

BEYOND CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Places, Practices, Experiences

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This article presents state of the art ethnology and anthropology of Europe as indicated in the programmes of two international conferences to be held in 2008. The author discusses the parameters of pertinent research topics and suggests three themes that are especially relevant for present-day Europe as a field of ethnographic research. They concern migration, citizenship and Europe beyond the EU. Conceptual lenses other than those of culture and identity are proposed, referring to places, practices and experiences.

Keywords: Europe, migration, citizenship, practice, experience

An Ethnology of Europe or Ethnology in Europe?

An ongoing interplay between old and new paradigms is a standard feature of academia. What is special to ethnology as I have known it¹ since the 1980s is the remarkable difference between particular national traditions with regard to the timing of otherwise similar disputes about what is considered as “new” – and therefore better – ethnology.

In their respective national realms, European ethnologists have been striving for academic influence, research funding and job opportunities, with varying results. While in some countries the numbers of students are dwindling and the argument of their employability tends to outweigh the argument of academic merit in the struggle for scarce educational resources, in other countries ethnological institutions are thriving as a result of increased public interest in their expertise on socio-cultural change or their potential use in the tourist and event-industry.

However, certain departments’ current positioning on a continuum between crisis and expansion is hardly dependent on the presence or the absence of “European” in their titles. Names are primarily outcomes of institutional traditions and university politics.

In this text, “European ethnology” is understood as ethnology practised in Europe.² My view is that territorial designation should be avoided in the name of the discipline. However, the ethnology of Europe as a cluster of socio-cultural spaces is highly relevant and not only entails comparisons of local concerns and regional responses to global economic and political conditions but also looking at the European Union (EU) as a political and identity project.

Ethnologists living and working in European countries are not the only ones interested in cultural aspects of everyday life and “from below” interpretations of, and reactions to, the changing socio-political settings. The same issues are in focus for

many native European anthropologists as well as those considered as Europeanists from elsewhere. What are their specific views and findings on European issues? Is maintaining disciplinary boundaries important? Is this at all possible, with regard to research done in and on Europe?

Here, *anthropology* and *ethnology* denote disciplines as institutionally defined in different settings, although ethnographic methods and the focus on lived experiences and emic perspectives are central to both. In the last two decades quite a few ethnology departments in Eastern Europe have been renamed as departments of ethnology and social or cultural anthropology. Such refashioning did not have to be negotiated with anthropological departments in the respective countries, since they were virtually non-existent. However, many followed the common European path: from an initial interest in traditional peasant culture to an interest in contemporary cultural processes in one's own society informed by theoretical debates in anthropology.

Ethnologists often participate in conferences organised by anthropologists. Does this mean we are transgressing, or even losing, our disciplinary identity? Or are we simply pursuing our work liberated from any *a priori* ideas about "proper" collocutors? Regardless of historical and actual differences in scholarly scopes and academic traditions, ethnologists are welcome at anthropological meetings, and vice versa, on the basis of their research topics rather than their institutional affiliation.

Editorial information about the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, published since 1990, captures the commonalities. While engaging "with current debates and innovative research agendas addressing the social and cultural transformations of contemporary European societies", it strives towards encompassing different academic traditions, "from social and cultural anthropology to European ethnology and 'empirische Kulturwissenschaften'" (AJEC 2008). The journal

... serves as an important forum for ethnographic research in and on Europe, which in this context is not defined narrowly as a geopolitical entity

but rather as a meaningful cultural construction in people's lives, which both legitimates political power and calls forth practices of resistance and subversion (ibid.).

Here, ethnology is equated with "European ethnology", but it is important that ethnographic research – "in and on Europe" – connects all the disciplines mentioned. Indeed, stressing the importance of methods and pursuing common interests is the most reasonable way of circumventing the obstacles entailed in rigid understanding of disciplinary labels.

