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After exoticism*

Ethnography as critique

Abstract: A new version of the ethnological understanding of critique seems ne-
cessary, since the mode of ethnological critique which has been effective for a long time
has fallen into crisis: The search for the 'foreign' as a critical mirror of 'Western' civili-
zation and bourgeois culture. I propose to understand ethnographic critique instead as
a special form of 'representational critique.' The critical use of ethnographic research is,
thus, less about what is being researched and more about how objects of research are
understood and presented, i.e. it is about the specific form of representation. In a first
step, I will point out – without claiming to be exhaustive – some historical references
and current fields of critical practice in cultural and social anthropology that provide
links for a new understanding of critique: The genealogical-postcolonial critique, the
neoliberalization critique of 'Dark Anthropology' and Science and Technology Studies.
In a second step, I will highlight the particularities of a representational ethnographic
critique, its typical forms and modes, in the context of current debates on the concept
of critique. In contrast to other forms of critique, ethnographic critique is far more
reflexive, object-related and willful. The critical potential, thus, lies in ethnography
itself, and its modes of research and representation.

Keywords: critique, ethnography, exoticism, writing culture, representation

The history of ethnology, both in European contexts and beyond, can also be read
as a history of a changing understanding of critique. In the following, however, I
will neither provide a historical analysis of the changing understanding of critique
in different contexts of ethnology nor turn the diverse critical approaches that are
currently in play in the discipline against each other. Instead of a categorical (new)
definition of critique, I plead for a mode of critique which has implicitly already
been practiced in different ethnological streams of research but whose characteris-
tics will be elaborated on more strongly.

A new orientation of the ethnological understanding of critique seems neces-
sary because a powerful mode of ethnological critique has come under crisis: The
search for the 'stranger' as a critical mirror of 'Western' civilization and bourgeois
culture (Kohl 1986). This 'other,' which was romanticized with numerous projections,

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could be searched for in Africa or the Amazon, but also, with somewhat different connotations, in the Swabian Alps or the proletarian quarters of Berlin. Hans Peter Duerr's 1978 study *Traumzeit. Über die Grenzen zwischen Wildnis und Zivilisation* presents us with the fascination but also the pitfalls of this form of critique once again in a pointed manner. The transgression of the border between 'civilization' and 'wilderness' which is propagated in it links cultural critique with promises of liberation. It corresponded to the contemporary sentiments of counterculture but also came with a heavy dose of male heroism and intellectual pathos. With the processes of globalization, neoliberalism and digitization which have been moving to the center since the 1980s, this form of cultural critique which longed for the other no longer appeared topical, as the world appeared increasingly interconnected. With the 'crisis of representation,' the epistemic and ethical dilemmas of ethnological exoticism became apparent, such as the problematic connections with romantic ideas of the world and (post-)colonial structures of governance. Today, ethnological exoticism has been largely discredited but the temptations of 'othering,' the danger of stylizing and enshrining cultural difference continue to loom.

The farewell to ethnological exoticism (including the 'internal exoticism' in folklore studies) was long overdue; however, it remained unclear what was to succeed it. In retrospect to the 1980s, George Marcus (2008) speaks of a critical turn which began at that time, of an emerging new self-understanding of ethnological research as critical research, with the question of the way and manner in which ethnographic research took on a key role for the future self-orientation of the discipline for him. Which mode of critique is becoming apparent after exoticism and what the specific contribution of ethnographic critique may look like are questions that need to be asked in this changed constellation. The focus of the critique has recently increasingly been directed at the culture of late modern society: At transnational phenomena, such as migration and borders (Hess and Kasparek 2010), at social movements and state institutions (Adam and Vonderau 2014; Sharma and Gupta 2006) and, finally, at secularism, colonialism and the modernism of modernity itself (Asad 2003; Asad et al. 2013; Latour 2008). The critique is, thus, moving closer; it became more direct but also more vulnerable, as it was no longer able to take recourse to exclusive knowledge of the 'strange.' In addition, more and more overlap with other disciplines occurred, on the one hand, between European and extra-European ethnology in the German context and, on the other hand, to neighboring disciplines, such as sociology.

I, therefore, suggest conceiving of ethnographic critique as a special form of 'representational critique.' The critical potential of ethnographic research, therefore, lies less in what is studied but more in how objects of study are understood and presented – and, thus in the specific form of representation. However, what is representational critique? Different approaches to critique are presented in the anthology

Was ist Kritik?, edited by Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (2009), for instance, in Wesche's (2009) essay *Reflexion, Therapie, Darstellung. Formen der Kritik* (Reflection, therapy, representation. Forms of critique). In the latter, representational critique is understood as a particularly effective form of critique, because its persuasive power is not based on postulating higher moral ground or an epistemic claim to truth. Through a subversive critique that sets out from an everyday understanding, one can not only reach the ones who already share the same critical positions but also those who may be interested in a certain problem but still need to be convinced. The prototype of representational critique is literary representation. Wesche's example is Miguel de Cervantes' novel *Don Quijote*, in which a phenomenon is criticized precisely through refraining from persuasive, moralizing or therapeutic formulations, and instead by its multifaceted representation. Instead of shortening the contexts of problems, he avoids simplifications and points out surprising connections. Such a form of critique is more hidden but, simultaneously, more accessible since it is not postulated in an abstract way but reveals states of being. While the representational critique that is oriented at literature is still primarily directed at an unease with individuals and their way of life, ethnographic critique, which is oriented more towards social theory, is more likely to target constellations and social conditions that produce problematic attitudes or actions worthy of critique. Finally, Wesche himself again distinguishes between different facets of representational critique: In dialogue, he points out possibilities and establishes an open-minded attitude towards critique; theory opens up conceptual options and provides new perspectives; and in the arts, an uncontrollable surplus of meaning is produced which can dissolve biases and initiate a new way of thinking.

A subsequent ethnological understanding of critique is similar to the philosophical models of an opening and a facilitating critique developed after Adorno, Foucault and Deleuze. According to this understanding, ethnographic research can open up unusual perspectives and, thus, question ingrained views. Analysis and critique are not separated from one another; rather, critique is already contained in the representation and interpretation. Instead of postulating norms, the dominant interests, values and claims themselves are questioned. Such a form of critique must be daring and provocative, for only in this way can it irritate entrenched ways of looking at things in a sustainable manner. This calls for shifts in interpretation and narrative condensations, for experiments with diverse genres of text and representation, and, thus, for an opening up of ethnography towards artistic approaches and literary methods.

In a first step, I will – without claiming to be exhaustive – briefly point out some historical references and current fields of critical practice in cultural and social anthropology to which such an understanding of critique can connect. In a second step, I will highlight the particularities of a representational ethnographic critique,

its typical forms and modes, in the context of current debates on the concept of critique.

Fields of critical practice in cultural and social anthropology

The last major inventory of ethnological critique was the survey *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, written by George Marcus and Michael Fisher, which had already diagnosed a "declining appeal of the primitive/exotic" (Marcus and Fisher 1986: 133) that had long motivated and guided ethnological cultural critique. After first discussing the contemporary currents in ethnology, the authors suggested in the later part of the book how ethnology/cultural anthropology itself could be understood as a form of cultural critique. In order to do justice to this claim, they argued, it would have to combine three impulses: A theoretical verve linked to the (early) Frankfurt School, a sensitivity for problems of representing the "real" trained in French Surrealism, and an empirical focus on poverty and marginal social situations linked to the US documentary tradition of the 1930s. Combining these approaches would avoid pitfalls resulting from their isolated application: A theory without vividness and practical contradictions (Frankfurt School), an aloof sensitivity and playfulness (Surrealism) and a naïve empiricism without adequate theoretical perspectivation (documentations of poverty). According to the authors, an ethnographic critique that followed this approach would have to unite the following in order not to be merely affirmative description: It must follow critical theoretical traditions (not necessarily only the Frankfurt School, one might add), it must be open to irritations and surprises and, therefore, vary and experiment accordingly with its modes of representation (not necessarily only with surrealist methods), and it must deal with cultural misdevelopments and social injustices in society (but not exclusively with poverty).

This proposal is still convincing but, after more than 30 years, some additions seem necessary: On the one hand, regarding the relationship between ethnology and critical theory, recent ethnological references to the first generation of the Frankfurt School stand out, especially concerning Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno (Taussig 2006), which are, however, typically combined with various other currents of critical theory. On the other hand, there is a discussion within the Frankfurt School about the extent to which the perspectives of those involved should be given greater weight, which would go hand in hand with an increased turn towards ethnographic approaches (Celikates 2009). The ethnographic surrealism to which Marcus and Fisher refer had its origins in Paris in the 1920s and 30s, when an elective affinity between ethnology and artistic avant-gardes emerged. In the ethnographic-surrealist period which developed during this period, the marvelous and poetic aspects of everyday life were emphasized, instead of their normality and reality, a fascination with the exotic went hand in hand with a playful look at one's own

culture, and culturally disparate elements were artistically connected through the use of techniques of collage and montage (Wellgraf and Schwanhäußer 2015). This research attitude has always been in tension with the 'mainstream' of ethnological research; it experienced another boom after the Second World War around 1968, and it was rediscovered in the United States in the early 1980s by James Clifford (1981) under postmodern auspices. Ethnographic studies on poverty were also influenced by a fascination for the 'others'. One of the classics of poverty research, thus, bears the title *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis 1997). This form of intra societal exoticism was closely linked to bourgeois projections and social welfare (Wietschorke 2013). The authors of the Chicago School particularly ventured into the 'dark' quarters of the industrialized cities from the 1920s onwards. The attention in the course of the change from poverty to exclusion research (Knecht 1999; Lindner 2004) shifted from the characteristics of people to the conditions which produce exclusion. In addition, the interdependencies and the mutual constitution of various relationships of inequality have recently been brought more into focus (Hess, Langreiter, and Timm 2011). Finally, academic- and university-related milieus themselves have come into view along with research on precarization (Sutter 2013). This was accompanied by a changed tone, the description became more personal and biographical, and the researchers themselves were now drifting on uncertain ground (Venkatesh 2013).

Following on from the actualization of these historical references, some newer fields of critical ethnographic practice since the 1980s can also be identified in which forms of representational critique have already implicitly played an important role: Genealogical-postcolonial critique, the neoliberalization critique of Dark Anthropology, as well as Science and Technology Studies (STS).

Postcolonial critique focuses on the continuing effects of colonial patterns of thought and governance up to the present (Castro Valera and Dhawan 2005). By placing established cultural patterns in a colonial context, a reevaluation of traditional self-images and institutional arrangements takes place. This critique is usually a historicizing line of argument according to which many of the fundamental problems of our time are based on the aftereffects of colonial structures that have not yet been sufficiently recognized. In her book *Duress*, US anthropologist Ann Stoler speaks of duress as a way of working out the colonial history of the present. In addition to the hardened effects and structures of imperial formations, she emphasizes, above all, the subtler mechanisms of postcolonial modes of governance: "[T]heir durable, if sometimes intangible constraints and confinements" (Stoler 2016: 7). She conceives of her style of writing as a postcolonially oriented form of genealogy, which, following Foucault (2002), she does not understand as an abstract theoretical program (and certainly not as a fashionable slogan). She connects this to being tasked with uncovering the historical depths of current social upheavals through empirical and conceptual fine-tuning, while, at the same time, investigating the political impact of

alternative, broken and buried history(ies). Such a genealogical critique (Saar 2007) aims at a change of view and perspective: The object of investigation should be seen 'with different eyes' after reading. This calls for special forms of representation, selective historical references, pointed descriptions and sometimes for drastic theses which can also give scientific texts a special urgency and persuasive power. Achille Mbembe's (2017) *Critique of Black Reason*, a mixture of historical treatise, journalistic essay and political manifesto which further sharpens postcolonial positions with daring theses ("the world has become black"), can be read as a current example of such a form of critical genealogical writing.

Since the 1990s at the latest, genealogical and postcolonial perspectives have become one of the most important drivers of critical research in ethnology. Critical research on Europeanization responds to the call to 'decenter' Europe (Chakrabarty 2010) by highlighting its interwoven genealogies and current entanglements. The search for perspectives beyond Eurocentrism (*Jenseits des Eurozentrismus*, Conrad, Randeria, and Röhmhild 2013) goes hand in hand with a reassessment of Western-influenced epistemologies, hierarchical spatial orders and the dominant understanding of nations. Migration movements and border policies no longer appear as a marginal phenomenon but as fundamental to the constitution of modern societies (Hess and Kasparek 2010; Labor Migration 2014). Genealogical critique also plays a central role in feminist deconstructivism and activism (Butler 2009) and Gender and Queer Studies, which are connected to it. Since this academic current emerged in the 1980s from the social struggles for gender equality, there has already been a long discussion in this area about the tense relationship between research and activism and the possibilities of politically engaged science (Binder et al. 2013). One challenge here is to develop a form of ethnographic critique based on the critical deconstruction of powerful normative orders that can do without new norms and associated exclusions. Institutions shaped by colonialism and imperialism, such as the ethnological museums in Western Europe, appear in a different light from a postcolonial perspective, and their traditional ways of collection and representation appear increasingly problematic (Edenheiser and Förster 2019). With the postcolonial turn, ethnological fieldwork itself, together with the assumptions and approaches inscribed in it, finally, also moved into the focus of critique, as it was connected in many ways with colonial structures during its emergence (Asad 1973).

Dark Anthropology, a sort of dark shadow, also hovers over the present in a related field of critique; only here, it is not colonialism but rather neoliberalism that darkens the world. US ethnologist Sherry Ortner, in her text "Dark Anthropology and Its Others" (2016), points to the tendency of ethnographic writing that has been emerging since the 1980s to increasingly turn the hardships of everyday life and their socio-structural causes in the context of neoliberal transformations. The rise of Dark Anthropology stands for a break with ethnological exoticism and

primitivism. Ethnologists are now less enchanted by the foreign, and they no longer delegate the 'others' to a lower level of civilization. They focus instead increasingly on social exclusion and social dislocation in a world marked by political tensions, economic exploitation and social divisions. It was economic, social and cultural interdependencies which moved to the center of attention in a radical departure from the old cultural model, according to which fieldwork was conducted in cultures that were as foreign and untouched as possible, preferably in societies without state and capitalism. This sociopolitical thrust goes hand in hand with alternative currents that balance and continue them, as it were. On the one hand, Ortner addresses the increasing preoccupation with questions of a good, meaningful and future-oriented life and, on the other hand, the revival of ethnographic critique, in the double sense that ethnographers prefer to examine resistant behavior and understand their writing itself as a form of social critique. The critique of neoliberalization can also be applied to university practice itself, especially when the pressures of utilization and career aspects put a strain on fieldwork and, thus, undermine the basic conditions of the form of critique envisaged here.

My own books on the social production of contempt (Wellgraf 2012) by Berlin school students attending a *Hauptschule* and the emotional experience of inferiority in neoliberal times (Wellgraf 2018) could be grouped into a series of dark ethnographies (Bourgeois and Schonberg 2009; Willis 1977). German students are streamed into different secondary schools after primary school. The *Hauptschule* provides a lower secondary education up to year 9 or 10. There is a correlation between social exclusion, racism and secondary school attendance that is the subject of an ongoing debate in German society. Regarding the temporal positioning of research in 'neoliberal times,' a contemporary historical perspective is opened up and, as it were, the thrust of critique is alluded to in a way which addresses undesirable developments but attempts to avoid reductionism. Neoliberalism is a controversial term that, especially in the German-speaking world, still has a reputation for being unsound. In fact, it is used to describe and often also evaluate very different phenomena, but it is precisely this possibility of thinking about different political-economic trends of development together, such as the liberalization of labor markets, the deregulation of financial markets and the dismantling of social security systems, that again speaks in favor of a cautious use of the term that avoids analytical shortcuts (Biebricher 2012; Brown 2015; Hall 2011; Ther 2014). But how can neoliberalization processes be illustrated ethnographically? Studies on feelings are particularly suitable for the analysis of processes of subjectivation, since they make it possible to understand how social standards are internalized and processed. My research on secondary school students in Berlin provides numerous findings on the profound effects of neoliberal socialization, especially the individualistic attribution of responsibility to those at the losing end of the educational spectrum. Yet, at the same time, this also

indicates ruptures and tensions in the neoliberal governing regime. The emotional experiences did not fit smoothly into the social order; they often arose in conflict with it and resulted from resistant practices.

