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COSMOS CONFERENCE

The Charlie Hebdo Critical Juncture: European Public Spheres Before and After the Paris Attacks

COSMOS - Centre on Social Movement Studies

Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence – Italy

20-21 October 2016



The Charlie Hebdo shootings of January 2015 represent a critical juncture that changed the European public debate, at both the EU and national level. The controversies that followed the attacks had deep effects on mainstream institutional actors, social movements and subaltern publics across Europe. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks contentious issues related to the role of religion in secular societies, civil rights and freedom of speech, accommodation of cultural diversity and securitization of migration are once again in the middle of public sphere debates in Europe.

The conference aims at analysing the effects of these attacks on the content and quality of public debates across Western European societies, paying special attention to dynamics of deliberation and polarization across public spheres, and to the interplay between mass media and social movements in the construction of public discourse.

This event will bring together scholars reflecting on the consequences of critical junctures from multiple perspectives. It will also offer a space to present the preliminary findings of the ongoing project led by Donatella della Porta at SNS, as part of the ERC Advanced Scholars' Grant *Mobilizing for Democracy*, which will provide qualitative and quantitative insights from individual case studies in France, Germany, Italy, UK and Denmark.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1: 20 October 2016

9:30 – 10:00 *Coffee Break*

10:00 – 11:00 **Opening**

Donatella della Porta (SNS): “Discursive Critical Juncture: Debating the Charlie Hebdo Attacks”

11:00 – 13:00 **Panel 1: Religion, minorities and the debate on secularism**

Chair: Linda Lund (LSE)

The attacks against Charlie Hebdo, the Koshers supermarket and the French policemen in Paris in January 2015 gave once again a central stage to issues such as the position and role of religion in a western democratic society, the value of secularism, the position of and relationships among minorities in a liberal democracy. Major religious groups have mobilized substantially in occasion of this debate building bridges with each other but also retaining distinct approaches. This panel welcomes theoretical and empirical analyses shedding light on how these topics have been addressed in public debates in the aftermath of the attacks.

Keynote: Timothy Peace (University of Stirling) – “Laïcité républicaine vs laïcité ouverte?”

Paper presentations:

- Emin Poljarevic and Georgia Mavrodi (SNS) “The role of minorities and religious actors in the Charlie Hebdo debate”
- Farida Belkacem (European University Institute) “Muslims in the West : Which response to the Paris attacks ?”
- Romain Badouard (University of Cergy-Pontoise) “«Je ne Suis pas Charlie»: What Social Networks do to Public Debate in Post-Charlie France”
- Thijs van Dooremalen “The discursive linkages between 9/11 and the Charlie Hebdo attacks in American, French and Dutch public debates concerning Muslim immigrants”

Discussion (Konstantinos Eleftheriadis)

13:00 - 14:30 *Lunch*

14:30 – 16:30 **Panel 2: Charlie Hebdo and the far-right: narratives and strategies**

Chair: Konstantinos Eleftheriadis (EHESS)

The Charlie Hebdo juncture is imbued with a range of issues that are at the heart of right-wing narratives and propaganda, such as immigration, security, and the management of ethnic and religious diversity. As such, it provided far right and anti-immigrant movements with an extraordinary opportunity to access the public sphere. This panel will draw on different empirical examples to explore how right-wing political movements made sense of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, investigating the role of far right frames in the unfolding of public debates following critical events.

Keynote: Gavan Titley (Maynooth University) – “Becoming symbolic: digital media events, transnational narratives, political opportunities”

Paper presentations:

- Pietro Castelli Gattinara (SNS): “Transnationalizing national preference? The Charlie Hebdo debate in the far right arena”
- Joel Busher (Coventry University): “Living out the ‘clash of civilisations’: Critical junctures, the forging of activist identities and the ebb and flow of movement viability”
- Gwenaëlle Bauvois and Niko Pyrhönen. (University of Helsinki): “Exposing our internal enemies: Comparing the right-wing populist scapegoat-narratives in the aftermath of Charlie Hebdo and Orlando shootings”.

Discussion (Andrea Felicetti) and Q&A

20:00 *Group Dinner*

DAY 2: 21 October 2016

10:00 – 12:00 **Panel 3: Views from left-wing movements and the debate on civil rights**

Chair: Andrea Felicetti (SNS)

Civil right debates have immediately captured the attention of actors involved in the Charlie Hebdo debate. Freedom of expression, the role of satire, freedom of speech, right to blasphemy, protection of religious values and sensitivities, these and many other aspects have been invoked and discussed systematically after the attacks. Such challenging debates have generated mixed reaction in left-wing circles and beyond. This panel focuses on the vast and complex array of arguments that have been developed by progressive actors.

Keynote: Jan Willem Duyvendak (University of Amsterdam) – “How Eventful is the Problematization of Islam in Western Europe?”

Paper presentations:

- Konstantinos Eleftheriadis (EHESS) and Linda Lund (LSE) “The Charlie Hebdo debate seen from the left”
- Maëlle Bazin (University of Paris 2) “Urban writings after the Paris Attacks: circulation of “Je suis Charlie” in city life”
- Aude Seurrat (University of Paris 13) “The mediatization of “The survivors issue” front page of Charlie Hebdo”

Discussion (Pietro Castelli Gattinara) and Q&A

12:00 - 14:00 *Lunch*

14:00 – 16:00 **Panel 4: Deliberation, Democracy and the Charlie Hebdo debate**

Chair: Pietro Castelli Gattinara (SNS)

This panel looks at the Charlie Hebdo debate from a democratic standpoint. The far reaching discussions occurred across Western countries in the aftermath of the attacks has involved a vast number of actors – from within political elites as well as different public spheres – engaged on a number of themes – from religion in society, to immigration and civil rights. This panel reflects on the quality and the effects of this complex process and on the main lessons that democratic scholars may draw from it.

Keynote: André Bächtiger (University of Stuttgart) – “Deliberation to the Rescue? Deliberative Potentials and Pitfalls in the Transformation of the European Public Spheres.”

Paper presentations

- Andrea Felicetti (SNS) “The Charlie Hebdo Debate through Deliberative Democratic Lenses. Insights from a Comparative Analysis”
- Laurie Boussaguet and Florence Faucher (Sciences Po Paris) “The Charlie Hebdo Critical Juncture: A crucial role played by the French executive”
- Philippe Gonzalez and Laurence Kaufmann (University of Lausanne) “Public events as emotional test: media uptakes of Charlie’s “Survivors” issue”

Discussion (Linda Lund) and Q&A

16:00 - 16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30 – 17:30 **Concluding Discussion**

Chair: Donatella della Porta

Contacts:

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