State of the Art: SIEF and EASA

Multiple connections, overlaps and practical impossibilities in differentiating "who is who" in disciplinary terms are state of the art examples taken from two international conferences to be held in summer 2008. The first is organised by SIEF, the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore,³ and the second by EASA, the European Association of Social Anthropologists.⁴

While focusing on one of the classic ethnological concerns – *heritage* – the theme of the 9th SIEF conference, "Transcending 'European Heritages': Liberating the Ethnological Imagination", signals the need for change (see SIEF 2008b). The organisers state that ethnology (in SIEF seen as part of "the field of ethnology and folklore") is undergoing considerable transformation in terms of theory, methodology and practical outlook.⁵ The sub-themes "European Heritages", "Transcending Theories and Practices" and "Performing the Ethnological Imagination" are also open to contributors from the fields of medicine, politics, music, history, arts and new communication technologies. This witnesses a remarkable effort toward cross-disciplinary inclusions. Although anthropology as such is not mentioned, anthropologists are included among the keynote speakers at the conference, and one of the workshops is entitled "Anthropology and Europe". A more integrated practice of teaching and research is proposed there, involving "the related fields of Socio-Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology", especially in dealing with Europeanist issues. It is seen as an imperative to

“lay obsolete disciplinary gates open, so that we may creatively engage with neighbouring branches of knowledge in true and consistent interdisciplinary pursuits” (Barrera-Gonzales 2008).

In keynote lectures cultural heritage is discussed in relation to ambivalent links between patriotism and populism, and to groups’ and nations’ identity politics. The issues of cultural and political performance are explored, including the changing positions and roles of ethnographers. In some of the workshops, “European heritages” are searched for beyond the continent or analysed in a global context. Innovatively, the politics of culture and heritage in Europe are explored through Science and Technology Exhibits and questions of culture and property raised. Furthermore, workshop topics include experiencing and remembering the pre-1989 borders of Europe, homeland-diaspora relations, museums in transition and changing perspectives on the use of ethnographic archives.

By taking up experiences of *diversity and mutuality* as the main theme of its 10th Biennial Conference, EASA attempts to explore “different ethnographic instances of mutuality, especially those of mutual borrowing of practices and beliefs [...] related to imperialism, colonialism or modern cultural flow” (EASA 2008c). Ethnography is emphasised as central, and many workshops are proposed by scholars who do not call themselves anthropologists but work at ethnology departments. A remarkable number of workshops deal specifically with Europe, i.e. with local understandings of nation-state and regional belongings, with relations between the EU and a European identity, with sustainable cultural diversities in Europe and with processes of Europeanisation as envisioned in the geographical peripheries of the continent.

Matters concerning *state and governance* are central to several of EASA’s 2008 conference workshops. Decision processes in the public domain, administration, implementation and policy making are in focus here, as well as elites in developing countries, the policies and ideology of capitalism in the European Union, bureaucrats working in national governments and transnational organisations and

the question of how their work contributes to Europeanisation processes. Field perspectives are invited into the marginalised population’s strategies for dealing with supra-national European citizenship, nation-state citizenship and ethno-national identification. Finally, the difficult issue is raised of different national regimes of asylum seekers’ confinement in Europe and their transnational logic.

East-West relations, i.e. diverse modes of the “liminal” Eastern European countries’ inclusion in EU-Europe, are analysed first and foremost in the field of academic discourses and hierarchies. Representations of one’s own *Europeanness* are seen as worth investigating, as are the social consequences of the labels *East* and *West* in European countries. Otherwise, interest in Eastern Europe (not surprisingly) revolves around the keyword “post-socialism”, combined with “borders and boundaries”, “economic, social and political changes”, “consumerism and individualism”, or “socialist and post-socialist tourist imagery”.

Topics related to *migration* have never been as prominent at an EASA conference as they are in 2008. They encompass colonial heritage and postcolonial immigrants, African Christianities in Europe, ambivalent identities that transgress cultural differences, the interlinked questions of integration and transnational activities, the growth and diversification of migrant associations, children between new citizenship and their transnational families, Islamic communities in Europe, as well as the less explored theme of migration and cultural diversity in rural areas. Importantly, one of the proposed workshops takes up the tensions between official celebrations of cultural pluralism and the new “borderless” Europe, together with new forms of material and social exclusion (see Reeves & Glick Schiller 2008).

Inasmuch as the programmes of the 2008 SIEF and EASA conferences indicate the current state of the art ethnology and anthropology, it is notable that both confront their respective historical “sins”. The need for transcending “European heritages” is recognised in the contexts of the lasting effects of ethnology’s involvement in processes of nation building and exclusory political (ab)uses of culture.

Attention to diversity and mutuality is seen as a central task of anthropologists who struggle with their predecessors' engagement in imperial and colonial projects.

Which Issues Are Pertinent?

