

Introduction: The Frontiers of Europe and European Ethnology

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This *Companion to the Anthropology of Europe* offers a survey of contemporary Europeanist anthropology and European ethnology, and a guide to emerging trends in this geographical field of research. Given the diversity of approaches within Europe to the anthropological study of Europe, the book is intended to provide a synthesis of the different traditions and contemporary approaches. Earlier surveys – whether in German (e.g. Dracklé and Kokot 1996), French (e.g. Jeggle and Chiva 1992), or English (e.g. Macdonald 1993; Goddard et al. 1996) – have approached the subject through regional ethnographic case studies, mostly concentrating on Western Europe, or focusing on specific aspects, such as European integration (e.g. Bellier and Wilson 2000); the present volume is different in that its approach is both thematic and fully cross-European.

Any reader picking up this book may well do so on the assumption that the terms that frame it, “Europe” and “anthropology,” are reasonably straightforward and that their meaning is more or less clear. This must surely be why such a volume has been produced: to summarize and reflect on the engagement of an agreed discipline with its (more or less) self-evident subject matter. As editors, we have approached this project in a different spirit, considering that neither “anthropology” (or its cousin, European ethnology) nor “Europe” are intellectual *terrae firmae* – historically and conceptually, both can be described as “moving targets”: in a constant process of transformation since their first inception – and perhaps, as some would argue, so elusive that it is doubtful whether they have any reality at all outside the imagination.

The idea that “Europe” may be elusive or indeed nonexistent might strike the unsuspecting reader as rather strange. Are the origins of Europe not located in Greek mythology (Tsoukalas 2002)? Is this not the Continent that lays claim to having been the cradle of (at least Western) civilization? From where the major global empires were built and administered, and where two world wars originated? And are we not

witnessing, in our own lifetime, the coming together of diverse European nations to build a peaceful European Union (EU), aspiring to be a major global economic power? Is not this list of stereotypes, for all its brevity, full of questionable assumptions?

Anthropologists have looked critically at these and other themes for some time, and have even engaged in debates about them with other disciplines. “Europe” as a sociocultural construct has increasingly come under the magnifying glass and one cannot help the impression that the keener the gaze, the deeper the subject recedes into a haze. Part of the problem with the definition of – the drawing of boundaries around – Europe is that its frontiers to the south and east are rather fuzzy. Is Russia part of Europe, or where does Europe’s eastern boundary run? Both Turkey and Israel regularly compete in the Eurovision Song Contest, as do various former Soviet Republics whose geographical Europeanness depends rather on where one draws an arbitrary line on the map and whose cultural Europeanness is every bit as debatable, from the hegemonic point of view, as that of Turkey, nevertheless a long time candidate for membership of the EU. Turkey is also a long-standing member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has been an important component of Europe’s defenses. But are matters any clearer in the north and west? And what about those who argue that geographically Europe is not a continent at all but merely a component in a landmass more accurately named as Eurasia? (See Hann, Chapter 6 in this volume.)

For most of the latter half of the twentieth century, “Europe” was usually conflated with “Western Europe,” while “Eastern Europe” was at best considered a debatable land. With the decline of Communism we have witnessed the fragmentation of Eastern Europe, and that concept has become increasingly fuzzy. It now appears that there could be a threefold division between East Central Europe, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe “proper” (i.e. Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia; see Burgess 1997:23).

It has always been problematic to delineate the spatial boundaries of Europe precisely, perhaps because Europe is more a conceptual than a geographical entity. Even before the emergence of Benedict Anderson’s (1983) notion of “imagined community,” it had become customary to think about Europe in terms of an “imagined space” (Said 1978), and ideas of Europe have varied considerably between different geographical locations (Malmborg and Stråth 2002; Nic Craith 2006).

And yet, in much of western and northern Europe, “Europe” is considered to be somewhere else. Looking “over one of their cultural shoulders,” Russians have always perceived Europe as on their doorstep, while the German and French perspective on Europe has been tempered by centuries of bloody conflict – for them “Europe could be just about anywhere they could live peacefully alongside one another” (Kockel 2003:53). From the traditional Danish perspective, Europe was located between their southern border and the Dolomites, and Danes crossing the German border are “going to Europe,” as do English people crossing the Channel. Irish people used to snigger at this as a typically English idiosyncrasy until they discovered, following the IMF bailout in 2010, that they never belonged to Europe either. And even the center of the Continent is hard to locate.

