AN EU 'FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE' PROPOSAL BY LERU[1]
March 2013

In order to increase the effectiveness of research and innovation which supports smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the European Commission is advised to launch a 'Flagship Initiative' to better understand the place of Europe in the world as well as the legal, economic, political, social, linguistic and cultural fabric of Europe in which growth has to be achieved. We suggest calling the 'Flagship Initiative':

Resilient Europe in a Globalized World

More than ever before Europe is confronted with the tensions and opportunities created by integration processes with different speeds and other processes which create more differentiation – while the world is changing fast. Europe is also confronted with a financial and economic crisis which has had far reaching consequences on the ability of the EU economy to innovate and grow.

In addressing these challenges, all societies – at the local, regional, national and supra-national level - build upon the social, cultural, linguistic, historical and institutional arrangements they have developed. This social infrastructure may be highly effective in tackling challenges and in increasing a society's resilience, but it may also be an obstacle; for instance, when this infrastructure loses its dynamism and its adaptability, or when it is governed by special interests. A better understanding of the formation, functioning and effects of these legal, economic, political, social, linguistic and cultural infrastructures – which is the field of expertise of the Social Sciences and Humanities – is therefore of supreme importance and forms an essential basis for formulating policies in order to create economic, social and cultural growth on both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Strong European institutions will also need a reform of the political and legal framework of the European Union, especially when one wants to create a better functioning Economic and Monetary Union.

Only a resilient and dynamic Europe which stresses history, language and strong local traditions as well as strong and reformed European institutions can address the known and unknown societal challenges of today and the future and can make sure Europe plays a prominent role in the world.

---

[1] *The main author of the paper is Prof. Wim van den Doel, Professor of contemporary history and Dean at the Universiteit Leiden and Chair of the LERU Social Sciences and Humanities Community. LERU sincerely thanks Wim and the group of leading academics from all LERU universities who brought their rich and varied research expertise together to develop this paper.*

Approaches and methods: argument for an integrated and multi-disciplinary SSH approach

Several aspects of the legal, economic, political, social, linguistic and cultural infrastructure have thoroughly been investigated by scholars from separate disciplines. Increasingly, it has become clear, however, that only an interdisciplinary approach can lead to a true understanding of what Europe needs to remain resilient. The elements of this multifaceted approach have manifold aspects (they fulfil economic, social, political, linguistic and cultural roles at the same time) and they can only be understood in an holistic way, also because they consist not only of formal institutions but also informal ones, including norms, values and beliefs.

This Flagship Initiative proposes a "matrix approach": from local to global and from past to future.

All themes should be dealt with not only from an local, national and European perspective, but also from a global perspective. The temporal dimension is also of utmost importance. The social infrastructure develops only slowly, in a path-dependent process; we are building on the arrangements developed from the Middle Ages onwards. Also, history forms a laboratory of the social sciences and humanities; it allows us to test ideas and models.

Specific and urgent themes

This initiative looks at some conspicuous aspects of the legal, economic, political, social and cultural infrastructure in Europe. It tries to analyse these pressing challenges and will come up with clear policy recommendations. Four urgent themes are singled out:

- Public Discourses & Media
- Identities & Loyalties
- Citizenship(s) and the Democratic Legitimacy
- The European Social Model

The themes are interrelated: public discourses and media play an important role in the creation of identities and loyalties, which in turn influence the way citizens think about institutions and their legitimacy and how they consider the European social model. Together they form the building blocks of a resilient Europe.

1. Public Discourses and Media

The people of Europe (and of the rest of the world) live increasingly mediated and mobile lives in a rapidly changing media landscape that directly and indirectly shapes public discourse. Attitudes to the institutions and policies that govern our lives and the ways in which we construe the communities to which we belong -- the nation, 'Europe', regions within Europe (East/West; South/North), and the wider world -- all are shaped and contested through a wide range of genres transferred by multiple platforms (from mobile phones, internet and television, to more traditional print-based forms). Information, ideas, images and narratives circulate across different platforms and along multiple routes that sometimes, but not always, cross national and European borders; they sometimes, but not always, intersect to form networked communities.

While the advent of online forums and interactive social media has allowed more people to become active in the (semi-)public exchange of information and opinions, the outcome of these changes is as yet unpredictable. It may lead both to new public discourses and new possibilities for transnational communication across and beyond Europe. But the result may also be reduced possibilities for a common

public sphere and a proliferation of atomized, competing discourses rather than a well-informed and inclusive public debate. While the challenges of an increasingly dense and differentiated mediasphere affect all parts of the world, they are of particular importance for the European project, whose development has coincided with that of (satellite) television and, later, with the digital revolution.