It goes without saying that an instant recipe for a meaningful and intellectually and socially rewarding future for ethnology is neither attempted nor generally possible. Even if it were, it would have to include specific national circumstances as its main ingredient and thus appear in many very different variants.⁶

The search for new knowledge should be first and foremost guided by ethnologists' individual preferences, and not by applicability. These preferences involve not only our education and institutional concerns, but also the entire experience of life in specific socio-cultural contexts. Living in the setting that is under analytical scrutiny – a standard situation of European ethnologists – means being well-informed and able to access the dense complexity of implications of a certain event or statement encountered in the field. *Living there* often entails an emotional attachment that prevents one from simply dissecting and dismissing a position or a phenomenon that one is critical of; it urges an *understanding*.⁷ While this is a potential added value of analyses from within, it does not imply a superiority of natives' interpretations in relation to those of foreign researchers. Their insights and interpretative priorities may be different, but difference does not include organising hierarchies.⁸ They can question different kinds of grand narratives, and challenge different kinds of generalising claims.

Several themes are especially relevant for present-day Europe as a field of ethnographic research and concern migration, citizenship and Europe beyond the EU.

Europe beyond the EU and the End of Post-socialism

Numerous papers have been written since 1989 about post-communist countries "in transition" and addressed themes such as "transformations of men-

tal", "identity after the breakdown of communism", or "tradition and modernity". Several important ethnography-based titles have been published, although this field has also nourished research rich with examples confirming "the danger of knowing what one is looking for" (Löfgren 1990). Almost two decades have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but stereotypes of the "peripheral" Others still need to be challenged both in public realms and research. An understanding of the differences and complexities as perceived by people who live in "new" parts of Europe and in the out-of-EU parts of the continent is far from accomplished.

Michal Buchowski (2007) offers an insightful analysis of "the battle for acknowledgement" of Western anthropologists doing research in Eastern Europe. The Cold War East–West division made it "a kingdom of political science and history", thereby suppressing alternative perceptions offered by anthropologists – not to mention those offered by "anthropologically retarded" East European ethnologists. Buchowski discusses the teleological concept of "transition" and the modes of implementing Categorical Orientalism.⁹ Using the examples of research on Poland, he shows how hierarchies of knowledge have been created and perpetuated between the disciplines and within anthropology. He pays special attention to the hierarchies between Western anthropologists and East European ethnologists whose scholarly production regarding their own societies is seldom seen as worth taking into consideration. At the same time, they are readily used as easily accessible informants.

In contrast to that – generally speaking – the lack of references to Eastern European intellectual traditions was never characteristic of the relations between ethnologists living and working in Eastern and Western parts of Europe. Since its establishment in 1964 SIEF has been regarded as a meeting place, and boasts numerous examples of collaboration in research and publishing. In my experience, dialogues have been led by ethnologists mutually perceived as equal partners, and the interest in others' positions has been genuine.¹⁰ Being familiar with their East European colleagues' work long before post-socialist

times, Western European ethnologists are neither inclined to see 1989 as a “fresh start” nor to engage in the dubious (a)theoretical stretching of the prefix “post”. Paying attention to the duration of some cultural forms, practices and values underpins the rejection of the ideologically motivated and, again, hierarchical difference-evoking adjective “new” (as in “new Europe”, “new Europeans”). Seldom perceived as such from within, East Europeans’ “newness” to Europe confirms nothing more than a conflation of political and identity-issues of EU-Europe as a model of normality.

Omitting post-socialism as a signpost of difference and focusing on continuities of individual life-projects as narrated by people who found themselves in the midst of historical events is one of the paths to follow. Comparative research projects undertaken by scholars who are native to only one of the field-work sites facilitates comparisons but doesn’t necessarily neglect the complexities as seen from within. At the same time, it allows for the estrangement of any understandings and their critical assessment.¹¹ An example of such good practice is the collaboration of Norwegian and Croatian ethnologists on interpretations of Yugoslav political symbols in Croatia, focusing on the cult of the late Yugoslav president, Tito, in his native village turned into an open-air ethnographic museum (see Hjemdahl & Škrbić Alempijević forthcoming for the English version, and Škrbić Alempijević & Hjemdahl 2006 for the Croatian version of the edited collection). While the Norwegian participant was helped in terms of practical and epistemological access to the field, the Croatian participants benefited from being simultaneously positioned as researchers and natives, thus confronting their own ambivalent feelings towards a politically sensitive topic. The fusion of mutually enriching perspectives resulted in innovative research.

Migration: Practices beyond Ethnicity

Within the vast field of multidisciplinary research on issues connected to international migration, the importance of ethnography is unsurpassed in its ability to reach and represent the individual level of experience and everyday dynamics of sense-making.

