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“Knowledge Regions and Innovation in an era of Globalisation: Challenges and Opportunities for Europe and Asia”

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ABSTRACT

Intertwined with globalisation, societies and the international system in general are experiencing major structural changes that are being determined by two distinct processes – the simultaneous emergence of the “**knowledge society**” and the “**network society**.” The key factors of the “knowledge society” are knowledge and innovation, and the most valuable aspects are human and social capital and the investment in intangible assets. The “network society” is characterised by new forms of social interaction and new sources of identity and loyalty.

The nature of the process of knowledge creation and diffusion leads to the reemergence of local and regional economies as highly valuable areas for economic, political and social interaction. This process of knowledge creation and diffusion requires geographic proximity, direct face-to-face interaction, thus becoming a geographic phenomenon. The proximity enables national/regional actors to develop trust, settle differences, form networks, develop partnerships and engage in mutual learning and diffusion of tacit knowledge.

The European Union (EU) is involved in a fundamental debate concerning the Lisbon Strategy (2000 and 2005) - a grand design to enhance Europe’s economic competitiveness aimed at preparing Europe to be a “knowledge-based society.” Asian societies, with different degrees of intensity, have also been engaged in defining their strategies to advance towards “knowledge societies” which present both points of convergence and divergence with the EU vision.

A crucial structural feature that increasingly marks the international system is the emergence of regionalism in its two distinct dimensions – the formation of macro-regions on one hand, and the increasing relevance of micro-regions on the other hand. By extension, **the emergence of “knowledge regions” is an important phenomenon, both in Europe and in Asia**, raising new challenges in terms of governance and the remaking of social relations through the intensification of transborder and transnational networks. Some of the “knowledge regions” that will be analysed in this lecture are in Europe (Catalunha, Baden-Wurtemberg, Uusimaa and Zuid-Nederland), and in Asia; Singapore, China (the Bohai region, the South China triangle), and Japan (Osaka and Kyoto). Some of these knowledge regions have been very active in the international system through their sub-national governments, promoting their interests and developing an autonomous “paradiplomacy” which has become one of the pillars of their competitiveness in the global economy.

The “knowledge society” paradigm is a major challenge that both European and Asian societies are facing, and the “knowledge regions” - even what could be considered as micro-regions - play a critical role in this process. **Paradoxically however, interactions, ties and relations between European “knowledge regions” and Asian “knowledge regions” have not received the attention they deserve by policymakers, and this remains by and large a missing dimension in the analysis of EU-Asia bilateral relations.** This lecture will stimulate debate on this strategic dimension of EU-Asian relations. In doing so, it will introduce a more disaggregated level of analysis and a wider and more integrated approach that goes beyond the traditional ways of viewing inter-regional relations.

How have some of the different regions promoted their integration in the global economy and adapted to “glocalisation” dynamics? What are the implications of an increasing international presence of these knowledge micro-regions? What are the implications for the future development of bilateral EU-Asian relations?

PROFILE OF THE SPEAKER



Miguel Santos Neves is currently the Head of the Asia Programme at the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IEEI) in Lisbon, where he is in charge of various research projects in a wide range of areas such as China-EU bilateral relations, external relations of the SARs of Macao and Hong Kong, EU external relations with Asia, Chinese business communities in Portugal and Europe and Southeast Asian security.

He received his PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), University of London, his MPhil in Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex and a BA in Law and Economics from the Law Faculty of the University of Lisbon. He is an Associate Professor at

Universidade Moderna, Lisbon, in the areas of Management, International Law and International Relations and currently holds the position of Director of the Department of Law and International Relations. His past experience includes positions as Consultant to private firms, Economic Consultant to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Adviser to the Governor of Macau (1986-88) and Expert of the Portuguese delegation to the Sino-Portuguese Joint Liaison Group on Macau. He has participated actively in the Asia-Europe dialogue both as a Member of the Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposium of ASEM and of the EU-ASEAN+3 Think Tank dialogue process. He published more than 40 books and articles in various international journals, including the book *Europe, China and the two SARs* (2000), co-editor with Brian Bridges, Macmillan Press, London. The most recent publications in 2006 include the following articles and books *Macro-Regionalism and Community building in Europe and Asia: political and security challenges*, in *Panorama*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (forthcoming); *A China como potência global emergente: vulnerabilidades, tensões e desafios*, in *Revista Política Externa*, São Paulo, Brasil (forthcoming) (China as an emerging power: vulnerabilities, tensions and challenges); *The Chinese Business Community in Portugal – business strategy and internationalization : implications for foreign policy and immigration policy*, IEEI (forthcoming).

ABOUT THE ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

In March 1996, fifteen European leaders, ten East Asian leaders and the President of the European Commission convened in Bangkok, Thailand, for the inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). At this historic ASEM Summit, the leaders from the two continents agreed to forge a comprehensive partnership and strengthen links between the two regions for mutual benefit. The meeting, among other agenda, called for the strengthening of cultural links between Asia and Europe, particularly the fostering of closer people-to-people contacts, which is indispensable to the promotion of greater awareness and understanding between the peoples of both regions at the civil society level.

To carry out the mission set out by the leaders, the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting (Singapore) launched the Asia Europe Foundation on 15 February 1997. ASEF's mission is to promote greater mutual understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe through closer **intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges**.

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