What is urgently needed is a large-scale, innovative and integrated study of the role of media in and relating to Europe. This means mapping:

(a) discourses and narratives: the way representations of Europe – as a cultural whole and as a political project, and as a collection of individual member states and members, and as a region in the world – are generated across different media in multiple language areas both within Europe and beyond;

(b) the channels and pathways through which these discourses proliferate, circulate, interact and are appropriated to new contexts;

(c) their impact on

1. processes of European integration and the involvement both of citizens and immigrants' in public debate of local, regional, national, European and international arenas

2. the idea and perception of 'Europe' in the international arena.

In order to be fully effective, research needs to address a broad range of media and to overcome traditional genre boundaries between broadcast media, print, and social media, between commercial and public enterprises, between journalism and the arts. The project needs to provide an integrated account of the interplay between news media (reporting on current events often in a national context), entertainment media, with an important role in shaping ideas and mobilising emotions, and often working across national borders); and social media (involving user-generated content in the private sphere). A systematic, comparative and historically-informed understanding of the interplay between these different forms of mediation working across the private and (semi-)public spheres is a prerequisite for the evidence-based formulation of educational, cultural, linguistic and social policies in the European area.

The project requires further a combination of contemporary and historical perspectives, so that emerging trends can be mapped at the same time as they are related to longer-term tendencies and path dependencies.

The challenges of understanding the role of the media in creating the image of Europe at home and abroad can only be met by

▪   a large-scale research project combining expertise in multiple linguistic and cultural areas, and involving the integration of different archival resources from across Europe;

▪   the combined expertise of humanities scholars (with particular expertise in the field of image and discourse analysis, and the analysis of long-term cultural and historical processes) and social sciences (with particular expertise in the study of actors, institutions and social structures).

▪   using and developing the most recent tools of digital text-mining and image recognition, as well as conventional archive- and interview-based methods.

2. Identities and Loyalties

The media are an important determinant in creating the identities of the people of Europe, but by no means the only one. Research into the way identities and loyalties are shaped in the 21st century is urgently

needed, because one of the most pressing issues that Europe is facing, as it is continuing to expand its legal, cultural, political and economic boundaries, is that of its citizens' identity. The creation of a broader, yet still homogeneous Europe, which must continue to be a fundamental interlocutor for the rest of the world, will have to come to terms with the continuing existence of long-established, sometimes conflicting identities and allegiances at the local, regional and national level. It will also have to accommodate the emergence of new identities as a result of Europeanisation, globalisation, and the integration of new migrant groups. The construction, legitimation, and transformation of identities involve complex processes which are historical, cultural, linguistic and social, as well as political and economic. They encompass and influence all aspects of the life of individuals - language, memory, customs, values, religion, political allegiances, just to name a few. Realising how identities are discursively shaped and change, or remain unchanged, in response to new circumstances is therefore essential to the future of Europe. Humanities and social sciences research is vital to the understanding of the cultural and linguistic construction, historical emergence and on-going transformation of identities as well as the resistances offered to such transformations. Social and historical research can shed light on the origins and development of the dialogue between an overall European identity, local allegiances and the perspectives of immigrants; it can shed light on the vague but all-pervasive agency of culture and cultural (self-) representations in these identity formations; it can facilitate an understanding of how European citizens can see themselves, and operate, as citizens of the world; it can identify the most crucial aspects of the dynamic tension between centre and peripheries; it can give an answer to questions which are, at the same time, historically and discursively relevant and urgently topical.

3. <u>Citizenship(s) and Democratic Legitimacy: how to live with resilient national, European and global institutions</u>

Despite having made a major contribution to peace, stability and prosperity on the continent, as recently recognised by the Nobel Committee in Oslo, the European Union's and especially the Eurozone's resilience has been called into question over the past few years. The problem has many roots, but they all fuse in a lack of legitimacy through the 'democratic deficit'. This project therefore proposes to investigate which European polities have shown such resilience in the past, even within otherwise divided and unequal societies, and what lessons might be drawn for the present as we face similar existential legal, political, strategic and economic challenges. This requires a multi-disciplinary effort – with history at its core – to explore the links between external security and political participation through union, debt and democracy, language and liberty, and war and welfare, as they played out in European states and cognate or rival polities over the past five hundred years.

On second theoretical level, the project proposes to investigate the resilience of the EU as a *demoicracy* (sic). Democratic theory is most often based on the overarching idea of a single *dêmos,* be it a national or global *dêmos*. A multiplicity of sovereign *dêmoi* and the relationship between among them is frequently portrayed to have profoundly negative implications for democracy from the start, if not as a conceptual impossibility. A plurality of peoples either poses a fundamental drawback to democracy because it is necessarily out of touch with citizens and collective political identity, or it represents a 'no-dêmos' situation that needs to be redeemed by the formation a single *dêmos* on a European or even global scale. The present project investigates whether a consistent theory of popular sovereignty is possible in a setting of institutionally connected sovereign peoples. The question of under what conditions it is feasible to choose such a political order of common government by the peoples is at the heart of research in this section. On the basis of the openness and interconnectedness implied in the notion of liberal democratic *dêmoi*, on the one hand, and of separate, self-determined *dêmoi* on the other, we investigate the resilience of European "*demoi*-cracy" or "government of the peoples". Most visibly, recent developments point to an increasing

discrepancy between tenacious national *demoi* and yielding national states. In fiscal policy, a core issue of state power and redistribution, the EU is moving towards supranationally monitored and sanctioned rules and mutual liabilities without adequate parliamentary control on the national or European level. In addition, the absence of entrenched *demoi*-cratic attitudes among EU citizens and *demoi*-cratic frames in public discourse might weaken the resilience of the EU as a *demoicratic* polity.

