



Workshops European Summer Academy

European Identity in Times of Crisis (EITC)

European Summer Academy 2017: Myths of Europe – April 29th to May 8th

Title: DISTURBING THE SYSTEM: ABOUT SYMBOLS, MYTHS, IDENTITIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Workshop Trainer: Wilfried Korngiebel

Workshop description

In times of crisis someone can say that there is a risk of the European House being burnt down by nationalist fire-raisers. But maybe you will also read that the ship “MS Europe” has got out of course and is in danger of sinking like the Titanic. Or perhaps you will see a cartoon showing an airplane with the label “Europe” driving into turbulent weather. These three symbols of our everyday life, realized either in speech or in icons, are having the same meaning: ‘The federation of the European states are threatened by their nationalist negation.’ You notice that these so called **collective symbols** like “house”, “ship”, “airplane” etc. can interchange with one another. Thus all collective symbols of a culture are forming a coherent synchronous system: a system of substitutive, equivalent, distinctive, complementary and opposite relations between its terms.

According to this we have got a basic symbolic schedule (diagram) imaging modern society, ‘our system’. It includes three constituting symbolic axes: the (social) axis of the opposition ‘above versus bottom’, the (political) axis of the opposition ‘left versus right’, and the (historical) axis of the opposition ‘progress versus regress’.

Collective symbols can be put in a symbolic form of stories: **myths**. That means: a simple form of narration telling us how simple the world is. But in reality the world is much more complex. So let us also have a look on myths. You know for example the antique myth of the “Trojan Horse” bringing enemies into ‘our city’, basing on the opposition of ‘us versus them’ and giving us a special (maybe identifying) view on the scene?



In political speech, mass media, literature, movies, arts and situations of everyday life the traditional myths of a culture are often combined with modern collective symbols. We want to discover the function of the myths in the synchronous collective symbol system. This Summer Academy plans to build a **toolbox** which makes it possible to reflect medial impressions, to recognize their implicit action and perception impulses (and their consequences) and to **develop alternatives**. Our workshop should be a part of this project. Do antique or modern everyday myths, or else iconic and narrative elements of these myths stabilize the synchronous system, or can they perhaps disturb it on the other hand? How can myths, for example like the "Trojan Horse" or the "Great Flood", be localized in the basic symbolic schedule? Can such myths be told in another way and thus get another meaning? Let us study newspapers and other media and start experiments!

In this context it should be emphasized that especially the stereotypes, prejudices, resentments und **enemy images**, transported in present European myths will have to be explored. How can enemy images constructing "the other ones" in mass media and public be thwarted? Is it possible to jump across those not only imagined but also mentally "felt" trenches between "us and them"? Let us try and bring out subversive experiments, by inventing changes of view, other narrative versions and pointed irony.

Biography

Wilfried Korngiebel (*1956), studied new german literature, mediavistic and philosophy. Master degree 1987 Ruhr University Bochum. Doctor of philosophy 1996 University Dortmund. Till 2004 scholar, member and assistant lecturer at different universities, afterward one year substitute at school teaching. At present working in the IT industry and at once as lecturer for social sciences at several adult education center and other education facilities in the ruhr area region. Furthermore working as freelance writer.

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