Science and Technology Studies is a somewhat different current of research, which is primarily devoted to the intertwining of science, technology and everyday life (Beck, Niewöhner, and Sörensen 2012). While STS was initially devoted to the *Fabrikation von Erkenntnis* (Manufacture of Knowledge) (Knorr Cetina 2002) in scientific laboratories, its radius of research has now expanded considerably. An approach based on everyday life and practice theory is crucial for the ethnological variant of STS. The main focus is on technical and medical anthropology. Thus, in Germany for example, Katrin Amelang (2014) recently studied organ transplants and Martina Klausener (2015) focused on psychiatric practices. The basic assumptions of *New Materialism* include a destabilization of the difference between culture and nature as well as between subject and object (Gesing et al. 2019), an emphasis on the productive character of materialities and the agency of objects (Bennett 2010), and, finally, a networked understanding of subject-object relations and a practical-theoretical perspective on the corresponding structures or arrangements (Mol 2002). In a way, what is being pursued is an exoticization of modernity itself, whose own rationalist basic assumptions are thereby called into question (Latour 2008). Since this line of research deals specifically with knowledge production, it is obvious that ethnological research methods have also been critically reflected in this context. Thus, following the debates of the 1980s, Michi Knecht pleads for an ethnography of emergent forms, for more open, fragmentary, collaborative and anticipatory forms of ethnographic writing. In doing so, she takes as her starting point a broad and, to a certain extent, a tripartite concept of ethnography that includes participant observation, the mostly textual presentation of research results and a specific empirical-theoretical nexus (Knecht 2012).

Furthermore, the understanding of theory and critique that is developing in the STS context is relevant to the discussion here. Authors such as Bruno Latour (2010) argue for not presupposing social structures but rather for following movements and associations in which the social is composed of heterogeneous elements in ever new and unpredictable ways. The skepticism towards structural postulates goes hand in hand with an undogmatic, selective and associative understanding of theory in which analytical connecting lines and categories are not predetermined but are developed and constantly modified in the course of fieldwork. The productivity of this approach lies in the fact that critical theories are not simply applied to empirical practice but that both are regarded as fundamentally intertwined (Kalthoff, Hirschauer, and Lindemann 2008), and that concepts are further developed, combined and reformulated during the engagement with the field. A modified understanding of critique is also derived from this. Latour, in a polemical text entitled

"Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern"
(2004), calls for an expansion of our critical vocabulary: Instead of exposing 'secret
powers,' such as colonialism or neoliberalism, and, thus, always knowing the real
cause of the world's problems in advance, we should turn to the actual things that
matter and give the elements of the social the opportunity to assemble in new ways.
According to this, the critic envisaged is not the one who exposes but the one who
gathers (Latour 2007: 55). While the warning against structuralist foreshortening is
certainly appropriate, the radical departure from all previous forms of critique seems
somewhat premature. If one takes into account that practice-theory approaches are
already widespread in Dark Anthropology and that the postcolonial discussion has
strong links to post-structuralism, productive connections could rather be made
between the critical research directions currently in circulation.

The refocusing of ethnological critique outlined here calls for modified forms of
representation, for an alienation of one's own culture (Amann and Hirschauer 1997).
This is a major challenge, especially in the representation of social institutions that
are taken for granted, such as nations, museums or schools, since the dominant state
standards of evaluation shape their perception and assessment (Bourdieu 2017).
Critique directed at this self-understanding is received differently from earlier forms
of ethnological critique; it must be prepared for more massive resistance, both from
other university disciplines and the representatives of the institutions that are being
studied themselves. Ethnographic authority, which has already been severely eroded
(Clifford 1986), is sometimes radically questioned in this endeavor. Ethnologists
now no longer appear as amiable outsiders but as unpleasant troublemakers. How-
ever, new opportunities are also emerging: An ethnographic critique which is more
sociopolitically oriented and interested in one's own culture can now contribute to
current public debates in a more direct and effective way. And, finally, it can develop
its theses more strongly in dialogue with those being researched and support them
more effectively in social struggles. In order for the already rather quiet voice of
ethnology/cultural anthropology not to become lost in the self-confident chorus of
academic critique, it is important to work out what distinguishes an ethnographic
critique that follows after exoticism from other forms of critique.

Contours of an ethnographically guided understanding of critique

Different camps of critique can be identified in the humanities and social sciences
whose representatives are usually extremely critical towards each other. Ethnology
can learn from the discussions about the different models of critique, but it takes
on a special role that is characterized by an open understanding of critique in which
different models of critique can be flexibly combined with one another.

A split between an external critique and an internal critique becomes apparent
in the philosophical discussion. The external or universalist critique assesses the

world in comparison with abstract standards that are considered universally valid. It refers, for example, to Kant's categorical imperative to act only according to maxims that we want to be universally valid (O'Neill 2000). Michael Walzer (1990, 2000), on the other hand, points to the problem of an unconnected critique which is oriented towards purely fictitious moral standards and does not result from the practical involvement of researchers in the fields they are studying. Above all, he recommends courage, compassion and a good eye to critics – virtues that would certainly also suit ethnographers well (Walzer 1990: 77). The standard of critique in the internal or particularist critique that he represents is worked out from the field of investigation itself, for example, when norms apply in an institution that are disregarded in institutional practice. The immanent critique of Hegelian coinage (Stahl 2013) is partly understood as a special form of internal critique, but it also has points of reference to universalist positions, since it claims to develop a context-spanning validity from an internal starting point. It starts less with an explicit canon of values but more with the implicit normativity of social action, with the problematic relationships between normative settings and practices constituted through them.

In addition to these classical positions, there are also alternative models of critique that are of particular interest for the understanding of critique proposed here. Rather than assigning the task of describing the everyday experience of social suffering to writers and ethnographers in a disciplinary division of labor (Rorty 1989: 161), this approach tends to expand the boundaries of what critical scholarship can be. A (world-)opening critique (Honneth 2000) that is trained on Adorno and Horkheimer's (1998) daring project of a dialectic of the Enlightenment attempts to expand the circulating critical vocabulary through creative redescriptions. The normative judgement is evoked rather than being derived in an abstract manner. The aim is not only a new view of social conditions but also a critical reflection of the value standards applicable. Such a form of critique is characterized by the description of facets of social reality which have received little attention to date and, in addition, attempts to challenge entrenched views through linguistic condensations and the shifting of meanings. Judith Butler, in dialogue with Foucault (Butler 2009; Foucault 1992), understands an "enabling" critique as a practice that opens up alternative scopes through new arrangements and new descriptions. A form of critique with a similar orientation, more akin to Spinoza and Deleuze, emphasizes the unfinished, nascent character of the world and attempts to approach the potentials and imaginations slumbering within it. Joao Biehl and Peter Locke in their book *Unfinished. The Anthropology of Becoming* (2017*)* present the critical potential of a post-Deleuzian ethnology characterized by a combination of strong empirical relevance and radical analytical openness. In this approach, the ethnographic sensorium is directed at the surprising and the inappropriate, at the changes and openings and, thus, follows the unfinished, mobile character of the social.

Different models of critique are also in circulation in sociology (Bröckling 2017: 365–382), the first being a positivist understanding that does not want to know anything about the critique of social conditions and regards critique merely as a method of falsification within science. Secondly, a sociology of critique (Boltanski 2010) which takes the critical practices of the actors into consideration but which itself regards the normative standpoint of a social critic as untenable. This pragmatic camp formulates critique solely from the internal perspective of the field and, thus, primarily against Pierre Bourdieu's perspective of the sociology of domination, which is more strongly characterized by social structural concepts, such as social class or neoliberalism. Following Platon's allegory of the cave, some dig inside the cave, while others look at the cave from the outside. Didier Fassin (2017) has rightly pointed out that this distinction makes no sense for ethnologists, who, due to the interplay of proximity and distance that is characteristic of fieldwork, find themselves both inside and outside the cave and seek to combine a complex interior perspective with an equally complex exterior perspective.

Thirdly, a critical, in the broadest sense, post-Marxist sociology can finally be identified which follows the claim not only to describe social conditions but also to point out grievances and addresses social contradictions. In this critical sociology, according to Bröckling (2017), one can distinguish between a normativist and a negativist variant; the former is based on positive ideals (such as 'justice' or the 'good life'), the latter phrases its critique by pointing out obvious undesirable developments. In relation to this third variant of critique, the question of the relationship between activist and scientific critique also arises. The two cannot be strictly separated from one another. Migration and gender studies are particularly closely linked with political activism in European ethnology, as has already been indicated, and research itself can be understood as a form of political interventionism (Binder et al. 2013). Ethnography and activism can inspire each other, but, in some cases, they also follow different logics. Descriptive critique in the sense of pointing out complexities, contradictions and ambiguities often cannot be directly translated into political discourses and activist action but rather questions and irritates them.

Ethnographies comprise – in different ratios – both narrative descriptions and theoretical or conceptual reflections, thus, combining theory with literary forms of representation. Ethnographers not only choose between different variants of critique; they also combine them in a relatively unrestrained manner. Thus, Anna Tsing combines insights from various currents of critical theory in her study *The Mushrooms at the End of the World* (2015). She uses, *inter alia*, a feminist philosophy of technology to destabilize the distinction between nature and culture and works out unusual value chains with reference to (post-)Marxist discussions. However, she does not focus on theories but on a mushroom in her ethnography by stylistically orienting herself on mushroom analogies and constructing her text as a sort of

rhizomatic network. Such an approach requires an unorthodox understanding of theory, the ability to associate and combine but also knowledge of various contexts of discussion. This means that individual theoretical strands in the ethnographic text often cannot be presented comprehensively as they would otherwise threaten to overwhelm the empirical presentation. This, in turn, often provokes unease among readers from specific camps of theory who feel that their own critical strands of theory are underrepresented or not derived in sufficient detail.

This tension is exemplified by the relationship between ethnology and the aforementioned Frankfurt School. As with other schools of theory, there is an interplay between mutual fascination and latent skepticism. Authors from the context of the Frankfurt School, such as Robin Celikates (2009), have recently referred to ethnographic approaches in order to take greater account of the moral standards of actors in theory formation. However, his diagnoses of a structural deficit of reflection among marginalized groups (2009: 183) or of cognitive dissonances among the actors (2009: 243) indicates that the asymmetry between intellectuals and laypersons is still persistent even in progressive philosophical discourse. Conversely, ethnologists make use of the theoretical offerings of the Frankfurt School but hardly in a way that strict theorists will appreciate or even respect as a form of theoretical reflection. However, some of the weaknesses of the Frankfurt School could be addressed through a combination with other approaches that are common in ethnology: With post-structuralist authors, whose analyses on subject formation and authorship can be read as an objection to the latent intentionalism of parts of Critical Theory; with practice theory approaches, whose references to the material and corporeal dimension of the social turn against the widespread philosophical mentalism; with British Cultural Studies, whose focus on youth and popular culture is directed against tendencies of bourgeois elitism in cultural critique; and with Postcolonial and Gender Studies, who rebel against ethnocentrism and male dominance in academically established philosophical schools of thought.

Consequently, the ethnographic form of critique cannot be reduced to one of the forms of critique described; what constitutes it is more of an overarching and flexible understanding of critique. The different approaches can complement each other; they need neither be epistemically excluded nor categorically separated from each other. Alternatively, the critical potential of ethnography unfolds through the combination of different perspectives and patterns of argumentation – this, too, makes ethnography 'thick.' Critique tends to take place in a narrative mode, in a description coupled with analytical reflections and theoretical discussions. The question of an appropriate form of critique is, thus, not decided in advance in terms of theory but must be renegotiated time and again and compared with personal and theoretical assumptions. An open, flexible understanding of critique is, therefore, fundamental to representational critique.

Such an understanding of critique is difficult to define in abstract terms; it is characterized more by a different mode of critique. In contrast to other forms of critique, ethnographic critique is clearly more reflective, object-related and willful. The constant reflection of one's own perspective of observation and argumentation is of crucial importance because of its theoretical openness. Both the object of critique and the theoretical standpoint are not taken for granted but as constructed and bound to position (Allerkamp, Valdivia Orozco, and Witt 2015). Ethnologists can never reproduce their research subjects in their entirety; they only ever create 'partial truths,' a play on words by which James Clifford (1986) pointed out that ethnological 'truths' are always partial and biased. The form of representation – selection, description and interpretation – is, therefore, of special importance as it reveals the critical impetus of the writer. Category formations tend to be met with skepticism; for the sake of understanding, they cannot be completely dispensed with; at the same time, ethnologists are aware of the powerful and restrictive effects of such naming practices that define and normalize, establish and assign. The frequent use of quotation marks in ethnological texts points to this dilemma. Moreover, 'good writing' plays a greater role in ethnology than in other subjects because of the special importance and constructivist understanding of subject descriptions, and, therefore, there is more scope in the subject to experiment with different genres of representation, using literary (e.g. portraits), artistic (e.g. collages) or visual (e.g. photographs and ethnological films) forms of representation.

The self-reflexive mode was made possible in the 1980s by a vehement critique of othering: Johannes Fabian (1983) criticized at the time that the researched in ethnology were denied contemporaneity by imagining them in an unspecific 'there and then.' Through the habitual use of the ethnographic present tense, an immediacy of experience was suggested and, thus, the eyewitnessing of the writer was authorized, but, simultaneously, historicity and change on the part of the researched were concealed. Consequently, colonial patterns of thought were reproduced, so to speak, in which the 'Western' side was considered modern and the colonized side culturally backward. James Clifford (Clifford and Marcus 1986) criticized that ethnographic writing ignores the dialogical and situational character of research settings in favor of closed, holistic interpretations. He, therefore, met the corresponding textual strategies with skepticism and recommended experimenting with forms of polyphonic writing instead. Following on from this critique of established forms of text production, Clifford Geertz (1988) worked out the literary character of ethnographic texts based on ethnological classics. Towards the end of the decade, the long-standing self-image of ethnographic work was, therefore, fundamentally shaken.

Since then, substantially more attention has been paid to the practices of writing and interweaving of ethnological research with power relations: The historical

and current connections of ethnological research with imperial power relations, with surveillance regimes of welfare states and the positionality of field researchers themselves in relation to categories such as class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion are reflected upon. What is crucial in this is that this form of ethnological reflexivity is not understood as an 'addition' to otherwise conventional research but as fundamental to how we constitute and delimit our fields of research, how we collect, select and interpret the field material, and how we finally present and communicate our research results. Ethnological critique is, therefore, never absolute but always relative and, simultaneously, also 'personal.' This is not to be understood as a weakness; on the contrary, ethnologists only tend to be more willing to admit this basic condition of any form of critique and to deal with it productively. Incidentally, this can also mean that the subjectivity of research is occasionally somewhat understated for strategic reasons, for example, when critical demands in the public sphere would otherwise not be given attention.

Individuals and situations, together with their idiosyncrasies and dynamics, are included in critical social analysis to a greater extent than usual because of the empirical orientation of ethnographic critique. Ethnography ideally provides space for conflicting positions and irritating observations and, thus, makes it possible to establish unusual references. A resulting representational critique is multi-perspectival and multifaceted. Annemarie Mol (2002) describes 'multiple sclerosis' in *The Body Multiple*, for example, as a tense arrangement of highly diverse and sometimes contradictory practices, thus, questioning common notions of disease and the body. The text is divided into two parts, with a kind of footnote text running parallel to the empirical presentation, which, however, does not simply provide references but reflects the possibilities and pitfalls of theoretical references themselves. Being oriented towards objects also means that the critical impetus must, at times, be subordinated to empirical appropriateness. Conversely, upon closer empirical examination, social conditions can also prove to be more disastrous than social critics have been able to imagine up to now. It is crucial that the complexities and contradictions are not reduced in favor of critical snapshots but that a destabilizing effect is created by pointing out the complexity of the object of study. In such moments, ethnography can also point beyond its subject, open up new critical perspectives and reveal potentialities.