In order to see the faces behind the categories, understand the people behind the statistical data, and follow the motivations of actors involved in migration orders, ethnographic insights are crucial. The same goes for discovering migrants beyond ethnic groups.

In summarising manner, and not doing justice to those scholars who move against the mainstream, one can claim that the coupling of the notions of migrants and ethnicity is prevalent and that culturalist explanations of “integration problems” still inform research and policies in many European countries (see Povrzanović Frykman 2001). This is definitely the case for dominant media representations of immigrants.

As one of the options for de-coupling the notions mentioned above, I would like to propose a shift of ethnographic focus towards people’s *practices* in connection with migration. Only ethnographic methods can capture what migrants actually do – in the places of their everyday life, in the places they keep returning to and on the journeys between them.¹²

I am currently interested in the expansion of affordable travel options and the enormous quantities of objects – mostly intended for everyday use – transported in overloaded cars, buses, ships and planes. They plead for ethnographic descriptions and interpretations that outline relationships and processes embedded in migrants’ transnational practices. Such research on people’s travel and the objects transported is motivated by an interest in how belonging is embodied, reciprocity is materialised and social networks are re-created in different locations within the transnational spaces created by migrants. The focus is on practices through which people accomplish inclusion in different locations and in different networks. What do they do, send or carry in order to stay connected, be accepted, remembered, needed or appreciated? Which objects do they consider crucial to the maintenance of their private everyday normality in different locations of attachment? To what extent is involvement in personal relations and social networks achieved or proved through objects, and to what extent does this require physical presence?

The theoretical intention is to avoid focusing on ethnicity paradigms that concern boundary formation, social identity or the cultural content of (homogenised) group identities (see Povrzanović Frykman 2004b). While not denying the reality of experiences of group belonging, the intention is rather to turn the importance of ethnicity into an empirical question. It is also important to warn against the assumption that certain practices are only characteristic of migrants in conditions of disadvantage. Ethnographic insights into practices may reveal significant similarities between migrants of varying class and ethnic backgrounds (see Pezdir & Povrzanović Frykman 2008, and Povrzanović Frykman forthcoming).

Citizenship “from Below”

Citizenship became one of the central themes of the social sciences in the last decade, and is probably the theme engaging most interdisciplinary scholarship in the European Union.

Citizenship cannot be conflated with definitions of collectivity and solidarity. State is neither the locus of all aspects of governance, nor necessarily a source of loyalty. Everyday political participation and social negotiation occur both within and outside political organisations and legal institutions. That is why it makes sense to engage ethnographic methods that can capture non-institutional, extra-legal, off-the-record, everyday, private, local, transnational etc., ways of dealing with inclusions and exclusions imposed by the ubiquitous fact of citizenship. It is an utterly a-personal identity category, and yet potentially a matter of life and death. For me, this tension triggers ethnographic imagination.

A comparative project aiming at how people in different countries experience EU citizenship would relate the social and psychological concreteness of belonging to legal documents.¹³ Both EU-natives who voted pro and contra their own EU inclusions and pro and contra EU enlargement would be relevant here. So would, of course, immigrants with or without the EU citizenship and people from the more recently accepted EU countries.

Experiences of EU citizenship can be looked at in

relation to state-regulated rights and duties, in relation to cultural expectations towards native and non-native citizens and in relation to people's social and physical mobility, including their transnational connections. For example, dual citizenship (allowed or forbidden) has considerable potential for relevant ethnographic research in that it allows for meaningful connections between the implications and effects of legal rules, emotions and practices of belonging.

Not only would narratives of belonging as conditioned by citizenship be in focus, but also people's practices. What do people do in order to prove their inclusion in or loyalty to a state formation? What kinds of social and aesthetic resources are used? Who proves belonging, and to whom or what does one belong, and why? Concrete topics to be pursued could range from e.g. flags on toothpicks decorating a birthday cake of a toddler born into a nation, to the language test in the hands of a mature refugee, as a threshold to inclusion. Or, alternatively, the *surreal* experience of driving past the deserted police station as the last indication of the border between Germany and Austria juxtaposed with the *real* experience of a Swedish citizen being checked out by the police on the train crossing the bridge from Denmark to Sweden – presumably for his “Oriental” looks...¹⁴

Concluding Remarks on Culture and Identity

Ethnology may be a relatively small discipline when it comes to the numbers of professionals, but its importance lies in its special interest in cultural practices as lived, changed and invented in everyday life. Ethnologists are competent in giving detailed answers with regard to the uses and meanings of places, events, acts and artefacts. Apart from the manifold possibilities of complementing the perspective “from below” with other disciplines, I see this competence alone as firm grounds for optimism with regard to ethnology's future developments.

