

PROGRAM CENTRE/PERIPHERY

“WEST-EAST : CENTRE-PERIPHERY DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE TWO HALVES OF THE CONTINENT. PLURIDISCIPLINARY VIEWS”

The principal aim of the program is an approach of the topic “Centre-Periphery in Europe” by multidisciplinary teams of young researchers led by a few senior researchers. This topic must federate researchers of different disciplines on common matters. Each member of a constituted team will bring his disciplinary methods and contents: the discussion between members will be accompanied by a constant epistemological questioning and will adopt a multidisciplinary and comparative approach.

The program Centre/Periphery raises several matters:

- The relations between West European countries and East European countries and the changing perceptions of each group since the enlargement of the EU towards East. Is the centre, if it exists in Europe, moving towards East? Can we talk, as the philosopher and journalist Alexandre Adler wrote in the *Figaro* last week end, of “ the Western periphery of Europe”, thinking of the United Kingdom, Scandinavian countries and Ireland which said no to the Lisbon treaty? Is Germany becoming the big political and economic power of the EU? Will the economic development of East European countries change the distribution of wealth in the continent and the direction of migrations?

- Another matter suggested by the topic “Centre-Periphery” is the administrative organisations of the 27 members of the EU. We see in all European countries the weakening of the influence of central powers and the correlative growth of local governments: decentralization in France has changed the role of the state which is less present in local life, while local authorities have gained new powers ; the regions which are encouraged by the EU are becoming new “centres of power” : they were created in Czech Republic on 1st January 2000 ; in Hungary, a regional reform took place in 1996 ; others reforms followed during the 2000’s in order to rationalize the local organisation of the country. In Spain and Italy, the regions became authorities with large attributes and the capacity to vote laws thirty years ago. The model of “Regional state” described by European jurists and politicians is even challenged today. Italy became a federal state last year. Belgium which changed from a regional form to a federal form is threatened of dissolution and could be an example for other European countries.

- The theme “Centre-Periphery” is also linked to the place of Europe in the contemporary world. Europe is no longer the centre of the world. The European countries have to accept living in the periphery of a globalised world and have to invent new relations with the USA which has been for a long time the unique superpower and with the emerging Asian countries like China and India.

These matters topics suggest that the relations between centre and periphery in Europe have been changing over the last decades, particularly if we adopt a political view: And this has significant consequences:

- The national and cultural identities are weakened with European integration on the one side and the strengthening of local authorities on the other side. The question is whether the national states can survive in Europe. For a country like France which considered oneself to be the centre of Europe, what are the consequences of the political and economic changes described above? Do we see in this divided Europe the emergence of multiples “centres” and

the disappearance of periphery? Where are centre and periphery located today in a Europe whose frontiers are not clear and whose consistency is less and less obvious?

- How can we think of the topic “centre-periphery in Europe” in linguistic matter? How can we conciliate the existence of multilingualism and the question of dominant languages in which all European people could communicate? In the same way, what place can be offered to regional languages at the time when the EU is campaigning for the ratification of the European charter of regional or minority languages?

- What are the cultural transfers that existed yesterday and are still existing today in Europe? Is a national literature like the French or the English literature still a pattern for central or oriental literatures? In an Anglo-Saxon weekly magazine it was written a few weeks ago that the French culture was in decline and that its artists were no longer examples for other countries: Are the west European cultures still examples for East European cultures and literatures? Can we talk about a European culture and if it exists, is it in the centre of cultural debates in the world?

- How can we think the theme “centre-periphery in Europe” regarding the questions of religion, tolerance and secularism of our democratic-liberal states, concerning the distinction between a Western Europe where the catholic church is always dominant and a protestant and orthodox Europe at the East, or the growth of Muslim religion in several European countries?

These questions, among others, will be debated in our research program. The agenda of our two years program (2008-2010) is the following:

June 2008: The Budapest launching conference has two aims: 1) forming the multidisciplinary teams and their working structure. 2) defining for each team a first working program.

September 2009: a summer university at Pécs will gather researchers for a whole week in order to work on multidisciplinary methods (a few conferences by specialists of multidisciplinary are planned) and will permit to collect the first results of multidisciplinary teams.

In 2010, a large three days scientific conference, organised by the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris, will present the results of the various teams and the final conclusions about multidisciplinary to the scientific community.