Representational critique should not be confused with postmodern arbitrariness. Critical ethnologists, like other social critics, address various forms of inequality and injustice, of discrimination, exploitation and alienation – but they do so in a particular way. On the one hand, they focus more on the experiences of those affected and are more willing to be surprised. Moments of inappropriateness and stubbornness play a decisive role. By stubborn, I mean arbitrary, creative and sometimes cumbersome confrontations with social contradictions (Kaschuba 1986;

Lüdtke 2015). This goes along with a research attitude in which the unusual is not ignored and the inappropriate is not explained away but in which new, unfamiliar connections are sought. A focus on the irritating and the ambiguous, on grey areas and practices that undermine common categorizations, requires flexible approaches; both the layout of the field and the categorical frame of reference can, therefore, still change in the course of research. It is also a matter of leaving behind the routine academic semi-distance and allowing oneself to engage with the rhythms and intensities of the field, and with the language and the idiosyncrasies of those being studied. If such a reflexive, object-related and willful critique is to be convincing, it cannot simply be postulated. It must be achieved by means of and through the description of complex situations and contexts.

Conclusion: The political dimension of representational critique

Ethnographic critique has been 'disenchanted.' Having largely excised romanticizing exoticism, it is increasingly turning its attention to the social distortions in the context of current social transformations without being absorbed by the forms of social critique that have been common up to now. It has the potential to avoid some of the typical pitfalls of critical social analysis – such as the righteous stance, the claim to moral superiority and the failure to address everyday problems – and to undermine categorical distinctions between different models of critique. It is characterized by an open understanding of critique which has to be developed in every research field and is object-related and reflexive. Through 'thick' descriptions (Geertz 2003), it is possible to point out complexities but, at the same time, remain comprehensible and to argue precisely. Entrenched views and abbreviated forms of critique are called into question through an openness to the ambiguous and irritating and, thus, representational critique is itself also self-willed and uncomfortable. A space for the unexpected and inappropriate is, thus, claimed in a science that is increasingly evaluated based on criteria of measurability and usability.

In the face of new polarizations and populisms, this use of critique itself is to be understood as political, as a practice of dissent that seeks to shift the boundaries of what can be thought and said (Rancière 2002). In times of growing social divisions in which social circles close and face each other with mutual prejudices, front-line positions can be questioned by means of surprising cross-references. In this constellation, ethnologists have a role as mediators and translators through their descriptions. At the same time, they can counter emerging populisms, moralizing simplifications and rampant hate speech by arguing in a detailed and complex manner, approaching others and trying to understand them, describing them fairly and reasoning thoughtfully. What is generally understood as basic ethnographic virtues can, in view of opposing tendencies, already be understood as political commitment. This includes a specific approach with categories and concepts that serve

understanding and representation as well as forms of writing which are characterized by vividness, multidimensionality and a skepticism towards hasty conceptual conclusions. The critical potential, therefore, lies in ethnography itself, in its modes of research and representation.

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Beate Binder, Roland Ibold

Images of Porajmos*

Filmic practices of remembering and struggles for recognition in
post-1989 Romania

Abstract: A series of documentary films since 1989 have offered accounts of the
deportation of about 25,000 Roma to Transnistria under the government of Marshal
Ion Antonescu. They are, thus, a contribution toward documenting the role of Romania
in the *Porajmos*, the persecution and annihilation of Roma during the Second World
War, through interviews with contemporary witnesses and archive materials. Using
three examples, this article discusses the commonalities and differences between these
films regarding their origins, cinematic means of expression and modes of reception,
showing the ways in which they participate in the re-figuration of historical narratives
and historical points of reference. This analysis pays special attention to the extent to
which the films support the struggles of Roma in Romania for recognition beyond what
is shown on the screen. Even if only to a limited extent, the films can create a "space
of resonance" that serves to negotiate the continuities of Roma marginalization. The
analysis is based on ethnographic research conducted at film screenings in Romania
and interviews with the filmmakers.

Keywords: anthropological film analysis, politics of history, Holocaust, Roma,
Romania

Silence reigns on stage at the Jewish State Theatre in Bucharest. A series of portrait
photographs of elderly people appear on a makeshift screen: Faces bearing seri-
ous expressions, intense stares, tears running down wrinkled skin. The film credits
gradually come to an end, accompanied by the melodious lament of a cello. The
lights go up in the auditorium, bringing the audience back to the present. The of-
ficial discussion has not yet commenced but expressions of annoyance can already
be heard: "Yeah, right, us child-eating Roma! – Wasn't there a Romanian version of
the film, why was the whole thing only done with English subtitles?" It is a Spring
evening in 2018 and some 30 people have gathered together to watch a screening
of the documentary *Valea Plangerii* ('Valley of Sighs')[1] made by Mihai Andrei Leaha,

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1 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy4DbH3D2Ko&t=781s (via CINEPUB, accessed Janu-
ary 1, 2019).

Andrei Crişan and Iulia Hossu, which uses testimonial interviews and archive sources to follow the trails of deportation and imprisonment in camps of thousands of Romanian Roma during the Fascist military dictatorship of Marshal Ion Antonescu. Most of those present know one another; many see themselves as part of the Romanian capital's fairly small political – artistic – activist scene. Some belong, in a politically aware and public way, to the group of ethnic Roma, as it is named officially (*persoane de etnie Roma*). The discussion, announced via Facebook, is to address issues of representation and of whose interpretation of history is accepted. The venue – the Jewish State Theatre – was chosen deliberately: It serves to underscore the parallels that exist between the persecution of Jewish and Roma people, while, at the same time, providing an opportunity to address racist views circulating within the Jewish community as well. The event was organized by theatre director David Schwartz (Jewish Theater, Macaz Coop) and Roland Ibold as part of the research project on the politics of recognition and filmic practices of remembering on which this article is based.[2]

The film *Valea Plangerii* is one of the few documentaries about the persecution of Roma in Romania, the *Porajmos*.[3] This and other examples of filmic treatments of the Holocaust are the point of departure for an exploration of political debates and struggles around the issue of history and recognition which is at the center of our ethnographic research project. Like *Valera Plangerii,* most of these films work with documentary methods, using interviews with contemporary witnesses or their descendants and offering interpretations of the history of the period. At the same time, the films are conceived as vehicles of awareness-raising and counter-narratives to dominant discourses in which the role of Romania in the Second World War – especially regarding the persecution of Jewish and Roma people – is downplayed or even denied altogether (Friling, Ianaid, and Ionescu 2005; Kelso and Eglitis 2014). In this respect, then, the harsh criticism expressed after the screening is initially surprising. The young actor Raj-Alexandru Udrea, identified as Romani since his childhood on account of his appearance, explains:

> [...] if I'd seen this film on TV at 8, 9 p.m., I'd only understand [...] that, ok, these
> people were deported to Transnistria, yes, they are Roma, but how did these people

3 *Porajmos* ('swallowing whole') is the Romani term for the genocide of European Roma during the Nazi period. In Romania, Romani organizations are struggling for the *Porajmos* to be recognized on equal terms alongside the *Shoah*; the term Holocaust is used to refer to both instances, as we also do here.

talk about their ethnicity, what did they mean by that, how were these interviews taken? It sucks – [...] and I'm not talking about how it sucks to be Roma, but 80% of my friends, and I'm still young, they would only understand that these people were in Transnistria and they ate each other.

Everyone present agrees that documentary films support the struggle against racist power relations and should, therefore, be shown much more often on television or in education centers than they have been to date. What they query, however, is the way the issues are (re-)presented. All of them are especially sensitive when it comes to portrayals of stereotypical images and narratives about Roma, including ones that are unintended or might be considered 'unimportant' in terms of the cinematic context. In the case of *Valea plangerii*, the audience's criticisms are directed at a comment made by a survivor to place added emphasis on the horrific experiences he recounts in nuanced detail, namely, that starvation drove those who had been deported to eat their own dead.[4] During the discussion, Roxana Marin (English teacher, Romani and longtime queer activist) notes a correspondence between this talk of cannibalism and the anti-Roma stigma of 'child eating' that continues to circulate to this day. David Schwartz, a theatre producer and activist whose name marks him out as Jewish, points out that only Roma rather than other groups are associated with this survival strategy, which very likely occurred in many death camps. A member of the audience tries to defuse this critique, however, and to underscore the special meaning of the documentary. One participant emphasizes that the film conveys new perspectives:

I saw this film for the first time today and I'm very impressed. It almost made me physically sick and I agree this may not be the best tool to use in school. However, the fact that this movie was made is very important; it makes you feel ashamed to be Romanian and not admitting the horrors that happened there. I didn't feel like it was too much emphasis on the topic of Roma eating themselves because I found more touching the notes from the officers' reports who were proudly giving accounts of the large number of dead people. So there is a very good contrast between the written declarations and the testimonies of the Roma and the Ukrainians.

Andrei Serban, Romani and member of a political theatre group, responds to this regarding the positioning of Roma people as victims of the Holocaust:

I think it's rather a thing perceived from the inside of the respective ethnic group. We're a bit fed up with this discourse of pity. [...] I do appreciate that someone is interested in this subject, but I have the feeling that everything is moving around pity: "Look, man, what happened to them, poor them." In addition, we had enough of this 'poor them, poor them.' [...] this is what I'm trying to do through my work,

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4   This account is relayed at the beginning as a voice-over as the apparently untouched landscape of the former camp is shown; it is later recounted again by an interviewee.

I'm trying to change a bit this 'they are also people' mentality, I'm so fed up with this phrase. There are acts of resistance too! [...].

The response to this comes swiftly: "I agree, but what I'm feeling now is not just pity, but also solidarity. I believe that it's very important that the Romanians start feeling solidarity towards their fellow Roma citizens," spoken by the previous speaker who thereby confirms – probably unintentionally – the social boundary between Romanians and Roma.

These exchanges during the discussion in the Jewish Theatre in Bucharest powerfully convey the politically sensitive nature of the *Porajmos* whenever it is made visible and presented for debate, as in the film. In what follows, we take a closer look at this film and at two others that were made in Romania after 1989/90. In sharing our research, we are simultaneously making the case that films dealing with memory should be considered from a broader cultural anthropology perspective than one that simply explores (media studies) issues about how the films are made and what messages they convey, how they embody developments typical to the genre or contain intertextual references – although these aspects should not be ignored completely. The focus of our research is more on the processes through which the films came into being and the critical debates they have prompted; as in the case above, we ourselves also initiated film screenings. What we were interested in was the circulation of the films, which we see as being nodal points in a cluster of diverse practices of remembering. We chose to look specifically at Romania because it is a context in which there is an extremely heated debate about history, especially the history of the 20th century, not least in the context of current processes of self-inquiry and negotiations on national self-understanding. These politically laden historical debates form a framework for Roma struggles for political recognition, which constitute the focus of this paper. In the following, we begin by elucidating our perspective and then discuss the film projects, locating them in broader, overarching contexts.

Films on/as memory: cultural anthropology perspectives

With the growing availability of image and filmmaking technologies and their associated modes of production, distribution and reception, films – especially ones about historical events – have become a key medium of memory. Visual representations with their archival, discursive and aesthetic potentialities provide views – in the truest sense of the word – that enable the past to be brought to life and appropriated. Turning events and lifeworlds into pictures can easily evoke an impression of inevitability. The testimony of things, places and people, the creation of a certain atmosphere and the emotional charge of historical circumstances contribute substantially to the creation of seemingly authoritative narratives about the past (Bruns, Dardan, and Dietrich 2012; Stock 2018: 32ff.): They generate authenticity.

In the course of this, interpretations and meanings can be adapted to 'speak to' current problems, that is, the images can be read 'differently' depending on the (societal) situation. In this sense, films are both the medium and the object of politically charged historical debates. Images and films can also be used for a repeated and longer-term critical engagement with the past: They can be received, discussed and interpreted at different times and in different spaces, in copresence and/or in mediatized public spheres.

Over the last few years, a transdisciplinary field of research has emerged in relation to film and memory. The specific features of the genre are at the center of cultural theory debate. Eike Wenzel sees films as being an integral part of the "process of societally structured communication of images of the world and of history" (Wenzel 2000: 432). Taking this further, Astrid Erll and Stephanie Wodianka describe films as a key medium of memory (2008: 1), though for them it is not so much the subject and content that determine the status of a film about memory as "what memories the film prompts 'outside the film'" (2008: 8). They propose that we look equally at the production and reception of films and identify the relationships between aesthetic trends and expectations, sociopolitical circumstances and practices around how films are dealt with. It is this approach that prompted our ethnographic research in Romania, which was additionally based on the notion that films do not become interventions in political struggles around history or tools in struggles for recognition simply by virtue of their mere existence. Instead, they need to be tied into "plurimedially mediated processes of negotiation" (Erll and Wodianka 2008: 6). Against this background, we are especially interested in the conditions of possibility for the emergence and circulation of films. We take as given that films need a stage in order to make issues and possible interpretations visible and available for negotiation.

This kind of film analysis informed by a cultural anthropology approach can also tie in with concepts found in visual anthropology and visual cultural studies (Evans and Hall 1999; Pink 2007²). What is of interest from this perspective is not so much the meaning of individual visual documents as the question of how the institutions of production, distribution and reception regulate meanings and uses of the visual. William Mitchell and John Thomas assume that a film constitutes a "complex interplay of visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurativity" (1997: 19). Oliver Marchart (2008) locates visual media in the interrelationship between culture, power and identity, conceiving them as the arena for powerful struggles over meanings, identities and self-understandings. Following this lead, we too examine films not simply as representations; rather, we inquire as to their effects and contribution toward political struggles (over history or for recognition) in which interpretations of history and the self-understandings associated with them are negotiated. In doing so, the question of how films intervene in such historical

and political negotiations, what status they acquire and in what way they (are able to) exert influence remains an open-ended one.

The Romanian context: Historical and political constellations

The films about the *Porajmos* discussed here are part of Romanian debates about the time before and after the Second World War. They are also a response to the continuity of ethno-nationalistic attitudes articulated, among other ways, through anti-Roma sentiments (Verdery 2001: 148). The following brief comments are intended to convey an impression of the context in which the films discussed here are located and against what kind of silencing they are directed. Central to contemporary political debates about history in Romania is the fact that, due to the geopolitical situation after the First World War, the country initially acted as an important strategic and military partner of National Socialist Germany in its attack on the Soviet Union and systematic persecution and murder of Jews and Roma. At the turning point in the war in 1944, the country's military dictator Antonescu was removed from his post: As members of the Allied forces, Romanian troops now fought alongside the Red Army, so that at the end of the war, Romania was counted among the winners. After 1945, Romania's participation in the Holocaust was no longer an issue in the anti-Fascist history written by the victors. On the contrary: During the Ceausescu era, Romania's "special path" was supported by ethno-nationalistic historic discourses (Totok 2009, Benz and Mihok 2009). Thus, when the system transformation of 1989/90 occurred and the coordinates of national self-referencing were reset, discriminatory attitudes towards minorities were already in a position to flourish. Beginning during Ceausescu's time in office and even more so after 1990/91, the figure of military dictator and "*Führer*" (*Conducatorul*) Ion Antonescu enjoyed renewed prestige: He was elevated (once again) to the status of a national hero (Binder, Kaschuba, and Niedermüller 2001; Totok 2009). The film *Oglinda/Inceputul Adevarul* ('The Mirror/The Beginning of Truth,' 1994), made by well-known Romanian director Sergiu Nicolaescu[5], played a significant role in this, portraying 'Marshall Antonescu' during his imprisonment after 1944 as a patriot and an intellectual, while all mention of his ethnic cleansing policy[6] was omitted. This coincided with the hardening of anti-Semitic and -Roma positions after 1990 (Andreescu 2003: 144; Geissbühler 2012). Maria Bucur considers Antonescu's positive image to be a myth that was generally tolerated and used to reinforce national sentiments, establishing a connection with the silence over the Holocaust (Bucur 2004). Wolfgang Benz also describes the rather grudging process

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5   In sample surveys on Romanian films about the Holocaust, Nicolaescu's film proved to be the most well-known among adults at the turning point of the war.

6   It is estimated that some 300,000 Jews and 12,000 Roma were murdered; cf. "The report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania," available at: http://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Raport%20Final/Final_Report.pdf (accessed January 2, 2019).

of facing the facts of the camps and the shootings of Jews and Roma in Transnistria as a "forgotten Holocaust" (Benz 2001), while Valentina Glajar speaks of a "double silence" of official and individual remembering (2016: 225).