In envisaging possible projects that would reinvigorate ethnology and prove its importance, I follow Anne-Marie Fortier's (2006) very inspiring rethinking of the “New Europe” towards analysing and theorising Europe through migration. Namely, migration is an integral part of the way the world is

imagined, and as such “impacts on how individuals, communities, nations and multi/international formations such as the European Union imagine themselves and their (co)inhabitants” (ibid.: 313). Fortier discusses three theoretical strands relating to the forces of *spatiality* (scaling; i.e. various ways in which the sociality of space is lived, practiced and represented), *temporality* (timing and histories – of past and present, traditional and modern, “here” and “there”) and *corporeality* (embodying and “the European people”; belonging to a certain time-space “glued” by values vs. emotional and sensuous belonging) (ibid.). She suggests the benefits of bridging migration studies with mobility studies. An ethnologist would claim that ethnographic explorations are critical to both.

The crucial question remains as to whether culture and identity as ethnological concepts contribute to the culturalisation of citizenship and the naturalisation of ethnic difference. Should we handle the notion of identity and its political uses with care, but still acknowledge the need to recognise specific identities in specific contexts? Research that supports particular political projects is an option as long as it is done in a transparent way.

The SIEF conference keynote speaker Sharon Macdonald warns about “institutions – museums, heritage sites and disciplines such as ethnology and anthropology – that have been historically associated with stabilising and freezing bounded and exclusionary identities” (Macdonald 2008). What kind of engagement would be revealed by a “search for Europe” in different museums’ exhibition plans, developed by custodians with degrees in ethnology? Is Europe framed as a distinct cultural space?¹⁵ Are there examples of “European consciousness-raising” exhibitions that seek to establish or strengthen post-national sensibilities and responsibilities? Is it possible to agree that some identity-projects are better than others, e.g. a post-national EU-identity as compared to European nationalisms?

Organisers of the EASA workshop on the persistence of *culture talk* in the making of Europe wonder why the European Union has been conflated with the notion of Europe as a civilisational entity, and

why a culturalist paradigm permeates the controversies regarding immigration and EU enlargement in a Europe increasingly characterised by liberal market expansion (see Taylor, Schneider & Hann 2008):

Why are some cultural differences seen to form a legitimate basis for ‘diversity’ while others are designated to form the object of ‘culture talk’? How can we explain such differentiation not in terms of (conflicting) cultural differences, but e.g. in relation to processes of European integration that shape social landscapes and experiences? In light of current slogans of ‘unity in diversity’ in EU-Europe, can we discuss diversity without at the same time reinscribing ‘culture talk’? (ibid.).

The very production and use of categories of cultural identity in public realms is a given field of research. At the same time, knowledge based on ethnographic research can be used against the discourses on essentialised differences and cultural threats, and against ideas of people “belonging” to groups just because they have something in common at the ascription level. The truly relevant questions concern how, why, where and for whom groups are constituted as significant, and what practices this implies (see Turner 2000).

It is also highly relevant to ask how people belong to *places* (regions, territorial political unions) in ethnic and non-ethnic terms. Who belongs, when and why? Which places belong to whom, and how? In which circumstances is sharing a place crucial for inclusion in a category of “us”? Finally, who has the power to define this category?¹⁶

Commonalities, connections, overlaps and transgressions of all kinds of boundaries can be lifted out and displayed. Instead of using the notions of local, regional and national cultures, we can conceptualise belonging as rooted in place, familiarity, sensual experience, human interaction and local knowledge, and conditioned by social and psychological concreteness (see Hedetoft 2004). That leads research to the *communities of experience* or *communities of practice* in places that are shared regardless of origin, and the “ownership” of which is based on everyday use (see Povrzanović Frykman 2005).

We have been very good at defining – for our students – culture as historical process and identities as identifications, never “pure” and fixed, but situated in lived experience, malleable, and open to reinterpretation. It is high time that we found instructive examples that are accessible to wider audiences, and insist on spreading the same knowledge beyond the confines of academia.