A large number of places, as far apart as the German Rhineland and the Lithuanian-Belarusian frontier, are laying claim to the honor, and definitions of “Central Europe”

range from “the German-speaking former Prussian and Habsburg lands” to a group of contemporary states that do not even include any of the latter. Part of that particular discrepancy lies, of course, in the way language prevalence is defined – whether it is measured according to the official language of state administration or the language spoken by the majority of the population in their everyday lives.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the concept of Europe has frequently become confused with that of the EU, and the term “Europe” is often used as shorthand when journalists make references to EU administrative and political decision-making bodies (Phillipson 2003:29). Yet the two are not coterminous. Many states, such as Switzerland and Norway, form part of historical, geographical Europe but have no representation in the European parliament.

All of this makes interesting study for anthropologists and others concerned with aspects of culture, history, and society, and so the vagueness of Europe as a concept and cultural actuality can be intriguing and inspiring rather than being an obstacle to rigorous research. However, for a book such as this, vagueness of its subject matter constitutes a certain quandary – which regions to include or exclude, whether to focus on the common perception that equates Europe and the EU, and so on. It is important to recognize that Europe is not a fixed entity, and as an analytical category it remains in historical flux.

Similarly, the discipline of anthropology, perhaps marginally more so than other fields, remains in flux. A generation ago, it was claimed (Kosuth 1991) that anthropologists were not suited to the scientific study of their own society – at a time when anthropologists were increasingly getting ready to “come home” from colonial and otherwise exotic outposts and do just that. The anthropology of Europe has, nevertheless, remained very much “in the shadow of a more proper anthropology elsewhere,” as Nigel Rapport (2002:4) put it with reference to the anthropology of Britain. Most European regions have at some stage developed the study of their own culture, usually in association with the respective project of “nation-building.” Regional and national differences have led to a proliferation of labels for these approaches, and while the designation “European ethnology” has been extensively used since it was proposed by Sigurd Erixson in the 1930s, practice in this field remains firmly focused on the local and regional, with quite limited references to any wider “Europe” of sorts. In one sense, this is a good thing because its acute awareness of the “Local” is a key strength of European ethnology; in another sense, the lack of a decidedly European perspective has made the designation a bit of a misnomer that causes confusion outside the immediate field (and often enough within it). Many of the departments and institutes of European ethnology have since the 1970s aligned themselves thematically, theoretically, and methodologically with cultural anthropology. Many of the authors in this volume would be *Grenzgänger*, scholars who cross the boundaries between an anthropology “proper” and those other approaches gathered under the label of “European ethnology.”

Rather than providing a simple, straightforward answer to the question of how “Europe” should be delineated for the purpose of this book, we have chosen a somewhat shamanic approach, beginning this exploration of the anthropology of Europe with journeys toward Europe’s cardinal directions. The chapters in the first section seek to locate Europe with reference to its various – real or imagined – geographical

frontiers. Christian Giordano reviews the original regional field of Europeanist anthropology from a perspective encompassing the Mediterranean region as a whole, identifying current issues and future research directions. He highlights the fluidity of Europe's borders by exploring the idea of the Mediterranean space as historical region which spans over three continents. This critiques some Eurocentric visions concerning both the external and internal boundaries of Europe. In a contribution on circumpolar anthropology, Hugh Beach addresses social science issues and deals with indigenous peoples and their relations to the environment.

Reginald Byron looks westward across the Atlantic, contrasting American and European perspectives. He argues against "neat tidy categories" such as multiculturalism, which are useful for the purposes of control but which can result in cultural boundaries that are unhelpful for society at large. Major issues and controversies relating to the transformations in the ethnoanthropological study of Eastern Europe since 1989 are discussed by Michał Buchowski, who explores disciplinary boundaries in the work of scholars in postsocialist Europe. This contribution reviews the achievements of academics in the fields of ethnology and anthropology with a view to bridging the gap between one group and the other and breaking down an inappropriate hierarchical division in favor of more egalitarian area studies. Chris Hann also attempts to break down geographical and conceptual boundaries. Traveling further east, he ponders the boundaries of geographical Europe as well as its cultures and society. He considers the case for a wider geocultural perspective in the context of debates about the Eurocentric nature of much of anthropology.