The fact that this process of coming to terms with the past has begun, at least in certain times and places, over the last few years and that cinematic treatments[7] of the Holocaust have met with interest also has a lot to do with the European Union's cultural policy guidelines and Romania's efforts to become a recognized member of the European Union. In the context of Europeanization, the Holocaust is regarded as a "common European point of reference in the past" (Assmann 2012: 29ff.; Diner 2007; Levy and Sznaider 2001). In 2016, Romania took over the chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance[8]. It remains the case, however, that in Romania, memories of the Second World War, the Holocaust and the country's role in both are contested.

External impulses: Michelle Kelso: Hidden Sorrows – the persecution of Romanian gypsies in WWII (RO/US 2005)

"Back then a notice saying 'No dogs, no gypsies' might have hung in the window of a restaurant like that!," says Michelle Kelso, referring pointedly to the racist tendencies common in Romania during the 1990s, and adding: "But that doesn't mean any Roma person could sit here today."[9] Twenty-five years ago, the US sociologist began to work in a United Nations project with orphans in Sibiu, most of whom were Roma. It was there that, for the first time, she encountered narratives of older people about the trauma of Transnistria. Since there was no research on the deportations of Roma, she enlisted the assistance of historian Radu Ioanid to gain access to the relevant police and military files in the national archive – despite the initially dismissive response that all the documents regarding deportation had been burned. With the support of civil rights activists, such as Romani Nicolae George, she began to search for survivors. By the time her film came out, there were already 200; another 400 followed. She also campaigned for the compensation regarding former victims of forced labor. Kelso tells of the laborious process of establishing the *Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future* (EVZ), which she experienced from

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7   Exemplarily, *Train de Vie* ('Train of Life,' Radu Mihaleanu, 1989), *Calatorie lui Gruber* ('Gruber's Journey,' Radu Gabrea, 2008), *Odesa* ('Odessa,' Forin Iepan, 2013) and *Tara Moarta* ('Dead Land,' Radu Jude, 2017). An important place for the distribution of these films in Romania is the Elie Wiesel Research Institute, which emerged out of the Research Commission of the Romanian Holocaust and organized the Holocaust Film Festival in Bucharest in 2015. Cf. also Degeratu (2016).

8   Available at https://berlin.mae.ro/de/local-news/1133 (accessed March 24, 2018); on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance see: https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/ (accessed January 3, 2019).

9   Interview with Michelle Kelso, Bucharest August 17, 2018, quoted from notes.

the perspective of those Roma who submitted an application for compensation at the German embassy in Bucharest. The officials there demanded evidence of health problems resulting from the applicants' time in the camps, a registration certificate and a named entry in the archive, knowingly ignoring the fact that applying for such certificates is expensive for Roma and often like running the gauntlet. In the film, one of the interviewees says:

> We are a delegation of Roma survivors who suffered greatly in Transnistria. We have decided to apply for those funds. We cannot do it alone. We need your help. Right? – Yes! – Wherever we go, they say "Get the hell out Gypsies!"

Kelso's commitment to the cause and her academic background form the point of departure for her documentary.[10] The director describes in the film's introduction how she and her Romanian husband set off on a search for people who had lived during those times. The film – initially intended for an English-speaking audience – is divided into three parts. The first introduces the history of Roma in Romania: the voice-over explains the conditions in which Roma lived before the Second World War; mention is made of differences between the towns and the countryside and of their status as slaves up until the early 19th century. In this way, the *Porajmos* acquires a prehistory. The rise of German and Romanian Fascism is explained, including Antonescu's deportation orders. Apart from a brief sequence at the beginning, Kelso lets the survivors tell their own stories against this backdrop. She makes impressive use of images of the countryside and film clips of villages and ethnographic photographs. The latter convey traditional ideas about Roma – a late effect of the ethnographic gaze fixed in images more than 100 years ago. The main part of the film consists of interviews with people who lived through deportation and camp life. The survivors speak of people dying of hunger and cold in the earth huts beyond the Dnjestr, of random violence inflicted by the Romanian gendarmerie and the German SS, of torture, rape, summary executions and epidemics in the collective farms that were used as camps. They also speak about cannibalism as a survival strategy. For those who survived this dehumanizing experience, 1944 becomes a return, surrounded by a disorderly retreating front, to new trials and tribulations. Kelso addresses the struggle for recognition and compensation in the last part of the film, showing the frustration and helplessness of the survivors in the face of the arbitrariness of officialdom's decisions.

The conversations, conducted in front of dilapidated huts far away from political decision-makers, demonstrate impressively the connections between failing strategies of recognition, social exclusion and a lack of political participation. The extent to which Roma are not used to talking about their experiences even today is shown powerfully in one of the first scenes at the start of the film: An elderly man,

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10   See https://www.unsilence.org/hidden-sorrows.html (accessed January 3, 2019).

asked about his experiences in Transnistria, responds with mistrust out of fear of renewed repression. This response is not surprising given that the deportation began with a process of registration and categorization by *gadje* authorities, 'non-Roma' authorities. By showing this institutionalized fear of state institutions, Kelso is denouncing the ongoing marginalization of Roma – this is her political statement.

With funding from the US Embassy in Bucharest, Kelso had 2000 copies of the film made, distributing them to schools and the country's Ministry of Education and, thus, feeding the documentary into the then nascent professional development course in *Holocaust Education* for Romanian teachers. In conversation, Kelso remains skeptical about the success of this course. Visibly shocked, she recounts the anti-Semitic and racist attitudes expressed by some of the seminar participants. Even some members of Jewish communities had difficulty incorporating the story of the Roma into *their* narrative of the Holocaust: "Why should Jews be less antiziganistic?" was Kelso's comment on the debate at the time.

Regarding research and awareness-raising about the Holocaust and *Porajmos*, Kelso's position is similar to our own: We too are Western academics, white, *gadje* and work on behalf of prominent foreign research institutes. This opens institutional doors, making it easier to access networks and organize film screenings, discussion events and seminars – and, thus, find ways of getting people to engage with the issue of Holocaust. However, it also harbors the danger of drawing overly hasty conclusions as outsiders and adopting a condescending stance that judges and 'lectures' others. What we also have in common is being labelled as '*civilizat:*' the reference here is to the notion of a civilized West and a backward East, a notion invented in the West and incorporated locally. The supposed backwardness of Romania is seen as being embodied in the poverty of many Romani people; this then becomes articulated as hatred towards so-called '*tigani*' and as shame felt about their poverty and 'uncivilized behaviour' – and, not least, as fear that the image of Romanians abroad could be defined solely by the Roma (whose name is almost identical).

When Roland Ibold screened Kelso's film in schools shortly after it appeared as part of the *cinema mobil* project, it prompted some highly emotional reactions: Pity and concern opened up a space – at least for a short time – to talk about everyday anti-Roma prejudices and the ongoing marginalization of Romani people. At the same time, in the discussions, which were dominated by *gadje*, there was always an almost knee-jerk reference to the suffering of one's own family members during the war. Romani friends of ours responded quite differently at an informal screening of the film: There was silence; there were tears; family memories were shared; there was talk of people who had died and of Nazis, both during the *Porajmos* and more recently. Shared worlds were being revealed here: The choice of words used by some recalled common antiracist and anti-Fascist discourses. Knowledge about the Fascism of the 1940s, about Auschwitz and Transnistria, blended with memories of

more recent racist attacks in Romania and Germany, of Kogalniceanu and Rostock-Lichtenhagen.[11] Even if there are no shared public debates about the *Porajmos* – with public space dominated by *gadje* – spaces of remembrance do still exist within Roma communities in which the past is recalled, talked about and made sense of.

Telling our *own* story. Luminita Cioaba: Romani Iasfa (RO 2006)

Luminita Cioaba fights against the discrimination and social exclusion of Romani people from a different position: She herself is a Romani person, a member of a politically active family from Sibiu and one of only a few Romani authors.[12] Through her poetry, books, exhibitions and non-governmental organization projects, she seeks to revive Roma traditions in order to strengthen the self-confidence of the younger generation especially. For her, part of this cultural work is to disseminate knowledge about the past of Romani people and create a culture of remembrance for them. Cioaba wants to make the history of *her* people and *her* community public, and she sees herself as a mediator between the non-recognized Romani culture and the majority society:

> I'm really pleased to have made this film. It was a matter close to my heart, be-cause – just like with the books I have written – people learn what happened to the Roma. And it's great that it wasn't made by a *gadje*, a Romanian, an American, an English person. [...] The research was done by a Romani person – by me. And it was very well received. It was hard work, but I'm glad because what I made – no one could make it anymore because there are no living survivors left. (Luminita Cioaba, July 14, 2014, Sibiu)

Cioaba's documentary comes alive through her close relationship to those she interviews, generated mainly by the Romani language they share.[13] It is important to Cioaba to lend dignity to the people she interviews: They are sitting in front of their homes, surrounded by summertime nature, or in front of tents they themselves have erected; they are often wearing traditional clothing and are surrounded by their families. The old people seem to be aware of the important role they are playing in the documentation of historical events. In contrast to the other films, their name and age are shown on the screen. They are *experts*, not just historical witnesses to a past era.

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11 Kogalnisceanu in Romania and Rostock-Lichtenhagen in Germany are references to racist attacks on Roma in the early 1990s. The racism encountered back then – in both places – is inscribed upon the migration experience of many Romanian Roma and is also a reason for migration.

12 She regards herself as one of only 300 writers among some 12 million Roma worldwide, as she stressed in an interview with Roland Ibold in Sibiu on July 14, 2014.

13 A description in Romanian with a few stills from the film can be found here: http://cineyporrajmos.blogspot.com/2018/02/roma-tears-romane-iasfa-de-luminita.html (accessed January 3, 2019).

Four stylistic devices are used in the documentary film: At the beginning and the end, colorful scenes performed by young actors illustrate poems by Cioaba that address the relationship between Roma and *gadje* through references to ancient legends. Secondly, detailed excerpts from interviews with historical witnesses are a key part of the film, and these are accompanied, thirdly, by historical black-and-white images, including ethnographic pictures from the interwar years, voice-over commentaries and interview fragments. The logo of Romania's National Film Archive lends a high degree of credibility to the historical film clips, even if – as in Kelso's film too – their provenance is not alluded to with any precision. Finally, a number of reenactments of episodes mentioned in the interviews are shown in black-and-white to emphasize their historical nature. This reenactment using young, well-fed and smartly dressed actors highlights the historical distance and does not even attempt to generate an authentic iconography of the concentration camps.

These aesthetic means are used not only to document history but also to perform contemporary self-images of Roma. The survivors themselves create the narrative of their own suffering; there is no use of established forms of historical representation, such as showing archive material or naming numbers of victims. In this way, the film distances itself from the history written by *gadje* and tells what happened from the perspective of the survivors. This also creates space for emotions such as mourning and horror. The director had long known the stories about Transnistria: Her parents and grandparents are themselves survivors of the camps. Her father, a civil rights activist alongside Nicolae George since the 1970s, supports his daughter in the task of inscribing the survivors' narratives into Romanian history.

> Roma were illiterates; they had nobody who could have written down what happened there [in Transnistria, author]. Their suffering was passed on orally, told to their children. […] I grew up in a tent, in the Satra ['movable camp'], and I remember very clearly how grandfather and the other old people spoke about it and cried. (Interview with Luminita Cioaba, Sibiu, April 20, 2018)

A total of some 250 interviews have been documented so far and some of them published (Cioaba 2006; Kelso, Cioaba, and Ioanid 2009). In order to finance the film, Cioaba applied for funding from the EVZ in 2002. After initially supporting the film, in 2004 – in the middle of the production process – the EVZ cut off the funding it had pledged. The film team was able to force the Foundation to pay out 23,000 euros, but this covered only half the production costs. UNICEF supported the project by funding 3.000 copies of a book to accompany the film. In 2009, thanks to an initiative by Radu Ioanid, Cioba was able, together with Michelle Kelso and with financial support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to publish a collection of historical documents and interviews with the renowned Romanian publishing house *Polirom*.

It is outside Romania, however, that the film project has enjoyed most success. The première took place in London, and screenings followed in the US and in several Western European countries. For Cioaba, though, the screenings in Kiev and Chisinau were more important. When asked in the interview about screenings in Romania, she complains of the unwillingness of Romanian institutions and the refusal of the EVZ to support local educational tours. Her film was not even welcomed within Romani organizations due to internal competitive wrangling, as she says. Five years were to pass after the film's production before *Romani Iasfa* was shown at the *Transilvania International Film Festival TIFF* in Cluj Napoca – a major success for Cioaba.

By contrast, Michelle Kelso succeeded in presenting her film at the *Astra Film Festival* in Sibiu shortly after production was completed. *Hidden Sorrows* was broadcasted three times on national television and was selected in 2013 for the film festival *One World Romania* in Bucharest. Her film also achieved international recognition. Kelso stresses that she herself took the initiative in these instances, and that she feels herself to be unfairly criticized as an outsider and competitor by some Romani organizations. This clearly shows the difference in opportunities for disseminating the films, which is ultimately down to the differing positions and networks of the two directors.

Set pieces of memory in the generation change. Mihai Leaha: Valea Plangerii (RO 2014)

To round off this discussion, we now want to look more closely at the film mentioned at the start of this paper. Director Mihai Leaha[14] is an anthropologist and filmmaker from Cluj-Napoca; as a *gadjo*, he is part of the majority society but sees himself rather as part of a "new, progressive generation," and this stance informs his critical engagement with the *Porajmos* through film:

> My generation was not taught about the Holocaust in school. Antonescu was like a national hero who struggled for the national unity ideal. We had no clue about that ugly part of history. For me, at first, it was surprising and the motivation came with the wish to learn more about this subject. So, basically when the *Institute for Studying the Problems of National Minorities* (ISPMN) launched the program, I was very happy that my colleague Iulia said, we should do a film about it. (Mihai Leaha, Bucharest, November 12, 2014)[15]

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14 *Valea Plangerii* is a project undertaken by the TribaFilm team: Mihai Andrei Leaha, Andrei Crişan and Iulia Hossu. Together with Mihai Leaha and Petre Matei, the historian responsible for researching the film, we organized not just the interviews but also joint events in Bucharest, Cluj Napoca and the Institute for European Ethnology/HU Berlin.

15 Jelena Steigerwald conducted the interview as part of the workshop "Nationalism, Fascism and the Holocaust in Romanian History – a critical approach" (Bucharest, October 2014, IDEE, Third

Using the same means (interviews with historical witnesses, historical documents) and goals (to create historical archives for the purpose of awareness-raising), Leaha's film team developed a different aesthetic format: The film begins with brief excerpts from interviews accompanied by a slow camera pan through a landscape which, at this point, can only be guessed to be the location of a camp; then, a text appears containing key historical events and dates and describing the aim of the film: "The last survivors of the Holocaust, children at the time, are talking about the places and the terrible events in Transnistria, reenacting pieces of memory that belong to all of us." There are three sections to the film: "The deportation of nomadic Roma," "The deportation of sedentary Roma" and "The return." Its chronological structure is based on four recurring stylistic devices: Firstly, the deportation routes are visualized by large red arrows on black and white satellite maps; secondly, archival sources are shown, including particularly military orders and reports from the Romanian Army and administration, with place names, dates and signatures of the people in charge; thirdly, historical witnesses, sitting in their everyday settings, recount the events they experienced; and fourthly, the camera pans smoothly through landscapes and the remains of camp structures.

Leaha deploys images of the landscape as silent witnesses; they allow the audience to catch their breath and process the horrific accounts of the survivors. The perpetrators are personalized by having their names and functions mentioned. The deportation lists showing surnames and the number of family members deported lift the victims out of anonymity; finally, the cypher 'Transnistria' is transformed into specific places visited by the film team and people who live nearby. The film differs markedly from the other two by including Ukrainian witnesses. The local inhabitants show where the camps were located and give testimony about the atrocities, starvation and disease and about instances of help and solidarity. In this way, the surviving Roma no longer stand alone as witnesses: Their accounts are affirmed by those of the Ukrainians. This is underscored by the way the film is edited: A map of the area – Ukrainian witness – Romani witness – military file containing an order or a report.

