

Research Symposium 9 November 2018, Osaka University, Graduate School of Letters

In 2018 we celebrate 20 years of the Erasmus Mundus Master's programme *Euroculture, Society, politics and Culture in a Global context* with a conference on 28 June during which the participants will discuss the changes in the European Studies program in the context of the changes that have taken place in Europe in that time.¹

Also, 10 years ago, collaboration with and participation of four non-European partner/consortium universities resulted in exchanges among students and staff. In Fall 2008 the first groups of European students and staff members arrived at the four partner universities in Japan, India, Mexico and the United States: Osaka University, University of Pune (since 2014 called Savitribai Phule Pune University), National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). The exchange began as a result of the successful application in the so-called Action 3 project in the Erasmus Mundus programme. One of the goals of the Action 3 project was to 'foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures'.² And this, the project did. Indeed, when the project officially ended after three years, all non-European partner institutions first became associated partners, and later full partners in the Euroculture consortium, and the exchange continued.

Robert Wagenaar, president of the Euroculture consortium, had stated at the Erasmus Mundus Symposium 'Erasmus Mundus A New Strategy for Academic Exchange between Japan and Europe' December 18th, 2007 at Nakanoshima Center, Osaka University, that Erasmus Mundus offered opportunities for 'building bridges' between Japanese and European universities. He mentioned in particular the importance of *mobility*: it constituted added value for graduate students and scholars by fostering critical awareness regarding the one's own cultures, values and standards, as well as understanding of the social economic and political environment of the guest country.

This added value remains the main rationale behind the study programme. Though since 2007 a lot has changed in the international context; the idea of the study programme - which Euroculture students may take in the third semester of the two year Master programme - remains offering a study package that allows for transnational comparisons. It contains elements such as cultural expressions in their national and regional context, and the image and understanding of Europe in Japan, in particular in the spheres of the Humanities and Arts.

Research symposium

The topic of the research symposium that will take place at Osaka University on 9 November 2018 is *Mobility, racism, and cultural conflicts across time and space*. It has been chosen not only because of its importance in today's world, but also because it allows for transnational comparisons.

¹ See for more information on the topic the call for papers: <https://www.euroculturemaster.eu/news/call-for-papers-european-studies-and-europe>

² http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/tools/faq_action_3_en.php#1

In study programmes of Higher Education *mobility* constitutes usually a positive and rewarding experience, which is undertaken voluntarily. When people move for different social and economic reasons or, in many cases, are forced to move, that is are 'displaced', that is of course a very different matter. As the United Nations Refugee Agency states on its website: 'We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from their homelands. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18'.³ One of the themes we would like to address, is both forced and unforced mobility and migration, and what this implies for the immigrants, migrants, and refugees themselves and for the countries where they live.

In this regard, cultural conflicts and racism are related themes that we would like to touch upon, both historically and now. One might, for instance, think of the position and the rights and history of ethnic minorities in Japan and in various European countries, but also of the position of Japanese transnational migrants and *Nikkei* abroad.⁴ Colonialism and postcolonialism obviously are also very relevant in these two themes. Many European countries have (ethnic) minorities which relate to former colonial empires; racism and cultural conflicts are hot issues in a great many countries.

By discussing these themes in Asian, European, and global contexts, we aim to provide insight on transnational developments across time and place and in its national and transnational challenges.

The organisers,

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³ <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

⁴ See for instance Nobuko Adachi, 'Ethnic Identity, Culture, and Race: Japanese and Nikkei at Home and Abroad,' *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, vol. 8, issue 37, no. 4, September 13, 2010.