The concept of *Mittleuropa* or Central Europe has proved fascinating for scholars in many disciplines (for example: Ash 1989, Bauman 1989, Kundera 1984, Miłosz 1989, Schöpflin 1989, Schwarz 1989). In the final contribution in this section, Gabriela Kiliánová compares and contrasts the polycentric discipline of European ethnology with social/cultural anthropological approaches originating from or studying Central Europe. She concludes that contemporary ethnology in Central Europe finds itself on the frontiers between the historical and social disciplines. Although ethnologists in Central Europe draw on different methodological approaches, they remain strongly orientated toward cultural anthropology and the social sciences.

Following this conceptual triangulation of an anthropology and ethnology of Europe, the remainder of the volume is organized according to thematic rather than regional foci. Because the political project of European integration continues to attract a relatively large amount of anthropological research on Europe, we begin with a thematic section reviewing key aspects of EU policy, practice, and everyday lived experience. Lianne Wilken opens the section, considering how a specific "European" identity is being constructed by European, national, regional, and local agencies. She explores three different anthropological approaches to questions of culture and identity in relation to EU integration and suggests that all three contribute to our understanding of the idea of European integration and its implications for identity construction.

Since borders are a major issue for European integration, this aspect is addressed by several of the contributors. Ksenija Vidmar Horvat examines how consumer culture affects processes of European integration especially since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007. Locating her enquiry in postsocialist regions, she asks how we

will envision a post-Cold War, post-Western and post-national Europe. She believes that the postsocialist experience has central relevance for any understanding of Europe and argues that the problem of Eurocentrism will not be dismantled until the collective perceptions of Europe in postsocialist countries are fully appreciated.

The concept of a “Europe of the Regions,” from the perspective of the lived experience of internal and external border regions in particular, is discussed by Thomas M. Wilson. Pointing to the significance of these border regions for the European Commission itself, as well as for national and subnational governments, he argues that a “regional Europe” is thriving both in the cores and peripheries of every country on the European continent. Catherine Neveu and Elena Filippova reflect on issues of mobility and security in the context of the Schengen acquis and the question of a European citizenship. Drawing on their own research in France and Russia, these contributors focus on the need to distinguish between different conceptions of citizenship across the continent and in particular of its specific connections with issues of (national) identities.

Turning a spotlight on what may well be the geographical center of Europe but is currently the Eastern frontier of the EU, Justyna Straczuk discusses issues at the interface of identity and policy. Suggesting that the new eastern border of the EU may well be a very strong symbolic sign of a divided Europe, Straczuk examines the implications of a sealed political border in a particular region which traditionally enjoyed an open borderland mentality. The chapter explores the contradictions and full implications of a political border which orientalizes and excludes near neighbors while promoting the idea of a “unified Europe” which can appear very illusory. Marion Demossier concludes this section with a discussion of how EU policies are experienced, negotiated, and sometimes subverted at the grass roots level. This chapter highlights the contribution that anthropology can make to an understanding of social and cultural processes in Europe and argues for anthropological expertise at the core of debates on the relationship between culture and politics in the EU.

In years to come, readers might expect to find in this part of the book a discussion of anthropological perspectives on the Eurozone crisis. That crisis escalated at a time when this volume was almost ready (these lines are written as the cancellation of the Greek referendum on the latest EU bailout of the Greek economy is being announced on the radio), and so has become one of the inevitable lacunae that occur when events overtake analysis and publication schedules; a subsequent edition may well take up this topic, perhaps in the context of a broader evaluation of the cultural foundations of European social economy and its post-Capitalist transformations.