Valea Plangerii ends with silent, almost motionless portraits of the historical witnesses. Without further comment or explanation, the faces of victims alternate with those of longtime inhabitants, looking into the eyes of their descendants. This sequence functions as a cinematic memorial. There is now a monument on the site that recalls the existence of the camps, and this is shown in the film: A stone plaque put in place by local Ukrainians, as one of those involved explains in the film. In Romania, however, there are no corresponding places of remembrance to date. The Holocaust monument in Bucharest is the only one that includes Roma alongside

Generation Buchenwald), where Mihai Leaha, Petre Matei and Roland Ibold presented *Valea Plangerii* for discussion.

Jewish victims, although – as Michelle Kelso and Diana S. Eglitis assert – they are not adequately represented there.[16]

The film's professionalism and, more significantly, Leaha's position within academic and cinematographic networks have ensured that the film has been a success. It has been shown at national and international film festivals and various universities in Western Europe. Excerpts from it have also been shown on television in the context of a program within the minority series for Roma put out by the state broadcaster TVR, in which Leaha had been invited to take part. The director also emphasizes an invitation for the film to be shown on the International Day of Remembrance of the *Porajmos* in Bucharest in August 2014, where several hundred young people watched his film, and yet:

> I can't say that the film has been able to achieve its full potential in Romania. [...] The film was made for the majority population of Romania, for people who need to think a bit about what happened back then. We have been criticized by Roma [activists, author] who have asked why we didn't speak to the people [the survivors, author] in Romani, why we didn't use any Romani music.

And Leaha continues by addressing his critics directly:

> Yes, you're spot on, politically correct, but the film wasn't made exclusively for you; we made it for the Romanians, who have a completely different picture of this period of history. So sure, in that sense, a lot of Roma have understood and supported and shown the film. (Interview with Mihai Leaha, Bucharest, November 16, 2017)

As was apparent in the discussion described at the beginning of this paper, the lines of conflict do not correspond neatly to the categories of majority/minority or insider/outside, as Leaha says. It is not only a matter of a speaker's position or their affiliation and, thus, of the right to speak for someone else – Kelso's film also demonstrates as much. But by stressing that the film is aimed primarily at Romanians, i.e. at the majority society, Leaha himself is taking responsibility, making the issue of the nonrecognition of the *Porajmos* an issue for the majority, whom he expects to take historical responsibility up to and including the present day. It is a form of activism that comes into conflict with that of a newly forming generation of activists who position and organize themselves as Roma. This new generation is combative in its demands for a space in society that has, thus far, been occupied by a generation of Roma and non-Roma with a different approach to political activism.

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16 Kelso and Eglitis (2014: 500f.) show how Roma people are "simultaneously represented, unrepresented and misrepresented" in the monument complex: They were only added as a victims' group at a later point in time and without any further details. The memorial site speaks about and for Roma but not to them: There are no explanations in the Romani language. For the authors, this speaks of the position of Roma in Romanian society as *'history's marginal actors'*.

Fade-out: Documentaries of the *Porajmos* as tools in the struggle for recognition

As described at the beginning of this paper, we regard the films presented here as a contribution to social struggles rooted in history and politics. Not only do the films represent a part of history, they also articulate the demand for recognition performatively: Coming from different social positions and with different resources at their disposal, they demand responsibility for the deportations and an equal place for Romani people in Romanian society. This twofold demand is confronted by a majority society that does not regard the Holocaust as a "shared European point of reference in the past" (Assmann 2012), as it is generally viewed from a German and Western European perspective. As the celebrations in 2018 showed, it is, above all, the founding of Great Romania after the First World War and the time between the two World Wars that constitute the key points of reference for the country's national and European self-perception. Given that the composition of Romanian society at that time was multiethnic, this period, imagined as a cultural, political and economic heyday, could conceivably serve as a point of reference for a Europe imagined beyond national borders. Instead, the interwar years are instrumentalized politically, not least as a means of reinforcing national patriotism and as an eman-cipatory force in a process of Europeanization experienced as western-dominated.[17]

This also has repercussions for the efforts of Roma to gain recognition and has a lot substantially to do with the opportunities available to the films presented here to generate spaces where they can resonate with audiences. There are simply not sufficient opportunities for the screening of these films. Creating such spaces of critical engagement for noncommercial documentary film projects is just as impor-tant as attracting funding for the production process. A fate suffered by all three films is that they are generally viewed and discussed by a very specific, mainly academic audience that is fairly small in relation to society as a whole. Although this is not to question fundamentally either the quality or the significance of the films, it is, nonetheless, a shortcoming. The films' directors are actively working to change this, but they have limited opportunities to do so. Leaha, for example, is try-ing to show his film in places where he had conducted interviews with Roma but has encountered little interest, probably on account of not being sufficiently networked

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17 As Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003: 143) write, "It is not only peaceful collectives such as feminists and marginalized minorities that are among the social movements nowadays calling for recognition of their own ardently-held values but also racist and nationalist groups." This can only be alluded to here, but it seems to us to be an important aspect for further research: It is not only in Europe that these movements are increasingly exerting an influence on, among other things, not 'besmirching' the national identity with 'intrusive' issues such as participation in the Holocaust and excluding social 'underclasses' with an ethnic or religious label from the imagined community of the nation.

within these communities. Cioaba has had more success: She has organized numerous screenings in the neighborhoods where survivors live. Kelso, in turn, has been able to distribute her film free of charge through her institutional connections. The films' availability on platforms like youtube.com (Kelso) and cinepub.ro (Leaha) also contributes toward their broader dissemination but has only a limited impact on actual debates about the issues. One person who took part in the discussion mentioned at the start of this paper, Zita Moldovan (actor and member of the feminist Romani theatre group *Givilupen*), summarized this situation in the following way:

> If we are to be critical about this film, there's a lot to be said; but I don't really think this is the purpose. The purpose, and in my opinion it's so good that we talk about this film, is that this film was done, it's out there, and here we are talking about it. It's true that more films need to be done, documentaries or feature films and maybe at another level. […] In fact, this is the issue: some of us gather here, we talk and then we go home. However, I think the message is not carried further. When actually the goal of this film is to be seen by a larger audience, people should talk more about it, there's need for feedback and opinions from others.

This is also the reason why Roland Ibold organized a series of film and discussion events in the context of the research project.[18] While this was an attempt to broaden the films' visibility, the screenings admittedly took place in a largely academic environment with audiences that consisted mainly of politically active individuals, including Roma, who would probably describe themselves as left-wing.

To conclude, we will briefly refer to comments that cropped up repeatedly, in order to indicate what kinds of broader associations and connections the films presented here are capable of generating. The right to representation is mentioned again and again, by Roma people in particular, with attention focused very precisely on who speaks or is allowed to speak in what way about issues such as the *Porajmos* or slavery. The issue at stake here is more than just one of correctly representing historical events. Rather, the crucial point seems to be one of continuities and embeddedness: The *Porajmos* should not be regarded as an isolated event but should rather be made visible as part of a set of power relations that continue to exist even today. These ideas, formulated largely by Roma commentators, quickly lead to much broader issues. This highlights not only the political significance of the films but also makes visible a desire to occupy spaces of one's own and not just to speak through or with the support of *gadje*. This is frequently linked to the positioning of

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18 Various examples of films were discussed in the Masterclass in MA "Roma Studies" by Roland Ibold "Moving history: cinematic remembrance and politics of recognition of Porajmos in Romania"; SNSPA, Bucharest, March 31, 2018; panel discussion: Representation of Roma in Cinema and Television, Bar Teatru Coop Macaz, Bucharest, April 5, 2018; screening of *Valea Plangerii* and subsequent discussion in the Jewish Theatre of Bucharest, April 17, 2018. We regard this as a contribution to an 'engaged anthropology' but cannot discuss this in further detail here.

Roma in the films: To what extent are they shown as contemporary individuals with names, real living conditions and their own voices – or do they just remain part of a nameless mass of historical witnesses? Linked to this point, the central dilemma of identity politics comes to the fore in the films discussed here: Those who speak as survivors of the *Porajmos* are already ethnically marked. To this extent, the process of coming to terms with history remains wedded to the logic of the perpetrators and their system of categorization: It barely seems possible to represent (this) history apart from/outside of such markings. The deportations and their effects, which extend into the present day, remain a 'story of the Roma' – even if their documentation makes it possible to reflect on the impacts of such categorizations. Since the films were produced under anti-Roma conditions and need to function in this context,[19] the high degree of sensitivity towards the reproduction of stereotypes is understandable. Images of wild horses, dancing and singing Roma, sexualized bodies, and the cannibalism mentioned above can quickly trigger prejudices, even if in some instances they refer to specific experiences and lifeworlds.

Another problem frequently mentioned in interviews and discussions relates to the reduction of survivors to the role of victims. *Valea Plangerii* also addresses acts of resistance and of solidarity between deported forced laborers and local people, names the perpetrators and describes the structures of the apparatus of persecution. This is an exception, which is why there are repeated discussions about whether it might not be necessary to have heroic figures presented in order to facilitate a different way of perceiving enslavement and persecution. Instead of generating pity for (passive) victims, this might be a way of opening up a space for positive identification and empowerment. Andrei Serban explains this idea:

> There were people, Roma, who set noblemen on fire, and so we should restore some dignity. […] This is what you need, you need dignity, you need to identify – yes, I am the one who eventually got angry and broke the chains […] because there are people [in history, author] who broke their chains.

This is not a matter of mythological figures but rather of real people, as Roxana Marin notes: "No, we do not need Queen Maria, we need Roma Queens. We need Razvan, the Roma ruler."[20] Daring to steal potatoes to prevent children from starving, daring to cut one's hair to avoid being raped, or daring to break out of the camp to flee repression completely – does remembering these doings afterwards

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19 As noted by Romani Rose at the conference "Antiziganism and Film," Berlin, February 21–23, 2018: The films are located in a societal context where antiziganism is inherent and are, thus, necessarily linked to the latter.

20 As also in *Romani Iasfa*, Queen Maria is named as a savior by some Roma. This Romanian queen is said to have appeared in the sky in an airplane, to have thrown down food and prevented mass shootings. Fully in keeping with her own charitable image, the regent, who died in 1938, was considered as a bearer of hope and an ally in the majority society.

diminish them and turn them into pitiable acts of desperation? Or can the stories render these deeds visible as acts of resistance that are worthy of great admiration? Resistance and solidarity have been addressed in film projects to date as little as aspects of collective and individual responsibility: What decision-making options did local authorities have when it came to categorizing Roma people? Were they able to influence deportation lists and were they even interested in doing so? How were the returnees from Transnistria treated in their places of origin; what had happened to their property, their houses and fields?

Questions like this have rarely been researched to date; at the same time, they draw attention to another blank space. After all – and this is addressed several times during the film discussions – there has been no analysis so far of the economic logic of deportation and forced labor. The confiscation of people's property and their physical and sexual exploitation is addressed neither in the films nor in previous research as part of an overarching system. Yet, revealing these socioeconomic mechanisms might be precisely the way to promote an understanding of the current situation of Roma people and help to explain why they have been marginalized socially and in formal societal ways ever since their enslavement in the 19th century.

The thematically broad spectrum of "memories […] 'around the film'" (Erll and Wodianka 2008: 8) that we have merely alluded to here highlights the key function of the three documentaries: In addition to their significance as an archive, virtual monument, historical document and pedagogical tool, they seek to be instruments in multilayered struggles for recognition. However, to have an impact in plurimedially mediated constellations over the longer term, in the sense implied by Erll and Wodianka and Marchart, the three films lack sufficient media visibility; they lack opportunities for carrying their messages to broader publics. This is simultaneously an expression of the "specific hegemonic constellation, that is, the specific politics of signification […] in which media are bound up" (Marchart 2008: 135): The marginalized position of Roma in the hierarchized constellation of minority/majority in Romania is starkly revealed here. At the same time, the importance of these film projects should not be underestimated, because they are available as impressive artefacts and thematic mediators in concrete discussions of the recognition of Roma. They enable boundaries of national and ethnic visions of the collective self to be broken open and new spaces of belonging to be created beyond them, thus, ultimately, also providing ways of linking into political struggles for an open Europe.

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Sebastian Dümling

Changing societies, changing narratives*

How to talk about 'social change' and be understood[1]

Abstract: Working with a narratological and discourse-focused perspective, this contribution examines how one speaks about societal transformations. Tropes, metaphors and narrative strategies are at the center of the analysis. The empirical evidence is drawn from seemingly distant fields: Statements are drawn from the humanities and social sciences, from popular culture and politics. Theoretically, the paper proceeds from the assumption that a proposition achieves particular success if it proves itself to be interdiscursively legitimate in different systems of knowledge. Such symbolic trade-offs strengthen the epistemic validity of propositions. 'Societal transformation' can, thus, be shown to be a disciplinary figuration that is deeply culturally marked. The article is intended as a plea for discourse and narrative research as a productive method to analyze pop-cultural, scholarly and political cultures of the present.

Keywords: narrative research, discourse research, transformation, political and popular culture, epistemology

1. Introduction: Why changing society is possibly a type of folktale

There is a rhetoric of change everywhere: The SIEF Congress of 2019 dealt with the 'track changes' of a 'transforming world;' universities have launched courses of study on 'changing societies,' research projects seem to be all the more worthy of support the more they make use of change semantics;[2] current phenomena, such as global populism or the use of IT in agriculture can be very plausibly linked to global transformation processes (Koppetsch 2019a; Schleicher and Gandorfer 2018). Similarly, the past is also described from a change perspective: 1989 is the year of

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* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2020, 116 (1): 46–66. The text and quotations in German have been translated by Philip Saunders.

1 This paper is based on the lecture "Narrating Changing Societies," which I gave as part of the master program "Changing Societies" at the University of Basel. I would like to thank Michel Massmünster, Basel, for important information.

2 The DFG's GEPRIS shows that out of 398 ongoing projects in the section "Social and Cultural Anthropology, Non-European Cultures, Jewish Studies and Religious Studies," 207 titles contain the word fields 'transformation/change.' In comparison with previous funding periods, a significant increase has been seen since the mid-2000s.

'ambivalent transformations,' the 1970s saw the transformation of the welfare state, which, in turn, resulted from economic upheavals in the 19th century (Bretschneider, Friedrich, and Spieker 2016; Lütz 2014). Observations that name a particular year as the turning point *par excellence*, for example, 1913 (Illies 2012), 1979 (Bösch 2019) or 1834, in which Karl Polanyi begins to relate his "great transformation" (Polanyi 1944), have proven to be particularly influential; Stephen Greenblatt was even able to identify the exact year in which "the world became modern," namely 1417 (Greenblatt 2012). While a good 20 years ago, Gisela Welz still identified the transformative special form of 'globalization' as the dominant 'umbrella term' of scientific and popular discourse, today it is generally 'transformation,' 'change' and 'alteration' (Welz 1998).[3]

In the following, I would like to examine such observations of change more closely from a narrative-theoretical perspective. I will focus on those narratives that not only make it possible to observe social change but also add the corresponding normative, affective and political implications to these observations in order to make the observations of change appear 'plausible' and 'evident.'[4] My contribution attempts to understand the diagnosis that this or that 'society is changing' as a narrative figure that seems plausible because it is deeply rooted in the narrative memory: The symbolic resources that are needed to be able to tell a good story are stored here, i.e. convincing, touching and exciting. In doing so, valid narratives do not stop at borders and certainly not at epistemic ones. Rather, as Mieke Bal has put it, they are always on the move (Bal 2002). They cannot help but constantly cross borders and spaces, and they do not stop at the boundaries of science.

Scientific anthropological studies since the 1980s have repeatedly taken up this idea by examining the culturality of knowledge production, especially in the natural sciences. Loosely based on such research, I would like to elaborate on the culturality of one of the central observational figures in the social and cultural sciences: That society is changing; which, however, it should be stressed at an early stage, is not yet an ontological statement to the effect that there is 'no such thing' as social change.

Consequently, I use a corpus of statements that guide the speech about changing societies. This corpus is empirically based on apparently distant fields of discourse: Those of cultural and social sciences, of popular culture and, on the margins, of politics. I want to show that statements about changing societies' in these fields are enriched with very similar material, i.e. tropes, metaphors and semantics. To put it bluntly, if one were to describe the narrative of changing societies as a 'type of

3   The exact linguistic version, whether there is talk of transformations, changes, etc., is left out for
    reasons of space.
4   See Dümling (2020) regarding the systems-theoretical observation term.

folktale' and put it in the Aarne Thompson index, I was interested in all the motives that belong to that 'type of folktale.'

