new initiatives in European studies at the MA level
- Gather expertise within the humanities on European matters, make it accessible to the media and participate in the dissemination of this expertise to a broader audience

- Support the publication of European studies research and gather all relevant publications by researchers in this field on the centre website

Research Agenda

1. Europeanization and transnationalization of the nation state: integration and conflicts

During the twentieth century, the European continent has undergone a number of deep-seated processes that have fundamentally changed not only the century-old European state system, but also the economic, social, political and cultural fabric of European societies. The development of a number of solid and far-reaching European and transatlantic cooperative organisations (Council of Europe, NATO, EU, OECD, CSCE) after 1945 has played a pivotal role in these transformations. However, this new layer of European and transatlantic organisations has been conditioned by and is closely intertwined with a number of broader, long-term historical developments; each of which demands careful study.

Important among these historical processes has been the rise of the European idea after the First and Second World War. How did perceptions of national sovereignty and international cooperation change during the twentieth century, from the interwar years to the post 1945 period? European economy history must be explored, focusing in particular on the political impact of increasing patterns of economic interdependence between the nation states. The development of the European states also deserves special attention. While the impact of two world wars and the dynamic policy agenda of the welfare state led to an ever growing strengthening of the state inside European societies, the European states found it necessary after 1945 to pool sovereignty to solve common problems. Europeanisation of the nation states in turn led to the question of how to establish a broader European democracy as well as communication and deliberation structures constituting some form of European public sphere. Finally, the development of European security during the cold war and after the thaw in 1989, with the ensuing establishment of new security structures in a wider Europe needs exploration.

How to explain the achievement of European social, economic and political stability after the long ‘civil war’ from 1914 to 1945 constitutes the leading question, the answer to which shape our perspective on the closely connected contemporary question of democracy and the further development of European welfare models on a national and European level.

Possible research themes:

- The history and consequences of the ‘European civil war’ from 1914 to 1945
- The history of the European idea and its role in the emergence of an economically and politically integrated Europe
- The history of the EU’s political and legal system
- The history of European security and the end of the Cold War
- The democratic deficit and the European public sphere: public debate, intellectuals and the new media in a national and European perspective
- The nation state under pressure from Europeanisation and transnationalism
- European integration and the question of the welfare state
- Eastern and Central European responses to the EU and Europeanisation

- Gender in relation to both the private and public sector in the EU

2. European Identity and Culture

The construction of a more unified, modern Europe is at the same time a pragmatic economic and political project created after decades of violent European history and the result of a much longer historical development in which ideas and visions of a European identity and culture have developed and influenced art, literature, religion, media, philosophy and political thinking.

The obvious weakness of contemporary European identity and culture is linked to the fact that an important part of the cultural legacy of Europe is firmly tied to the nation state and national languages, with the exception of a few strong regions such as Catalonia. Perhaps reflecting this state of affairs, the EU introduced the term “unity in diversity” in the late 1980s to describe European identity and culture. However, this assessment underestimates the existence and strength of several common European values and cultures. Anthony Smith’s term ‘family of cultures’ might best illustrate the extent to which common European values and cultures can be identified, but crucially, without playing the same role or having obtained the same status in all European nation states. Common elements include traditions of enlightenment, secularisation, democracy and, more recently, welfare states, human rights, religious freedom and equality between women and men. The uneven patchwork of European values and cultures that constitutes the European ‘family of cultures’ may make a common European identity very difficult to construct, but the concept nevertheless demonstrates the extent to which shared elements of culture exist. Whether there is a convergence towards these common values between European nation states and peoples is one central field of research.

Culture is also lifestyles, social norms and values, family, gender equality, religion, and the ideas and ideologies that different nations and social groups live by. Euro-barometer data provides comparative insights on a European level, but we need a much broader focus on identity and everyday life in Europe – comparative studies that can bring us closer to Europe as a mental and social space. The study of changing patterns of religious identity in contemporary Europe is a central field of study. The same applies to national and regional identities and historical memory, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, where such issues are highly contested. The relationship between historical consciousness and community self-awareness is well documented, but it is worth exploring further how the past has been refashioned in step with the radical new dynamics of community formation in Europe, both at the macro and micro-level.

Since 1992, the EU has put more and more emphasis on cultural and media policy. Liberal, market-oriented principles, and principles aimed at protecting cultural diversity and cultural democracy have been in conflict. The study of these policy areas and of the resulting media culture in Europe is an important task. At the same time, it is important to look into the artistic, literary, philosophical and media traditions in Europe and the role they play for national cultural identities and the European imaginary and cultural identities.

Possible research themes:

- European identity and European cultural history with a view of the *longue durée*

- Religion and European culture: the role of the various European Christianities, Judaism and Islam in European culture and the question of secularisation, democracy and culture
- Changing perceptions of Gender in a comparative European perspective
- The role of the novel – as articulations of experience of European history
- Values, lifestyles and everyday life in a national and European perspective: comparative studies of values of lifestyle in selected European countries
- Border regions and the creation of identity: the relation between regional culture, national culture, Europeanisation and globalisation
- The European imaginary: the role of cultural narratives for national and European identities in film, television, literature, art, music and theatre
- Digital commons: Public service in the age of digitalisation and the principles of cultural diversity and cultural democracy
- Media policy, film policy and cultural policy in a national and European perspective

3. Europe in a global perspective

The changing shape of contemporary Europe is also the product of globalising agencies and influences. For centuries, Europe played a decisive role in the formative stages of globalisation, from the transnational mobilisation of capital, to the worldwide dissemination of industrial goods, the transmission of European languages and culture abroad, transcontinental movements of European peoples and global security questions. Yet during the course of the twentieth century, Europe became as much the object as the originator of globalisation, with the emergence of US hegemony, the unravelling of European empires, and the rise of new centres of global economic power in Asia. Politically, the Eurocentric optics that once placed Europe at the heart of global power politics have given way to new constellations of power in which the European nation states tend to assert their influence collectively.

Much the same can be said in the spheres of economics, culture and demographics, where the very idea of 'Europe' has been subject to re-examination in the light of new global challenges. Having long been a place of emigration, over recent decades contemporary Europe has itself become increasingly multilingual and multicultural. A distinctive post-colonial heritage has shaped European societies to an extent still unexplored. Most recently, Islam has played an increasingly central but also contested role in European public debate with clear connotations back to older European conceptions of the nature of Islam. Seen in a broader cultural perspective, Europe since 1945 has become both globalised and Europeanised. The American influence on European culture is pervasive, but other cultures are also increasingly implicated in European public discourses as a consequence of migration, the use of satellite television and the rise of the Internet. A study of contemporary Europe must therefore include a global perspective on Europe and other regions as well as analyses of central processes of globalisation and the multicultural nation.

Possible research themes:

- Europe and America: culture, economy and politics
- Europe and Asia: culture, economy and politics
- European security during and after the Cold War
- Global migration and the role of Europe
- Legacies of empire in contemporary Europe

- European cultural and media policy in a global perspective
- Islam and Europe
- Multicultural developments and the role of media in relation to democracy and cultural identity and diversity