Contesting Europe’s Eastern Rim
Cultural Identities in Public Discourse

Edited by
Ljiljana Šarić, Andreas Musolff, Stefan Manz and Ingrid Hudabiunigg
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Introduction
Contested Cultural Identities in Public Discourse

Ljiljana Šarić, Stefan Manz, Andreas Musolff and Ingrid Hudlabunig

Europe’s eastern rim has been in constant flux ever since the watershed year of 1989. Autocratic regimes have been replaced with stable democracies, and planned economies have given way to a free-market system comprising most of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Whereas most of these nations swiftly embarked on a course toward EU accession, the countries of the former Yugoslavia plunged into ethnic and religious infighting that left the region paralyzed for years and has left a problematic legacy until today. Further east, Turkey’s long-held ambitions to join the EU received yet another setback when it was sidelined during the 2004/2007 round of enlargement. These political and economic transformations have triggered fundamental redefinitions of cultural identity. Nations and social groups have had to reposition themselves and their relationship to others within newly emerging political landscapes. Although the enlarged EU has created a new closeness between neighbors that were formerly separated by impenetrable physical and ideological barriers, at the same time it has excluded others that feel like outsiders being left behind. The break-up of the former Yugoslavia has necessitated reformulations of statehood and international relations in the Balkans.

We chose to call the area for this endeavor ‘Europe’s eastern rim’. With this metaphorical expression, we tried to avoid the widely used terms Mitteleuropa, Central Europe and Eastern Europe because each of these seems to imply different political and ideological conceptions for the countries from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean.

Mitteleuropa is a historically loaded term that focuses on the eastern part of Europe from an Austrian and German perspective, with explicit or implicit hegemonic intentions. The term Central Europe, invented in the revolutions of 1848, designates a Central European federation without Prussian or Russian domination. It reemerged in the 1980s as a kind of spiritual home for many intellectuals. However, as Maria Todorova and other Balkan experts have shown, this term is also divisive. It does not include the regions of the Balkans, but pushes them further east toward present-day Russia. Eastern Europe, in turn, clearly suggests Russian and Soviet hegemony. Furthermore, in a purely geographical sense, Eastern
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Europe extends to the Ural Mountains and includes countries outside our scope.

We, on the other hand, explicitly wanted to include the area of the former Yugoslavia, most of which, as of 2009, does not have European Union membership. In this macro-region with its overwhelming diversity of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, one can study, as though under a magnifying glass, how the still virulent backward movement of ethnocentric xenophobia has led to internecine conflicts and ethnic cleansing. Nonetheless, in each of these newly established countries, one can also observe that media and literature are making key contributions in the interchange of ideas toward a modern and tolerant form of civil society.

Public discourse has been the main platform for negotiating transformations of cultural identity, both self-referentially and in relation to others. The aim of this book is to analyze some central themes of cultural identity construction and its transformation in public discourse. It develops the ideas of an international group of researchers on discourse analysis, initially discussed at various symposia and research projects organized by the editors (Manz et al., 2004). Our main concern in this book is discursive modes of identity construction (deconstruction, reconstruction, reformulation and invention) in the light of recent political changes in Europe, European Union enlargement and EU policy regarding southeast Europe. We focus on national and cross-national rhetorical strategies related to issues of transition within Europe.

Our book examines issues surrounding the discursive creation of cultural identity and combines theory-oriented and empirical approaches. The analyses of specific national discourses also address general methodological questions concerning rhetorical strategies and national and cross-national characteristics that play a role in the discursive presentation of identity construction. The contributions to this volume provide a multinational and multilingual perspective on discourse analysis and discursive identity formation, focusing on how issues of identity formation arise in several European languages, particularly among less-studied languages such as Slovenian, Lithuanian, Polish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian.

Three closely connected issues surrounding the linguistic means of identity construction and reconstruction constitute the chief topics of this volume: (1) the relationships between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in the ongoing process of EU enlargement, (2) the perception of southeast Europe and its various nationalities as ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ and (3) European insiderness and outsiderness in literary representations. These topics naturally arise from the larger historical and political framework. Since the early 1990s, actual and potential enlargement has been a key issue in debates surrounding the EU. The former East Germany made an entry through the ‘back door’ during the German unification process in 1990. Five years later, Austria, Sweden and Finland followed. Except
for the negative Swedish referendum on the introduction of the euro, these accessions have been integrated relatively smoothly and hardly triggered any of the contested discourse surrounding the most recent round of eastern and Mediterranean enlargement. Considering the different nature and, not least of all, the sheer size of this last enlargement, this hardly came as a surprise. In 2004, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus and Malta joined the EU. After Romania’s and Bulgaria’s subsequent accession in 2007, the EU now consists of 27 member states. The enlargement process inevitably led to the exclusion of other countries. A number of candidates, including most of the Yugoslav successor states and Turkey, have been put on a waiting list.