Culture and identity have always been difficult issues for the EU and the concept of EU cultural identity usually refers to the sum total of national icons and identities. The Preamble to the Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Convention 2003:75) suggests that the Union “contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States.” Inevitably, there are difficulties associated with this process. Cultural elements such as memory, shared heritage, and history, which unify identities at the national level tend to divide them at European level (Shore 2000:18). The overarching principle of unity in diversity has proved very difficult to carry through. “Diversity is a wild

and chameleonic animal with thousands of heads that can hardly be kept imprisoned in the case of one legal principle” (Toggenburg 2004:18). The motto “unity in diversity” could be construed in many different ways. Obviously, it could be regarded as an acknowledgment and affirmation of the diverse range of European (national) identities and cultures, as well as including the various regional and minority cultures. However, it could also be viewed as an appropriation of power and symbolism to the center – as if “Europe’s ‘mosaic of cultures’ was but a multiplicity of smaller units in a greater European design.” From that viewpoint, European culture is characterized as the “over-arching, encapsulating and transcendent composite of national cultures; a whole greater than the sum of its discordant parts” (Shore 2000:54).

Chapters in the third section of this volume focus on whether there is such a thing as a single European heritage or collective identity. Sharon Macdonald, looking at how Europeans have been dealing with their past, both publicly and privately, introduces the concept of *past presencing* to avoid the problematic categorization of “history” versus “memory.” Taking the breakup of Yugoslavia as a case study, Maja Povrzanović Frykman considers aspects of conflict and recovery on the continent. She argues for the importance of fieldwork as a basis for an anthropology of “state-building” that can draw on the anthropology of “transition,” the anthropology of state, and the anthropology of violence and recovery. Peter Jan Margry reviews the significance of belief systems in Europe, past and present, with particular reference to popular religion today. Significantly, he explores the relationship between changes in the history of Europe and the way in which individual and collective developments have been inspired by Europe’s (Christian) past. Continuing with the theme of religion and its political aspects, Gabriele Marranci reviews the study of Muslims in Europe and the challenges that anthropologists face in engaging with such issues, not least of which are questions of definition, especially how one defines Muslims in Europe. With this, Marranci is highlighting a critical aspect of European ethnic ascription. Challenging conventional definitions of “European,” Sabrina Kopf takes up the theme of “othering” in her study of Roma and Sinti, who represent the largest ethnic minority within the EU, with an estimated population of 10–12 million. Finally, Norbert Fischer examines if and how a specific European sense of place may be founded in visions of landscape. People have always invested landscapes with meaning and the idea of a European perspective on landscape is not necessarily new. However, the definition of the concept of landscape has changed and there is greater recognition of its dynamic and fluid nature as well as its significance for understanding people and society.

Identity and heritage are inextricably linked to cultural practice, but not all such practice is explicitly aimed at establishing identity and defining heritage. In the fourth section, contributors offer ethnoanthropological perspectives on key aspects of cultural practice in European everyday life. Orvar Löfgren deals with tourism as a specific form of mobility and its potential contribution to European integration “from below.” Exploring the institutionalization of travel and the routines of holiday making, Löfgren examines the ways in which the tourist Europeanizes Europe. This exploration is not confined to the continent itself but also to the way European models of tourism have been exported to other regions of the globe.

In a contribution that takes up threads from the second and third sections, Gisela Welz discusses aspects of diversity, regulation, and heritage production in relation to

European food cultures. Since European Union policies impact directly on food products and on the process of production, it follows that that European consumption habits are strongly shaped by such policies. Welz introduces the concept of “foodscape” and explores the impact of sometimes contradictory EU policies on what we eat and drink at the beginning of the new century.

Different cultural perspectives and traditions are an ongoing issue for the EU, and one of its most difficult challenges is the management of the range of languages and dialects spoken on the Continent. The changing role of languages in the context of intercultural identity politics and the challenges that this diversity poses for Europe are assessed in a contribution by Máiréad Nic Craith. The treatment of cultural rights by various agencies is a difficult issue, and one of direct relevance for states that query the right of women to wear a burqa or the right, for example, of Somali migrants to circumcise their female children according to traditional customs. Valdimar Hafstein and Martin Skrydstrup explore different ways of telling stories of cultural rights and the different appeals to tradition or human dignity which can be used to support such claims. Christina Garsten compares and contrasts different approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR), assessing their relevance for contemporary Europe. Arguing that CSR is a concept which impacts on larger issues such as globalization, Garsten proposes that it has relevance for the relativity or universality of human rights and values. David Murphy takes us into the dark heart of Europe with his examination of the Far Right music scene as an aspect of cultural identity. Murphy’s argument is that in some instances music scenes have offered an alternative avenue of belonging for young people who are not particularly interested in ideals of nationalism. Finally in this section, Christiane Schwab takes a critical look at urban life through an anthropological lens. In 2005, more than half of the world’s population lived in urban environments, and this proportion is on the increase. Schwab’s contribution explores relationships between anthropologists and cities and the theoretical and methodological responses to urban issues.

