

AUSTERE HISTORIES

Social Exclusion and the Erasure of Colonial Memories in European Societies



International Symposium at REMESO, the Institute for Research in Migration, Ethnicity and Society, Linköping University.
28 - 29 November 2013, at Arbetets Museum, Norrköping

Main speakers:

Nicolas Bancel, University of Lausanne, Switzerland
Gurminder K Bhambra, The University of Warwick, Great Britain
Manuela Boatca, Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany
Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, Université de Paris VIII, France
Peo Hansen, REMESO, Linköping University, Sweden
Lars Jensen, Roskilde University, Denmark
Nicola Labanca, University of Siena, Italy
Gert Oostindie, Leiden University, Netherlands
Robbie Shilliam, Queen Mary, University of London, Great Britain.

EUROPEAN SOCIETIES have recently turned toward more austere political regimes. Evidence of this can be seen in budget cuts, management of the labor market and restrictions of welfare systems, as well as in new regimes of migration and citizenship. In the wake of these changes new forms of social inclusion and exclusion appear that are justified through a reactivation of differences of race, class and gender, all this serving, in its turn, to justify new forms of labor extraction and the formation of a new underclass or “precariat”. Another consequence is that democracy itself has become precarious. While the agents and adherents of austerity programs impose themselves as democracy’s saviors, practitioners of democracy find themselves pushed toward the extra-parliamentary margins.

This symposium will investigate how a current politics of austerity affects our cultural memory. Are we witnessing a turn toward austerity in theories and practices of historiography, as well as in pedagogies of history? Can we speak of an austere historiography, an enforcement of conformity on Europe past and present?

If this is the case, it helps explain that certain narratives of the European past are now privileged whereas other parts of the cultural heritage are weeded out. Strong tendencies and interests are apparently at work to purge the histories of specific European nations, but also those of Europe, the West, and globalization from cultural plurality. In their stead, assertively heroic and homogeneous stories about the past of nations, regions, institutions and religions are being retold, reinvented, and re-launched. In brief, history (including public debate on history and history education) is again becoming either “nationalistic” or “cosmopolitan” – but cosmopolitan in a way that tend to celebrate the achievements of Europe and posit the West as a model of universality, humanism and perhaps also of the human as such.

Among the sacrifices of this tendency are multiculturalism, postcolonial memories, and minority discourses of all kinds. What is lost is the very complexity and contradictoriness of Europe and the West. Especially,

colonial and postcolonial memories are evicted from their recently claimed habitats in the European past, and again placed at the outskirts, far beyond the limit of the Western world.

This symposium will thus seek to extract the correlation between how minorities, migrants and their descendants are treated by present policies and how memories and experiences of migrants, minorities and colonized peoples are treated in historiography and historical pedagogy. By bringing together a group of distinguished European scholars who have examined Europe's colonial past in relation to migration, historiography and cultural heritage, the symposium will elucidate how new regimes of historiography and memory culture relate to integration, discrimination, and social segmentation in the present.

THE SYMPOSIUM takes place at the Museum of Work (Arbetets museum) in Norrköping, November 28–29, 2013, and is organized by professor Stefan Jonsson, REMESO, Linköping University.

The conference fee is 500 SEK for persons working at public institutions and 625 SEK (including VAT) for other participants. The fee includes lunches, coffee and snacks both days and a reception at Norrköping City Hall on Thursday evening.

For registration and info on payment go to:

<http://sleipner.isv.liu.se/event/>

For further information and registration, contact conference coordinator Julia Willén (julia.willen@liu.se)