Multidisciplinary SSH scholarship is also in an excellent position to provide answers and policy inputs for dealing with another "challenge" that continuously figures high on the EU agenda: that of Europe's changing place in the world. That place is exceptional, not only because the EU is the biggest economy in the world, but also because it carries the legacy of its unique world-wide expansion between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. On the one hand this legacy is that of worldwide colonialism and imperialism, which have left deep and often painful traces, but it also that of the Enlightenment, whose ideas have now achieved near-universal status under the aegis of the United Nations. In the twenty-first century almost every state on the planet is ultimately based on the European concept of national sovereignty. Any discussion of Europe's place in the world as one of the three potentially leading global actors, along with the United States and China, is meaningless if it only focuses on economic and security issues and does not take this unique dimension into account. SSH scholarship, particularly through a multidisciplinary cooperation of historians, legal scholars and political scientists, has much to offer here.

4. The European Social Model

Europe is not only made out of cultures, identities and institutions, but also houses the "European social model" (ESM): an ideal type which aims to grasp some key features that distinguish European economies - in spite of their persisting differences - from both "pure market" (US) and "state-led" (BRICs) economies. Generally, the ESM aims to balance different goals (especially those of capital and labour) and different outcomes (economic growth and innovation versus social welfare and inclusiveness, or efficiency and equity). Specific elements are a well-developed welfare system and social rights, policies aimed at regulating the labour market to combine flexibility with income protection, and consultation, concertation or bargaining of collective groups and representative associations.

A better understanding of this model requires a deeper insight into its genesis and its effectuation at ever bigger geographical levels. The roots of the model can be traced back to the High Middle Ages, when (local) urban and rural communities with guilds and commons were developed. In the early modern period, elements of the model also became realized at the regional or state level, for instance through formalized poor relief. Its formation, in a discontinuous process, received an impetus in the late 19th century through the emergence of trade unions, cooperatives and associations, and later through the development of the welfare state, especially after WW II. It is crucial to answer questions as to the causes of continuity or discontinuity as well as whether it will be possible to develop such a model at the EU or even global level.

Also, there is a need to better understand how the ESM - not just as an ideal type but also as a vision of how to pursue economic efficiency together with social cohesion - is embedded in society. To what extent does it build upon traditions of social citizenship, self-organisation and civil society? And does the research into the European business systems and the European varieties of capitalism offer additional clues? A comparative research on the conceptional fundaments of the ESM is needed and the extent to which it is based on the individual (vs. social groups), the man (less woman), the paid worker (rather than the worker) and financial (rather than familial) forms of pensions need to be studied.

Another relevant perspective is the geographical one. Even though the model can be loosely identified as "European", especially when looking at Europe from the outside, for instance from the US or China, the

differences within Europe are strong. For example, so-called Anglo-Saxon, Mediterranean, Nordic and Continental countries have their own characteristics, while differences with Eastern Europe are even bigger. What are the causes and effects of these differences? Can they be linked to differences in societal resilience or success? A similar comparison is needed with other parts of the world; does this distinctiveness really hold?

A last set of questions pertains to the future of the ESM. The model at present is under pressure, because of the costs of social benefits and an ageing and mobile population, neo-liberal attacks on the rigidity of the model and an emphasis on efficiency in the global competition rather than on equity. Also, through the new media and modern forms of mobility of goods and people the stability and sustainability of the ESM has become, in a critical way, interwoven with the non-European world. To what extent can a normative, and perhaps empirical, emphasis on the beneficial effects on human and social capital formation, ensure its resilience?

The organisation of the Flagship Initiative

Members of LERU together with partners elsewhere in Europe, including partners of the EU12, would be able to form a consortium to implement this proposed Flagship Initiative. It is essential that the Flagship Initiative governance and management provide strong, flexible leadership through a high-level scientific board.

The Flagship Initiative should combine top down and bottom up research, with work packages addressing the four themes, but also with funding for competitive calls. These competitive calls will allow researchers from outside the consortium to propose research projects and to receive funding from the Flagship Initiative. Proposals will be evaluated by peer reviewers from outside the consortium. We expect to see many research proposals and approaches that the consortium will not have considered itself.

Finally, results of the research should be translated into clear policy recommendations. This should be done by adding to the consortium a policy unit which will be responsible for the translation of the research outcomes into policy recommendations.