The fifth and final section deals with areas where disciplinary boundaries are explicitly and deliberately being crossed. This may seem a strange notion, given our earlier pointer toward the blurred disciplinary boundaries of anthropology. It may be said with some justification that many anthropologists are less concerned with the maintenance of canonical disciplinary purity than some of their academic peers in disciplinary ivory towers, and that this willingness to engage is perhaps a result of the anthropologists’ greater experience of cross-cultural perspectives. There is, of course, also the “four fields” view of anthropology – physical, cultural (or ethnological), linguistics, and archaeology – especially in the US-American tradition, which in itself constitutes a multiple boundary-crossing.

The chapters in this section raise issues in interdisciplinary developments with reference to key areas of cross-disciplinary collaboration, beginning with Maryon McDonald’s discussion of the role of anthropology in relation to medicine and science, both as a contributor to and a critical perspective on these disciplines, which to some extent connects with that “four fields” tradition. Elisenda Ardévol and Aldofo Estalella examine the growing uses of the Internet in ethnographic research. They draw an important distinction between the Internet as a tool of research versus the Internet as an object of study, which illustrates the complexities of conceptions

of the Internet for anthropological research and the challenges and opportunities it poses for fieldwork.

The rise of interactive media and its implications for ethnography is explored by Terence Wright from the perspective of visual culture. Traditionally, the relationship between anthropology and the visual arts has not been easy, but in highlighting the significance of the visual in contemporary culture, Wright emphasizes the pertinence of visual culture and visual representations of culture for anthropologists. Elka Tscher-nokoshewa reviews theoretical and practical implications of the increasing realization that cultural worlds are hybrid rather than pure. Citing Ina-Maria Greverus (2002:26), she suggests that anthropologists themselves are becoming more and more hybrid. The hermeneutic value of creative writing for anthropological inquiry is evaluated by Helena Wulff with reference to an Irish case study. Engaging with texts is not a new practice for anthropologists. In 1973, Clifford Geertz proposed the notion of culture as text. He suggested that the “culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (Geertz 1977[1973]:452). He compared the process of doing ethnography with “trying to read (in the sense of ‘construct a reading of’) a manuscript.” Wulff notes that anthropologists have become more reflexive regarding their own writing, and she raises the provocative question: Can writing be taught?

Ullrich Kockel concludes this section with an ethnoecological meditation on issues of place and displacement, opening up critical viewpoints for an ethnology that has to grapple with the contentious politics of belonging.

In the concluding essay to this companion, Jonas Frykman takes stock of European ethnology and the anthropology of Europe at this historical juncture, and locates European ethnology in the wider field of anthropology, especially the anthropology of Europe, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

It is inevitable with a project of this scope that one has to be selective with regard to issues and aspects to be included. There are gaps in the coverage of regions and themes. Moreover, some of the topics we had originally hoped to cover in the volume could not be included for various reasons. A different editorial team may well have chosen a different set of foci and approached the treatment of the overall theme differently. In the context of a discipline and subject matter in considerable flux, that can only be a good thing, engendering debate and further development of the field. With this in mind, we invited contributions to this volume from both well-established scholars and emerging researchers, who are, after all, the future of the discipline, and who will be shaping the agenda for such debate and development. Although this is a European volume, we did not confine ourselves to scholars located on that continent, but aimed instead to present a list of contributors who are experts in Europeanist anthropology/ethnology – regardless of their location. Moreover, we have encouraged contributors not to confine themselves to English-language material and resources, instead taking a broad perspective which would embrace the multilingual nature of the European experience. Our aim with this collection has been to be comprehensive, but not exhaustive, explorative but not definitive. In due course, we hope to complement this volume with a reader that will cover some of the topics that could not be included here and provide further food for thought on those that could.

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