

Conference
‘Integrated Society: The Experience of Latvia and Canada’

October 18th 2016
Rīga Stradiņš University, the Senate Hall
Riga, Dzirciema iela 16

13:00 – 13:10

Opening Addresses

Beth Richardson (Chargée d’Affaires, Embassy of Canada)
Māris Andžāns (Rīga Stradiņš University)

13:10 – 14:00

Naomi Alboim (Queen’s University, School of Policy Studies)
Canada’s Experience in Refugee Integration

14:00 – 14:15

Break

14:15 – 14:30

Sergei Kruk (Rīga Stradiņš University)
Making the Nation: Cultural Socialization vs Political Procedures

Split society, selfish individuals – these are the recurrent topics of philosophical, sociological and political discourse in interwar and contemporary Latvia. Cultural socialization is offered as a remedy to lacking sociability and social trust. Both, ethnics and ethnic others, should incorporate the basic principles of ethnic culture, develop “sense of belonging to the state”, “legal consciousness” – it is a precondition of their access to civil society. Social scientists and legal documents defending the concept of cultural socialization do not provide a detailed explication of cultural values and their casual effect on social conduct, however. I would argue that the reason of low sociability is ignorance of political procedures and weakness of structures facilitating social interaction.

14:30 – 15:00

Daniel Weinstock (McGill University)
Canadian Nation-Building, from Trudeau père to Trudeau fils

Pierre-Elliott Trudeau was unquestionable a Canadian nation-builder, who came to think, despite early academic musings to the contrary, that Canada needed to be possessed of a strong, unifying identity if it was to withstand the attacks of Quebec nationalism (and perhaps also of Western regionalism). I have argued elsewhere that his project was built around five principal pillars: the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, bilingualism, multiculturalism, the Good Society, and federalism. I argued that this project was built upon a fragile combination of centripetal and centrifugal elements.

That the Trudeau père project has not given rise to the desired shared identity

was in large part due to the inability of his government, and of subsequent ones, to implement the centripetal elements of

the project. In this presentation I will attempt on the basis of the first few months of the Trudeau fils' government to determine how he envisages his nation-building job. Is he continuing in his father's footsteps, or charting a new course? I will tentatively suggest the latter alternative, and propose that electoral reform may be one of the ingredients of this new nation-building path.

15:00 – 15:15

Klāvs Sedlenieks (Rīga Stradiņš University)

Vernacular conceptions of the state

Latvians do not strongly contrast themselves as a body of subjects to the state in general. Instead the picture of the state is divided into two interlaced fractions. The first is the ideal state. Sometimes it is strongly treated as a Latvian national/ethnic project, but in any case it is a just provider for needs and a protector of citizens' interests. Symbolically this state is localized in schools, museums and historic monuments rather than in political institutions. The second is the state of everyday experience; it is captured by corrupt or incompetent politicians and bureaucrats resulting in crippling the ideal state to the level where it cannot fulfil the expectations. Although Latvians think they are a part of the larger, idealised, caring body of the state, they do not treat themselves as being able to influence the fate of the state, relying instead on semi-magical means, such as commenting in the internet news portals.

15:15 – 15:45

Wayne Norman (Duke University)

Myths, Economics, and the 'Real World' in Nationalist Politics: lessons from Canada, Brexit, Trump, and...

Before he became the Prime Minister (from 1968 to 1984) identified with a new kind of Canadian nationalism, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was an academic critic of nationalism. In this paper I look at the advice he offered as a young academic for those who wished to advance the cause of economic development and justice in the face of ethno-nationalism. With half a century of hindsight, and case studies from Canada and around the world, what can we now say about that young man's analysis and advice?

15:45 – 16:30

Coffee and Discussion