The first part of this volume examines the discursive means by which the opposition between old and new outsiders and insiders has been created in the EU: rhetorical figures, metaphors, metonymies, symbols and conceptual blending. These semantic features are not accidental to the discourses about identity; rather, they provide the conceptual and linguistic tools for the construction, reconstruction or (re-)invention of national and cultural identities. The theoretical structure for such an approach is provided by cognitive semantics – that is, a theoretical framework comprising Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003) and Discourse Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004; Semino, 2008; Zinken, 2007). These approaches have been discussed variously as complementary and competing (Grady et al., 1999; Zinken & Musolff, 2009); here, we assume their overall compatibility due to a set of shared assumptions. These include (a) an acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of metaphors for our conceptualization of and argumentation about the physical, psychological and sociopolitical world that we experience; (b) the insight that linguistic meanings cannot be analyzed as isolated entities but only as parts of integration networks, which allow us to merge and superimpose conceptual domains and spaces so as to achieve ever more complex semantic constructions; (c) the insight that these constructions are not just ephemeral, but can become entrenched in the semantic systems of languages; and (d) an acknowledgement that such entrenched meaning complexes can be used as lexical and grammatical material for further innovative uses that lead to specific pragmatic effects and thus practical political effects as well. The notion of states or other political entities as containers, for instance, taps into a fundamental schema of bodily and psychological conceptualization – the Self as a bounded and self-contained entity – and thus relates to universal and, possibly, transhistorical structural principles of embodied thought, as highlighted by Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Embodiment Theory (Gibbs, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). However, in order to capture its actual communicative
and cognitive effects, this notion needs to be studied in its varying discourse contexts. Several of the contributions to this volume show that the container metaphor with its inside–outside distinction has served not just to represent but indeed to redefine the relationships of individual nation states with the conglomerate entity of the European Union and its boundaries vis-à-vis other such conglomerate entities – for example, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and so on.

It is here that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) becomes methodologically essential for our studies, because it focuses on studying the linguistic manifestations of power relationships and social identity construction (Fairclough, 1995; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Wodak & Chilton, 2005; Wodak et al., 1999). Employing a mix of pragmatic, semantic, stylistic and sociolinguistic methods, CDA studies all levels of expressing and also managing sociopolitical perception and action in texts and their media environments. Language use is thus conceptualized not so much as a mere representation of a pre-existing ‘objective’ reality, but as a tool to influence and shape the social environment itself, including both individual and collective identities.

Grammatical and lexical choices are of key importance in CDA: deictic or indexical expressions, such as personal pronouns and adverbs, serve to establish the deictic center; that is, the specific position from which a piece of discourse is being created that helps addressees position themselves in relation to what is presented in a text (Chilton, 2004). With lexical choices, discourse producers define the border between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Lexical choices happen to be among the most important elements of strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Van Dijk, 2006). Lexical choices are also crucial means in legitimization and delegitimization strategies (Cap, 2008; Chilton, 2004). Of equal importance in discourse study are forms of implicit meanings in a text or utterance that are not overtly expressed, such as implications, presuppositions and allusions (Van Dijk, 2002). Discourse analysis concentrates on language means in creating discursive reality. However, this analysis is simultaneously a cognitive and social analysis that highlights the way we think about social reality and the social role of discourses.

The emphasis on lexical and grammatical choices and on the argumentative and discursive function of metaphors and other conceptual integration phenomena, such as metonymies and symbols, in identity construction has important consequences for the analyses in this book. Although the existence of relatively static, general and possibly universal conceptual integration networks is not denied, the main focus is on the variation, historicity and contested status of such concepts across regional, national and subnational boundaries. International political debates at times of momentous political upheaval, such as that experienced by the countries on Europe’s eastern rim since the 1990s, exhibit a maximum