I try to implement this in several steps. I begin by presenting basic narratological ideas that help to analyze the discourse about 'changing societies.' After that, I will briefly address some voices that have spoken very effectively about such societies, followed by remarks on science as a narrative community. These considerations are applied empirically in the final sections, in which I present the symbolic exchange between popular culture, cultural and social sciences, and politics.

2.   Narration and changing: How to observe time

At the beginning of my argument is the simple statement that so much is said about the 'transformation of societies' because it is a very narrative subject. The narratologist Wolf Schmidt has structurally defined the core of narration as follows: Narrations are series of statements that represent "a temporal structure and the change of a state" (Schmid 2011: 2).[5] They are observations of temporality that make time distinguishable and connect these distinctions. The clearer the distinctions are made, the more the narrative can work with time, which then usually leads to a greater tension on the recipient's side. These distinctions are, as early Russian fairy tale research has already pointed out, also always evaluative: Basic differences, such as near – far, high – low, much – little, man – woman, refer to ideological or ethical classifications (Uspenskij 1975).

This may be one reason for the worldwide success of the book *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, which, as the publisher's advertising stresses, was presented in 2012 by "Harvard economist" Daren Acemoglu and "Harvard political scientist" James Robinson: The progress towards power and wealth in the United States is contrasted with the powerlessness and poverty of Mexico. Similar to the biographical comparison of a supposedly successful and a failed person, the decisive developmental steps that would have led to success here and to failure there are shown on the respective paths: Private ownership vs. collectivism, long-term profit-seeking vs. short-term consumerism, urbanism vs. ruralism and, as a sum of these, willingness to change vs. traditionalism. The different social changes are so well narrated because society is constantly confronted with anthropomorphic decisions that have clear and, above all, unambiguous axiological consequences: Just as Little Red Riding Hood's decision to act against her mother's advice has life-threatening consequences, Mexico's decision not to change like the USA leads to great danger.

Accordingly, it follows narratologically that changes can hardly be grasped otherwise than through narrative movements (Lehmann 2007: 43–66). Narrating means

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5   All translations from German by the author and Philip Saunders.

to note that 'something' changes its state. It is, therefore, the narrative that brings about the change as a 'social fact' and does not merely depict it. Paul Rabinow's classic formulation of "representations as social facts" (Rabinow 1986) should, in terms of narrative theory, read: 'narrations make social facts.' A world that did not have the cultural technique of narration would probably be a world without change, a world of permanent repetition, because there are no "cognitive templates" to observe anything as change (Bruner 1990: 42; Meyer 2014).

A world without narration would also be a world without time. After all, it is narrative that enables people to work on time; that history is, therefore, elementary for narrative will be shown later. Time can only be experienced and communicated by dividing it into intertwined but independent units (Ricœur 2007). The practice that accomplishes this is called narration. Therefore, diagnoses of change are diagnoses of time in a double sense – and always narratives. Anyone who observes changes in the world must, therefore, be able to deal with two resources that are connected, but each one organized in its own logical way: The ability to tell a story and know what the times mean.

While the aspect of time has been discussed in works on folkloric narrative research (Lehmann 1983), the narrative remained marginal in fundamental cultural-anthropological studies of time (Appadurai 1996; Fabian 1983). Perhaps, one can at least speculate that this neglect of narrative is due to its poor ontological reputation: That it is attributed a lesser truth value, that the narration does not rid itself of the suspicion of being merely *fabula ficta*. Accordingly, the term narrative is now also used in everyday life in the sense of manipulative deceptions, unfair argumentation and ideological distortions of reality.

Therefore, this use of the word is at odds with its use in narrative theory, according to which something is all the truer the more closely it can be told (Koschorke 2013: 29–38). If one finally understands truth as a symbolically generated, collectively recognized classification, then truth validity is primarily a communication success (Luhmann 1990: 129–135). In this sense, narratives contribute considerably to the generation of truth, to the fact that something is classified as true, for example, the observation that society is changing. Narratives, as cognitive-symbolic schemata, assign emergent phenomena to culturally sedimented experiences and, therefore, reduce the possibilities of expectation. The narrative can, thus, be understood as a culturally condensed, historically grown process schema: It first sequences contingent events at cognitively and semiotically low cost and, in the next step, generates stable and, above all, probable assumptions about the course of events using emplotment techniques (Ricœur 2007: 60–75). The narrative operates in cultural depth semantics, which can assume different forms of articulation empirically.

Narratives are, thus, not synonymous with tales but are alternatively fundamental stabilization schemes that link the individual narrative with large-scale cultural "provinces of meaning" (Schütz 1971: 237). Statements such as "people will free themselves from their bondage" or "the world is heading for its demise" refer to narratives of social change but are not narratives. Narratives develop in the *longue durée*, operate in cultural long-term memory, which is why they can only be analytically recognized in a diachronic perspective. I have described narratives elsewhere as the "probable representation of the improbable," which confront "an ordered, semantically closed space with the unexpected" (Dümling 2019: 41–42). The narrative integrates cultural expectability into the narrative and increases its chances of validity (Schneider 2010). It can be concluded that narratives of social change are particularly plausible if they can dock onto narratives; narratives of social change are, in turn, articulated in concrete narratives. The sciences, as I will show in the next two sections, are among the spaces in which narratives are particularly well established and narratives control.

3.   The normativity of change: How some have imagined change

Folklore and ethnology in the 19th century were based on the guiding observation that some communities change, and others do not – an idea introduced by their pioneers Herder and Vico (Fabian 1983). Thus, the formative subjects tied in with the idea of an anthropogenic social evolutionism open to the future, which had been virulent since humanism and displaced the belief in a divine time order and its eschatological direction. While the emerging historical science referred to such communities that were visibly changing, the ethno-sciences also considered those who were denied this ability. The latter could be observed primarily in two geographical areas: The domestic rural environment and the non-European wilderness. From the beginning, the semantics of change were combined with normative ones, which were expanded into cultural, if not racist, value judgments, as in the non-European perspective.

Folklorists at this time were very sure where in Europe a peaceful, harmonious world could be found: Outside the dirty and disease-causing cities, among the farmers in the villages, far out on high mountains and in deep valleys. The good country life was good because it had not changed since medieval times, and the first folklorists went to these villages to find a world that was not yet threatened by change, but real and original (Bendix 1997). In the interpretative countermovement, the industrializing cities became ciphers for the growing unease with modernity: Not only did cholera and syphilis lurk around every corner in the city but, even more dangerously, modernity itself.

Accordingly, in 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies described the city as a genuine space of society (*Gesellschaft*), whose main characteristic was that it was not only open

to change but was explicitly designed for it. In contrast to this is the community (*Gemeinschaft*), symbolized by the village, whose purpose is to prevent change. Tönnies' depiction enabled a clearly normative reading: While solidarity and social responsibility only exist in the stable community, volatile society appears as a space of individualistic ruthlessness and social coldness. Echoes of this distinction can still be heard today, for example, when post-growth movements rediscover the village as a utopian counter-space, organically interwoven in harmony with nature, in which resources – both social and ecological – remain stable.[6] In another context, political commentators, in turn, explain that the current populism is a consequence of Tönnies' distinction:

> Whether […] in a chauvinistic or in a rapturous-eschatological guise: communities that want to turn society upside down in the name of supposedly true values often carry a lot of resentment with them. (Marty 2019)

Apart from this aftereffect, Tönnies gives an important hint in the speech about social changes: This turn of events is ultimately a pleonasm, because a society that did not change would be a community.

While folklore conceived of rural areas in Europe as an achronic ideal world, the (non-)changeability of non-European peoples was viewed under other normative auspices. Could the peoples of Africa, according to the skeptical leading question, change at all? In Europe, according to Vico's thesis, people could have finally freed themselves from early barbarism to the present civilization of reason (Fabian 1983). Time was, thus, considered a condition for progress, for civilizational improvement – but was there any time at all in Africa? Were the African tribes not ahistorical because they were timeless and, therefore, could not undergo any changes? Herder replied that the African "always […] was and will be a prehistoric man" (Herder 1965: 221). This could be recognized already by the fact that the African tribes had no written law: Only such collectives, according to Herder, need written rights that they can forget. But since nothing changes for them, they do not forget anything, because every day is like the previous one (Herder 1965: 221–229). About one hundred years later, Edward Tylor continued this argument and integrated it into a clear hierarchy of civilization: He designed several models to understand the degree of development of tribes and nations in his main work *Primitive Culture* (Tylor 1871). Thus, for example, the civilizing three-step savagery: Barbarism – civilization, corresponding to the religious development of animism – polytheism – monotheism. The ability to change belongs to the last step of development, i.e. to make transformation possible: The more development, the greater the ability to change. According to Darwin reader

6   This normative coding of temporality also led to the debate between German sociologists Armin Nassehi and Hartmut Rosa, in which Nassehi accused the post-growth theoretician Rosa of "a petty-bourgeois desire for a world" in which the course of events could be stopped; see Nassehi (2012).

Tylor, the West is superior to primitive cultures because it adapts to change and is constantly changing. Social changeability, thus, follows certain social-evolutionary steps. Such a hierarchical perspective to determine the 'own' and the 'foreign' was rejected by Claude Lévi-Strauss at the latest. However, in the end, Lévi-Strauss, with his distinction between cold and hot societies, also remained bound to the ethno-scientific view of change: Western societies capable of change are hot in contrast to cold tribal cultures. The latter would banish time through rituals and ceremonies and exclude change (Lévi-Strauss 1975: 11–44).[7]

What is important about this line of tradition is that it follows a narrative that enables meaningful observations: According to this narrative, it is evident that societies change or that their non-change allows significant conclusions to be drawn about a non-civilized otherness; this change or non-change, in turn, follows a normative index. The argumentative effort to explain that a society experiences changes of state or not is much less than not taking changes into account. In the cultural encyclopedia, which stores the connections between words, meanings and the world, the signifier society is inextricably linked to change, and it would be an "anti-encyclopedic" statement to talk about societies without addressing their mutability (Eco 1990: 187–189).

4. Disciplinary storytelling: He who tells a story knows something

In this respect, it is not least a narrative decision whether collectives are considered capable of change or not. The parameters used to classify a change worthy of observation follow narrative conventions. Important institutionalizations of such conventions are scientific disciplines that can be understood as narrative communities, each of which exhibits genuine narrative styles. Thus, some can captivatingly narrate that current migratory movements are an expression of global change, while others calmly state that migration has always been a fact of life. Some say that the currently rampant megacities are evidence of a global transformation, while others believe that these urbanizations have taken place since people settled down. Neither one nor the other may be empirically or analytically wrong – it becomes wrong when this is told in the cultural anthropological colloquium and that in the early history colloquium (Bendix, Bizer, and Noyes 2017: 13–28).

The ultimate aim is to create a narrative that is not suspected of having been determined by contingent decisions. Recognized narrative times and places must be chosen and the *dramatis personae* named: Who is responsible for change – nations, the people, a people, things, ephemeral powers, the great statesman or the many little people? And this too is part of the disciplinary narrative style: While cultural

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7   On the postcolonial critique, see Choudhury (2016: 122f.).

anthropologists create internally focalized narratives about small sites, early historians start from zero-focalized narratives that are dedicated to the vastness of space and time. The professionally recognized epistemology frames the professionally recognized focalization and vice versa.[8]

On such communicative operations depend not only how society is but also observed what society is empirical. After all, as various authors, such as Paul Rabinow, Niklas Luhmann or Judith Butler, have pointed out, society is the result of statements, of speakers – by which not only people are meant, but also institutions, literature, images, etc. – that believe that there is something called society and that have the power to make this statement valid. According to this, society is just as much an observation-dependent figure as Butler's sexes. This is now not just a banality of scientific theory but a political question.

After all, this is precisely what is being fought over in the current populist economy: How to describe society and its changes adequately? Who speaks for whom? Who speaks for the real people, who speaks only for a cosmopolitan elite? It is asked or questioned whether we live in a multicultural or post-migrant society, or in a nation that is abolishing itself? And sometimes only one letter is disputed: The coalition of right-wing populist parties in the EU Parliament, for example, changed its name under pressure from the AfD – the "European Alliance of People and Nations" became the "European Alliance of Peoples and Nations," because performatively one prefers to create peoples rather than just people. This is not surprising, as right-wing speakers in particular show a highly affectionate knowledge of the connection between language and empiricism. The German fascist AfD-politician Bernd Höcke, for example, argues about the political consequences of describing society as a salad bowl – if, according to Höcke, our society is a salad, then it has long since gone moldy and must be thrown into the trash (Höcke and Hennig 2018: 127–130). Metaphorical questions are political questions.

Ultimately, the diagnosis that a society is changing is also always a political intervention, whether the speaker wants it or not. The encyclopedic knowledge of a 'changing society' knows that change always leads to something: To progress and liberation or to enslavement and ruin. One cannot talk about social change without at least implicitly linking to these normative "couplings of signifiers" (Sarasin 2004: 49). Especially since abstracta and 'society' are empirically experienced as the truer – and also the more real – the more enduring such couplings are.

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8   Internal focalization means that the narrator knows what the characters know. Zero-focalization means that the narrator knows everything he or she wants to know. Cf. Genette (2010: 121–123).

5.   Without history there are no stories:
What narratable changes need

In German cultural studies, the literary scholar Jürgen Link presented one of the most important extensions of Foucauldian discourse theory in the 1980s. Link explained that discourses are particularly successful, i.e. widespread and constitutive of reality, when they connect with other discourses via collective symbols to form so-called *interdiscourses*. One speaks so frequently, so affectionately, so convincingly of waves of refugees because the wave is recognized as a mass metaphor in many special discourses (politics, journalism, etc.). These special discourses are connected by such language-image couplings which create knowledge dynamics and circular evidence (Link 1996). Building on this, I will identify collective symbols about changing societies in pop cultural, cultural and social science and political discourse in the following.

Basically, it seems important to me that the pop-cultural observations about change have themselves changed considerably: While changes observed in the classical modernity of pop, in the 1960s and 70s, were primarily future-oriented, for about 20 years now, as Simon Reynolds has put it, a "Retromania" has been established, by which he understands "pop culture's addiction to [the] past" (Reynolds 2011). Pop is, thus, no longer a laboratory of possible futures but rather a workshop in which nostalgic work is done on the past. But perhaps that is precisely why pop culture is such a good place to observe social changes, because these observations need history as an important resource – even if you want to extend the changes to the future.

Two of the most sensational music videos of recent years, Beyoncé and Jay-Z's *Apeshit* (2018) and Rammstein's *Deutschland* (2019), surprisingly agree on what the basic condition of changing sociality is: Historicity.

Apeshit shows Beyoncé and Jay-Z performing through the Louvre. The video knows that remembering is a cultural practice closely related to power. Beyoncé and Jay-Z claim a place for the memories of the African diaspora in the Louvre, which has secured legitimate Western memory for over 300 years. Finally, the Louvre, as a space of memorial practices, is also a space of political appropriation. The video's narrative program is, therefore, clear: The struggle for real power is a struggle about the question of which memory is worth remembering. According to the video, a society's capacity for change, therefore, depends on the question of how much one can shape the past. Rammstein's video is aware of the same as *Apeshit*, but unlike *Apeshit*'s liberal emancipation narrative, it leads to different consequences: Similar to a kaleidoscope, the video consists of fragments of memories of German national history – from Arminius to 1970s left-wing terrorist Andreas Baader. Rammstein, too, assumes that society is what it remembers and can only change in the way it is able to change these memories. However, while Beyoncé and Jay-Z only have to struggle with the case of the Louvre, Rammstein is confronted with something

else, much more stable: The nation. The video sketches German memory and, thus, national history as unchangeable. Accordingly, the German nation does not seem to be able to change; it will continue to commit atrocities and crimes and remain forever a historical community of destiny, unable to become a society capable of change. While *Apeshit*, according to Hayden White's typology, tells of changing societies according to the genre conventions of romance – romances "underscore the appearance of new forces [...] in processes that at first seem to be [...] stable in their essence" – Rammstein's video is a satire that depicts "the eternal return of the same" (White 1991: 25).