Notes

- 1 The following comparison is based on participation in international conferences and reading a variety of journals and edited volumes engaging ethnologists and anthropologists, as well as on detailed knowledge of the research and teaching undertaken in former Yugoslav and contemporary Croatian, German, Slovenian, and Swedish ethnology.
- 2 It goes without saying that a field site can no longer be seen merely as a geographical location, but as “an intersection between people, practices and shifting terrains, both physical and virtual. The ability to observe ideas, images and practices, and pursue a network of personal and institutional leads turns any location into ‘the field’” (Strauss 2000: 172).
- 3 “SIEF is an international scholarly organisation founded in 1964. The major purpose [...] is to facilitate co-operation among scholars working within European Ethnology, Folklore Studies and adjoining fields” (SIEF 2008a). A detailed history of SIEF is presented by Bjarne Rogan in this issue.
- 4 EASA is a professional association open to all social anthropologists either qualified in or working in Europe. The Association seeks to advance anthropology in Europe by organizing biennial conferences and by editing its academic journal, *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (see EASA 2008a). Recent EASA publication projects include edited collections (to be published by Berghahn) such as *Going First Class: New Approaches to Privileged Movement and Travel* (ed. Vered Amit), *Exploring Regimes of Discipline: The Dynamics of Restraint* (ed. Noel Dyck), *Postsocialist Europe: Anthropological Perspectives from Home* (eds. Peter Skalnik & László Kürti) and *Ethnographic Practice in the Present* (eds. Helena Wulff, Marit Melhuus & Jon Mitchell) (see EASA 2008b).
- 5 See also Ullrich Kockel’s contribution to this issue.
- 6 For example, the organisers of the EASA workshop “Europe and Anthropology: New Themes and Directions in Europeanist Research” offered the following tentative list of research issues: “The ethnography of Europe and European institutions; Ideas and images of Europe in travel writing, literature and ‘high culture’; Europe’s lore and media narratives; Politics and policies of European building and identity; Citizenship in multinational entities and ethnically diverse polities; Global migrations and social cohesion at the national and supranational levels; Anthropology and development: The role of non-governmental organizations” (Horolets, Heintz & Barrera-González 2008).
- 7 For example, my own (over)sensitivity and hesitation to ethnicity-based explanations has arisen from my experience of life in a Croatia enmeshed in war and of being an immigrant in Sweden. This has led me to see the relevance of certain issues that I have then been able to pursue as researcher (see, e.g., Povrzanović Frykman 2004a and 2008).
- 8 For a critique of simplified understandings of insider and outsider positions in research, see Povrzanović Frykman 2004b.
- 9 Ines Prca (2007) takes up similar matters, with a focus on “post-socialist” scholars’ struggles with dominant discourses and scientific hierarchies.
- 10 One example is the translation into German of Croatian ethnological production in the 1990s, in a volume co-edited by Austrian and Croatian scholars (Čapo Žmegač et al. 2001).
- 11 On methodological benefits of “external gaze” of non-native researchers, see Fartacek 2006.
- 12 Although physical travel is primarily taken up here, this does not diminish the importance of research on movement in virtual spaces of transnational connections.
- 13 The following ideas came about in the course of discussions at the *Ethnologia Europaea* meeting in Lund in September 2007.
- 14 For a similar experience at Bristol airport, see Khosravi 2007.
- 15 That could be read into the notion of “European everyday culture” used by the Berlin Museum of European Cultures (2008a). “In the face of an increasingly globalised world, the Museum of European Cultures intends to offer points of reference for the reflection of ‘identities’. This not only includes the society we live in, characterised by both cultural contacts and conflicts, but also other social groups in Europe – especially where those groups live in Berlin and have as yet found no other place for active public communication within the museum landscape” (Museum of European Cultures 2008b). Here, cultural conflict and the need for group representations seem to be taken for granted. One might also wonder about the definitions of “the society we live in” and “other social groups in Europe”. However, a critical distance to ‘identities’ is signalled by the use of quotation marks.
- 16 Alisdair Rogers (2004) recognises four zones of Europe

as “a space for transnationalism”, pointing to the fact that transnationalism becomes integrated into security concerns, and that ‘European values’ are imposed and contested in the zone made up of aspirant EU-members and the transit zone of Eastern Europe, Turkey and North Africa. These are also the areas “where the contradictions between the espousal of human rights and the imposition of constraints on movement are most glaring” (ibid.: 179). Local effects of political and practical inclusions and exclusion in those zones need to be investigated by ethnologists.

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