One can see here very clearly the basic condition for observing 'changing societies,' namely that one has history – and, thus, time. It is, therefore, not surprising that social science works on this subject argue historically *in extenso*: The aforementioned Acemoglu, Professor of 'Labor Market Research,' and Robinson, Professor of 'Global Conflict Studies,' begin their ladder narrative on the failure of nations in the pre-Columbian era, and in this they come very close to the liberal *Apeshit* narrative: One can make choices and, thus, change society for the better or worse. The pre-Columbian advanced civilizations had already decided to avoid risks and dangers, which is why they ultimately failed; the Plymouth settlers, on the other hand, had realized early on that they had to create institutions that rewarded the risk. People and markets in the USA are still geared to permanent change – which is the reason for the prosperity of the USA. Social geographer Jared Diamond reinforces this motive for decision in his bestseller *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2005) – a book that has had a major impact on Barack Obama's climate policy. Diamond goes far back in history with his warning examples to show that current policymakers need to take a proactive approach to climate change. The civilization of the Scandinavian *Grænlendingar*, for example, who settled Greenland in the High Middle Ages, died out in the 15th century because the elite were not prepared to learn from the Inuit how to adapt to the climate change of the Little Ice Age. These references to history, from Beyoncé to Diamond's Greenland parable, already show it clearly: Without time, no narrative; without narrative, no perceptible change. Let us take a closer look at this in the following.

6.   Stagecoaches, planes, telephones: How change is symbolized

I will begin with the mail, because it is stored in the western narrative memory as a strong collective symbol for the turn of the epoch. This can be seen, for example, in Wolfgang Kaschuba's depiction of time and space in European modernity, where the "principle of the post" introduces the new age:

> In the carriage of letters [...] this new organizational model [the stagecoach timetable, S.D.] is intended to consistently enforce calculability and plannability, i.e. to create a supra-regional structure of space and time. (Kaschuba 2004: 43)

Time is first liquefied, i.e. made workable, in order to harden it afterwards, so that it can be used instrumentally. With this figure of thought, modernity is narrated in numerous large-scale philosophical and sociological interpretations, from Hans Blumenberg to Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman. According to this, modernity is a "category of movement [...] in which an imperative of rapid change prevails" (Nassehi 2008: 199f.). This movement, central to modernity, is metonymically captured by the post: New spaces of possibility open up, an awareness of contingency emerges and with it, an inventory of mental and technical procedures for coping with contingency.

At the beginning, there is the post office, and at the beginning of the Swiss modern age, there is the stagecoach. At least this narrative thread can be seen in the iconic painting *The Gotthard Post* by Rudolph Koller (1873), which literary scholar Peter von Matt (2012) interpreted as an access to the political imaginary of Switzerland. The carriage crosses the Gotthard massif via the newly built pass road. The carriage and the roads and paths "shrink" (Rosa 2005: 62) Swiss space, Swiss time. Connections between cities and regions are now possible, with all their consequences: The horses run ahead, the herd of cows stare dazed at the carriage. The calf, driven forward by the carriage, is in danger. If the carriage stands for modernity, do the cows mean the old 'communal' Switzerland of the alpine dairymen and alpine pastures? What will happen to this Switzerland when change comes, but it cannot change? Will the calf then be run over?

In the picture, apart from the coachman hidden behind his hat, there are no people to be seen, and – so one might think – no 'society' either. However, it is visible everywhere in the painting: Society is dynamization, is the elimination of a somehow natural community order; society is the negation of stable time-space fixations and the alignment of permanently possible new "spatio-temporal connections" (Harvey 2005: 115f.). The stagecoach drives Switzerland into modernity and soon receives support from the railway, with which a new era has long since dawned outside Switzerland.

Since Marx's famous words "revolutions are the locomotives of history" (Marx 1960: 85), the railway – even more so than the coach – has been a collective symbol of progress, an open future and the mutability of all things. For, as Penelope Harvey argues, the laying of the rails is to be understood as an ideal symbol of anthropogenic land grabbing, which ultimately culminated in the Anthropocene (Harvey 2015). Pop culture knows this only too well.

In the motif pool of the Western genre, the railway and stagecoach combine to form the railway post office, whose rails shift the 'frontier' further and further west. To the west of the tracks lies the timeless space of the savages, and to the east, the modern time regime oriented towards change. Nowhere has this been photographed as well as in the final scene of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, in which

one sees the Chinese workers together with the slaves who have just been liberated laying the tracks westward so that the mail train, for which so many have already died, can continue on its way to the 'frontier.' The transformations of modernity, as Leone shows in the transformation year 1968, are based on a colonial land grab that sets the time-space dynamic in motion.

Leone, like Koller, is concerned with the disposal of time and space by means of new medialities and connectivities. Painting and film, thus, share the same motifs that characterize cultural and social science observations on social change, whether one calls them the "disentanglement of space and time" (Bauman 2016: 15) or the now possible "communication between absentees" (Luhmann 2000: 202f.). Whatever one calls it, the focus is on altered regimes of familiarity and contact zones between the familiar and the alien. At its core, therefore, it is, apparently banal, about how people interact with other people. This is the *fabula docet*, the moral of the story: Social change touches the way people interact with each other.

This is also evident in the narrative program that the Swiss folk-pop singer Trauffer creates in the video for his song *Heiterefahne* – sung in Swiss-German dialect: In the Bernese Oberland, Trauffer and his friends in historical folk costume enter the 1910s mail train; they go on a journey through time to "Retroland" (Groebner 2018). What Leone and Koller still used as a symbol for modernity – the railway, the post office – now means a nostalgic look at the past. The video's leitmotifs also refer to temporality, communication and mediality, but carry a different semantics. We see a postman fallen out of time, old (post) cars, the old (post) train, old books read on the train. These are media systems that form past and present associations which make the present historical or transfer the leading semantics of the past – slowness, stability – into the present.

To what extent Trauffer's post and railway are impregnated with semantics of deceleration, of time-space fixation, becomes clearer when one looks at their function within song and video. The stagecoach and the mail train in the Gotthard Post and in Leone's film enable translocal and transtemporal communication between absentees; both narrative programs elevate this to a genuine characteristic of modernity. In Trauffer's case, on the other hand, both media systems typically allow only proximity relations, i.e. communication of presence:

> *Der erscht Sunneglitz wo am Grad füre luegt/Der Pöschtler er schwingt zum Gruess mitem Huet/der Tou uf de Bletter vo de Rose bim Stau/im Wasserfall tooset der Früehligsgleschter ids Tau […]/I däm Ort woni wohne git me enanger no d Hand/Problem löst me hie, i däm me red mitenand/abgmacht isch abgmacht, und e Handschlag dä zeut/und säälte biist eine, wo luut ume bällt.* (Trauffer 2019)

(Translated analogously: The first sunlight appears behind the mountain./The postman waves his hat in greeting./The dew lies on the rose petals./In the waterfall the glacier water roars into the valley./In the place where I live, people shake hands./

Problems are solved by talking to each other./Deals are made with a handshake./
Rarely does anyone come looking for a fight.)

While the media in *Die Gotthardpost* and *Once Upon a Time in the West* overlap space
and time, coupling the invisible with the visible – in Leone's work, faraway Boston
plays a role, but is never shown; in Trauffer's work, they circulate in the zone of
social and cultural intimacy: Here, the letter does not bring the distant into the
village but is coded with the immediate, the haptic and sensual of presence com-
munication, which also applies to the train in which Trauffer's friends travel. This
motif, thus, inverts Georg Simmel's idea of the tram, with which modernity begins,
in a strikingly fitting manner, because people here are forced to "look at each other
for hours without talking to each other" (Simmel 1992: 727). The train as a relay
for strangers – this is where the plot begins with Leone: The train takes a woman
from the metropolis in the East to the male society at the 'frontier.' And the men do
not understand: A woman in a ball gown, here in the 'wasteland'? The men do not
know how to communicate properly with this woman. Leone's train, which brings
the foreign, thus, also dynamizes gender orders and the communicative expectancies
that are supposed to secure these orders: The train becomes a signifier of a moder-
nity that is becoming fluid. It is precisely this motif of contingency that Trauffer
transfers into a motif of proximity and expectability: The postman may not be de-
livering letters from afar, but he does greet in a friendly manner and does so every
day. Trauffer fights against social change by appropriating its earlier instruments
and fading out the current ones. At the only place where he mentions a decidedly
current connecting medium, the airplane, it serves as a contrast medium to express
his desire for the village "retroland" all the more strongly and to emphasize his
alienation experience in the global:

> *Natürlich bi ou i, scho wäg gsii vo da/ha d Wälle ghört ruusche, u aus hinger mir glah/
> […] scho im Flugzüüg da brönnts mer es Loch i mii Seel!* (Trauffer 2019)

> (Translated analogously: Of course, I've been away from here / I've heard the ocean
> waves crashing and left everything behind me / But: Already in the plane it burns
> a hole in my soul!)

Consequently, there are two separate media and axiological spaces in Trauffer's nar-
rative world: The world of airplanes, into which the hero is forced to set off, and the
world of old locomotives, in which even the signs of change ultimately only indicate
non-change.

Formulated in discourse-analytical terms, all these statements are to be under-
stood as homologous: Trauffer, Koller and Leone communicate in an interdiscourse
that observes changing societies quite clearly and to which the sociological theory
figures cited belong. They talk about social change by observing interpersonal ex-
pectancies in their dependencies on media systems: Only when one understands the

media that mediate between one's own self and that of the other can one be reliable about what one can expect from the other.

This seems to me to be a common perspective on change, especially when one looks at the works that emerged following Arjun Appadurai's reflections on temporality (Appadurai 1996). Human geographer Léonie Newhouse, for example, uses precisely those metonyms of change in her field study on the Sudanese transformation society that also appear in pop-cultural examples. Newhouse writes that new communication media, namely the use of smartphones, opened up "space and time" in Sudan, "shaping the everyday practices of anticipating, hedging for and living through a future and present that is radically uncertain" (Newhouse 2017: 501). According to Newhouse, a radical media upheaval in sub-Saharan Africa separates those who master the new technologies and the associated time-space relationships from those who do not. According to Newhouse, the use of digital communication media opens up new possibilities for action – such as fleeing to Europe – and, thus, an unprecedented "unpredictability of the future" is occurring (Newhouse 2017: 504).

While the change is observed across the tropes of acceleration, the responses are directed toward the solid, the real, the earthy and the rooted. When the leader of the AfD Group in the *Bundestag*, Alexander Gauland, discusses what he considers to be the main cultural conflict of our time, he makes use of precisely the semantic binarity that has been outlined:

> [The cosmopolitans, on the one hand, (S.D.)] live [...] in big cities, speak fluent English, and when they move from Berlin to London or Singapore to change jobs, they find similar apartments everywhere [...].
>
> As a result, the bond between this new elite and their respective home countries is weak. For our voters, on the other hand, home is still a value in itself [...] and [they are] the first to lose their home because it is their milieu into which immigrants flow. They can't just move away, fly away and play golf somewhere else. (Gauland 2018)

Like a structuralist, Gauland separates the fixed from the flowing, the fixed from the detached, the calm from the movement, the passenger from the stationary. The fact that such statements are not only possible in a political sense but are made as a slogan is because they correspond to our knowledge of social change: When societies change, then the flow begins, new media are used, and times and spaces are newly interconnected. Collective symbols and the semantizations conveyed through them function largely independently of political intentions. In this respect, it is no surprise that the sociologist Cornelia Koppetsch differentiates linguistically in her description of social differences in a similar way to Gauland:

> On the one hand, there is a global upper class that flies around the world or consults in all countries via video conference [...] without having to take on [...] responsibility. And, on the other hand, the masses of people do not achieve [...] [security or] modest prosperity, because the influence of popular parties, trade unions and col-

lective bargaining agreements ends at the national borders and is dwindling anyway. (Koppetsch 2019b)

Here, people also fly, connecting regions of the world, bridging times and spaces, while Trauffer and his friends drive around at a snail's pace in a locomotive and do not move; and yet others, who do not have a locomotive as a time machine at their disposal, develop, as Wendy Brown has pointed out, a desire for walls that stop the flows of time, space, and people; and in Brown's analysis we also find, only marginally, mobile phones, airplanes, and roads. Movements usually provoke stopping regimes, which are supposed to stop the movements (Brown 2018).

In the last pop-cultural example, I would like to refer to a particularly powerful imagination of such regimes, especially since this is specifically the area of responsibility of the former folklore – the people of whom the song *Wahre Werte* (i.e. true values) by the South Tyrolean band *Frei.Wild* is about:

Where we live, where we stand/Is our inheritance, lies our blessing/Homeland means people [...] But we are obliged to preserve this/[...] A tree without roots cannot exist [...] Your children will build on it later/Language, customs and faith are values of the homeland/Without them we perish, our little people die [...]. (Frei.Wild 2011)

Every statement is based on the paradigmatic decision according to which linguistic register the world is to be designated. The different registers articulate the different forms of desire of the politically unconscious. By observing the world through an organizistic linguistic register, *Frei.Wild* also describes the change organically: There is a literally natural connection between things in the world of *Frei.Wild*. In this respect, natural changes occur in the form of continuities and extensions; children are like parents, only young. In this register, one cannot, therefore, think politically but only naturally. Everything is connected by time and space, just as various developments from the 17th to the 19th century were understood via the collective symbol of the family tree and could not be thought of otherwise. No breaks or cracks are conceivable in this imagination. The breaking in of the unexpected and unplanned resembles the tearing out of tree roots. According to *Frei.Wild*, the Tyrolean people have existed for 1200 years and have successfully resisted all non-natural interventions. This includes the fact that the song explicitly takes a stand against fascism – as the only explicit opponent:

We hate fascists, Nazis... We will always keep our roots. (Frei.Wild 2011)

Fascism is not only a political force, but operates in the language of acceleration, of revolution – Italian fascism in that of futurism. Its language of political acceleration is diametrically opposed to *Frei.Wild*'s root world, a world that is very close to Tönnies' community and whose change can only be described through a language of health/illness. *Frei.Wild*'s song is a fitting conclusion to my reflections, because it formulates a utopia about the figure of the people, how future, present and past

can be summarized in a single dimension of time: As a permanent self-repeat. In the Bolzano market square, the video's place of action, forms of change such as fluidity and emergence have no access. If this were the case, the Tyrolean people would be transformed into a society, according to *Frei.Wild*'s narrative program. And that would be the end of the people. The desire that *Frei.Wild* articulates can ultimately be understood as the desire of the calf driven by the Gotthard carriage, as the desire of those who, in view of the omnipresent diagnoses of contingency, yearn for absolute spaces of providence.[9] It is the desire of those for whom Trauffer's locomotive still runs too fast and those who want to drive roots into the earth.

7.   Conclusion: Why there are changing societies

"The world was still so young that many things lacked a name, and to name them you had to point your finger at them" (García Márquez 1989: 7). This is how the narrator describes the nature of the world before change has entered it in *A Hundred Years of Solitude*. This world is not yet tied into a web of meanings. There is not yet an inventory of symbolic practices by means of which one could communicate about social change. In this world, things are simply there. After all, there is no time to which things are exposed. It is only after the village of Macondo is founded in a mythical act that time comes into the world, and with it change; only now are things given a name; and only now are the collective symbols that are needed to observe change emerging.

The novel, thus, solves a supposed problem that could be recognized in the background of my attempt at deconstruction. Its narrator can take the perspective of suspended culturality, whereas I, on the other hand, had to repeatedly make use of the character I was trying to deconstruct: While I questioned the figure of the 'changing society' in its symbolic-narrative constitution, I myself made use of diagnoses of change. Even though some, such as the representatives of New Realism, may see a hermeneutical contradiction in this, this apparent inconsistency should rather be seen as an argument 'for' deconstructivist procedures: Precisely the fact that we can imagine – at least at present and, thus, unlike the representatives of a colonial or folk romantic perspective – a world without social change only in fictional designs shows how much this cultural figure creates factual validity. Finally, the interest in deconstructions, i.e. the dissolution of validity structures, would be of little help if one did not consider their dialectical connection with the stable, solid, never to be dissolved (Leimgruber 2014).

In this respect, the question of whether changing societies exist at all, if this is nothing more than a cultural figure, would also be pointless. There is no doubt

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9   I understand as spaces of providence such spaces that are oriented towards predictability, for example, in that rituals clearly prescribe courses of action (Dümling 2019: 42).

that there are changing societies. That is completely evident, because neither the bestsellers of non-fiction books, the cultural-scientific-sociological interpretations, the political interjections, the ethnographic hard work, nor the Hollywood films, music videos, pop songs or paintings that I have cited here as observations of change have to stop at justifying the existence of changing societies.

In my presentation, it should have become clear that there is a rich cross-discourse fund of collective symbols and narrative strategies that give the figure of 'changing society' observed such evidence that there is no need to address questions of validity to it. Thus, my contribution should be understood as a plea to see culture not only as a resource that unsettles the world and reality but, on the contrary, to stabilize the world and reality.

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Asian tiger mosquitos as undesirable cross-border commuters*

Invasive species and the regulation of (bio-)insecurities in Europe[1]

Abstract: Similar to other animals, the Asian tiger mosquito has a particular biography. It is one of the most recent infamous additions to European wildlife (along with other unpopular invaders, such as the tramp slug and killer shrimp). Originally from South-East Asia, tiger mosquitos managed to spread to Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Europe by traveling along global trade and traffic routes. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has classified tiger mosquitos as an invasive species believed "to cause economic or environmental impact or harm to human health." The insects can be vectors for a number of infectious diseases, such as dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika. This article draws on ethnographic research to analyze the strategies used in four European regions (Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Germany) to monitor and control mosquito populations by means of mapping, insecticides and public awareness campaigns. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, we aim to understand how borders come to matter in the management of species that do not recognize borders. This article discusses how mosquitos embody powerful connections between nations, places, nature and the environment – and how these connections are based on assumptions about who is responsible for solving the mosquito problem.

keywords: Tiger mosquitos, biosecurity, prevention, dengue, invasive species

"It is a warm and bright September day in 2016. We are standing on a balcony belonging to an older woman who is telling us about mosquitos. Her house is located in a private street in the hills of Lugano in the Swiss canton of Ticino. Lago di Lugano – Lake Lugano – is visible in the distance. On this beautiful late summer day, many people have flocked to the lake to sail, swim or just hang out. Ms. Frasa,

on whose balcony we are standing, notified the local mosquito control unit (the Gruppo Cantonale di Lavoro Zanzare) after discovering an infestation of Asian tiger mosquitos in her yard. Asian tiger mosquitos are also known as *Aedes albopictus*, but that is of little importance to Ms. Frasa. Sure enough, as soon as we step out onto her balcony, we notice the sharp, high pitched hum of the insects. A group of female tiger mosquitos that had settled in the flowerbeds on the edge of the balcony now rises and approaches our group. In search for their next blood meal, the insects are attracted by the scent of our skin, a mixture of ammoniac, lactic acid and fatty acids that is irresistible to mosquitos. Straight away, Giulia, the newest member of the control unit, is bitten by a mosquito. So as not to interrupt the older woman explaining her theory as to where the foreign insects in her yard came from, Giulia whispers to us: 'This place is full of them. They are literally eating us!'" (KH's field-notes; all names used are pseudonyms)

Global mobility has brought about an increased circulation of not only humans, goods, standards and technologies but also other organisms. According to the European Commission (European Commission 2014), approximately 12,000 foreign species have established themselves in Europe in recent years, ranging from zebra mussels and annual ragweed to the coypu. Not all of these immigrants are welcome; at best, they are seen as odd additions to European ecosystems. In fact, experts from the fields of ecology and environmental protection have been warning about the impact that these so called 'invasive alien species,' might have on the environment, the economy and public health.

Originating in (sub-)tropical regions, tiger mosquitos, *Aedes albopictus*, are considered a risk to public health. Nowadays, they are endemic in many areas of Southern and Western Europe and have become a vector for approximately twenty human pathogens. Dengue fever (in addition to Zika and chikungunya) is probably the most well-known of these infectious diseases. Travelers in Croatia and Southern France were first infected with dengue fever, formerly understood as a tropical disease, in 2010. In 2012, over 2.000 people contracted the disease during an outbreak on Madeira. Dengue is also known as breakbone fever; in the majority of cases, symptoms include a severe headache, joint pains, fever, nausea and a characteristic rash, usually passing after about a week. A small number of people infected with the disease, however, develop a hemorrhagic fever associated with high mortality rates. To date, no vaccination or therapy exists for dengue. The WHO estimates that over 3.3 million people worldwide were infected with the disease in 2016 (WHO 2019).

While European countries have yet to be declared risk areas for dengue, the current debate surrounding the introduction of highly contagious infectious diseases has problematized tiger mosquitos as a potential biosecurity risk in and for Europe. In order to understand how monitoring is practiced at the time of writing this article, it is important to understand that the presence of the mosquitos in Europe

does not necessarily result in an outbreak of breakbone fever – they are, however 'the necessary prerequisite.' The visit of the Gruppo Cantonale di Lavoro Zanzare described above, which is typical for these settings, is one of the measures taken to monitor the mosquitos' activities in various Swiss cantons. Monitoring is carried out on a regular basis during the summer months, i.e. the insects' breeding season, and is dependent on the cooperation of citizens.

This article focuses on Asian tiger mosquitos or, more specifically, their ability to subvert numerous classificatory categories: Infrastructure, geography, administration and climate. As the ethnologists Uli Beisel, Ann Kelly and Noémi Tousignant remarked, mosquitos are "good to think with" (Beisel, Kelly, and Tousignant 2013: 3). By thinking with insects, we learn how scientists (but not only them) think about cohabitation in and the transformation of the natural world. They also enable us to critically analyze the ongoing transformation of environments once understood to be 'natural.' If we take their transgressive potential seriously, both from an empirical and a theoretical perspective, Asian tiger mosquitos present an opportunity to question the scope of the social categories we have been using for a long time to classify life in the Western modern age: Nationalism, territories, the public sphere, private property, safety. These resistant mosquitos are ideally suited for this purpose. Mosquitos make borders and boundaries visible precisely because they ignore, subvert and use them for extending their dominion – a strategy that Bowker and Star (1999: 34) call "infrastructural inversion," a reference to the relational nature of infrastructures that only take shape and become effective in practice. In this manner, tiger mosquitos force us to question the sustainability and maintenance of established boundaries and demarcations that have had normative effects and also proven to be extremely useful in regulating a wide range of social problems.

Tiger mosquitos in Europe are, to use Mary Douglas' (1984) famous aphorism, "out of place." They are not hampered by the borders between countries nor do they let an ambiguous legal status, obstinate authorities, unclear jurisdictions, or boundaries between private property and public space faze them. The world of mosquitos is based on the rhythms of day and night, wet and dry, on ammoniac and lactic acid, carbon dioxide concentration gradients, the buzzing of their fellow mosquitos and the humidity of the environment. It is because of this very defiance and the fact that the insects are necessarily "out of place" that the mosquitos draw our attention to several core categories commonly used in European civil societies – if there ever has been a 'right' place for mosquitos from a human perspective.[2]

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2   Unlike studies on companion species (e.g. dogs or other domesticated animals) that focus their analysis on reciprocal and often positively connotated relationships, tiger mosquitos belong to those organisms that are conceived as being undesirable, disruptive and a potential health risk (see e.g. Fox 2006; Haraway 2003; Lorimer 2010). As opposed to other animals, affective or even

This article is about these processes. Using the idea of tiger mosquitos as cross-border commuters as an empirical example, the paper looks at how biosecurity is negotiated, understood and practiced when dealing with an invasive insect. In the first step, we will describe how tiger mosquitos were translated from a tropical insect into a European biosecurity problem through connecting the global mobility of goods, people and insects to political-ecological categories. In the next step, we will scrutinize our field notes to discuss the administrative difficulties that result from new types of entanglements and how (human) actors in the field deal with these problems. Thirdly – and finally – we will examine the question of blame and responsibility in conjunction with solving the mosquito problem within this context. This paper takes the perspective of multiple entanglements, i.e. of ecological, administrative, political and (in a wider sense) moral practices, that unfold in connection with the highly mobile tiger mosquitos, constantly integrating new artifacts, actors and technologies into the relational structure. Against this backdrop, we will apply methods from cultural anthropology to discuss how these entanglements evolved and what their practical consequences are.

Methods and approach

The empirical data used here was collected as part of a research project funded by the DFG, "Biosecurity in practice: The prevention of dengue and its vector species in Europe as a field of biomedical, technological, and political intervention," which was conducted between June 2016 and November 2018 at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology at Goethe University Frankfurt. The project took an ethnographic approach, examining four exemplary settings that are relevant for research on and the prevention of tiger mosquitos in Europe: Firstly, entomological research groups and expert networks; secondly, the used tire market in the Netherlands; thirdly, the mapping of breeding grounds used by tiger mosquitos in Switzerland; and fourthly, the fight against established populations in France and Germany. The goal was to investigate how preventive knowledge and technologies emerged in the management and monitoring of tiger mosquito populations and how these practices were adapted to local conditions. The methods used were expert interviews and one- or multiple-day participant observations that had to be adapted to the mosquitos' life and activity cycles. Researchers from the natural sciences (biology, entomology, ecology) were identified as experts. The observations took place in a mosquito laboratory, in expert meetings and conferences, at different research institutions in Germany and France, and during the activities of the *Gruppo Cantonale di Lavoro Zanzare* mentioned above. The majority of the research was divided up

ethical attributes often do not apply to tiger mosquitos – in other words: "It may be difficult to love the mosquito" (Spielman and D'Antonio 2001: xviii).

between the two authors of this paper, while a much smaller portion was conducted as a team. The material collected in this manner was subjected to a systematic, software-supported analysis based on the principles of grounded theory. This paper discusses primarily the Swiss setting and the mapping of breeding grounds carried out there.

No place for tiger mosquitos – or 'multiple entanglements 1'

Even though the presence of tiger mosquitos in Europe, for example, on Ms. Frasa's balcony, leaves material traces, closer observation reveals that there is no linear, clear-cut explanation for their presence. The presence of *Aedes Albopictus* in Central Europe is, indeed, a story of entanglements across a multitude of fields which are political, ecological, economic, biological and administrative in nature. It is, for instance, a story of globalization. The Asian tiger mosquito is one of the most recent infamous additions to wildlife in Europe. From its origins in South-East Asia, it managed to spread successfully to Africa, North and South America, Oceania and Europe. Curiously, as we would like to mention, not all new arrivals – plant or animal – are considered a welcome addition to local biodiversity and, therefore, worthy of protection.

Current research indicates that the increased spread of the mosquitos is the result of their tremendous adaptability. Tiger mosquitos require only very small quantities of water for reproduction, for example, the amount of water that fits into a bottle cap, a branch fork or a used tire is sufficient for the larvae to breed. Thus, the globalized trade in used tires, cut flowers and lucky bamboo facilitates the spread of tiger mosquitos, or rather their larvae and eggs. All these goods have in common that they are the sources of small accumulations of water, and they embed Central Europe into a closely knit material-metabolic relationship with tropical regions in the Global South. Moreover, tiger mosquito eggs can easily endure prolonged periods of drought or cold weather of up to minus ten degrees Celsius, thus, making them ideally suited to surviving long trips across the land or ocean. Consequently, their eggs, larvae and pupae find numerous opportunities to travel the world as blind passengers.

The presence of tiger mosquitos on European territory goes back to the last century. The first sightings of the mosquitos in Albania were documented in 1979. In 1990, they were sighted in Genoa, Italy. Shortly thereafter, the mosquitos gradually migrated along the Mediterranean coast toward the north. Here, cars and the transportation of goods helped them along, as they do today. On the search for their next blood meal, the mosquitos entered cars or trucks, leaving the vehicles along with the passengers at rest stops or their final destinations (Flacio et al. 2016).

The number of tiger mosquito sightings has been on the rise in European countries since the 1990s – as has the number of countries affected. This situation

initially allowed medical entomologists to change their stance from viewing the mosquitos as pesky new arrivals to making them objects of regulation. Asian tiger mosquitos went from being insects "out of place" to becoming part of the sociotechnical system of biosecurity during the creation of the *Guidelines for the surveillance of invasive mosquitos in Europe* at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The system should ideally discover the mosquitos as soon as they cross a national border by systematically checking the corresponding goods. While still deemed out of place on European territory, tiger mosquitos have already become subject to the biosecurity apparatus and, as such, have had certain regulations applied to them (e.g. mapping, insecticides, biocides). These measures were possible because the guidelines mobilized concepts for exotic and invasive species that fundamentally changed the status of the mosquitos within political regulations. Exotic species are defined in the guidelines as those that are "not native to an ecosystem and, if present, [have] been introduced" (ECDC 2012: IV). A species is considered invasive and no longer simply exotic when it manages to establish itself successfully in an ecosystem (taking the successful survival of subsequent generations as the benchmark). In addition, the definition also notes that an invasive species causes "economic or environmental impact or harm to human health" (ECDC 2012: IV) – justified cause to fear they would do so is sufficient. This definition is based on a territorial understanding of the nation state acting as a kind of container for 'native' biodiversity. National borders, thus, determine whether a species is seen as harmless, desirable and 'natural,' or as foreign, harmful and invasive. While ecosystems themselves do not stop at national borders, national authorities' jurisdiction does. At the same time, this approach reinforces the concept of the nation state, as it is the state that regulates the (bio-)security of its citizens.[3]

This phenomenon was also evident in our field site, in this case in Switzerland. The first documented sightings of tiger mosquitos in the canton of Ticino dated back to 2003 (Flacio et al. 2004). The report describes how the mosquitos succeeded in settling in the US in 1985. From there, they used the international trade routes for used tires to reach Italy in 1990, later traveling in the same way to France (1999) and Belgium (2002). The used tire trade is a global network in which Switzerland is one of the trade partners (although one of our informants noted that Switzerland considers itself as more of an exporter of used tires than an importer). The tires integrate tiger mosquitos into global hierarchies of wealth and value chains. The canton of Ticino also plays a role here; while it does not import tires from neighboring Italy, it does benefit from inexpensive migrant labor from across the border. An

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3   Biosecurity practices lead to a mutual entanglement of the domains of medicine and security and, thus, to a medicalization of security and a securitization of medicine. This is particularly evident in the prevention of epidemics and pandemics, for example, when national states stock up on vaccines aimed at protecting the population (see e.g. Elbe 2010).

estimated 62,000 commuters regularly crossed the border between Italy and Ticino for work in 2014, giving the mosquitos plenty of opportunities to hitch a ride and thus "enter" (assuming this concept can be applied to insects) Swiss territory unnoticed by the human passengers (Flacio et al. 2016). In this sense, the monitoring and controlling of European tiger mosquito populations can also be seen as 'material politics,' as defined by John Law und Annemarie Mol (2008). The concept of material politics refers to aspects of political action that unfold outside of discourse, i.e. how materiality is, at the same time, a means, a prerequisite and a result of political action. In Law and Mol's study, interfering with traditional methods of boiling pigswill and the resulting circulation of goods and pathogens integrated Great Britain into larger globalization processes, both materially and politically (Law und Mol 2008). In the case of tiger mosquitos, material politics is aimed at disentangling the close connections between national European territories and the unordered metabolic globalization processes that bring tiger mosquitos – once a tropical species – to Europe. This includes heterogenous practices, such as setting traps, introducing BTI (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*)[4], spraying insecticides or drawing maps indicating where the mosquitos have been detected.

The impossibility of administration – or 'multiple entanglements 2'

The concept of invasion, as sketched above, rather than simply mirroring a 'natural' order of the biological world, is 'political' in nature and shaped by social norms and values (Fall 2013: 172–173; also see Barker; Taylor, and Dobson 2013). It is rich in political and scientific assumptions (i.e. being classified as 'foreign' or 'native' determines territorial affiliation and, consequently, what regulations apply). Similarly, biodiversity is much more than a representation of 'natural' facts. Geographer Juliet Fall stresses that our current Western ways of thinking about nature in terms of biodiversity are fairly recent and a product of modernization (2013: 168). Fall shows convincingly that biodiversity[5] is never a matter of mere numbers. Rather, the concept puts the diversity of life forms within a given ecosystem into hierarchical order and assigns different ratings to its species. Paradoxically, not all species are considered to be of equal value and a desirable addition to a particular ecosystem (and clearly, tiger mosquitos are not). In the case of Europe, they are seen as invaders, pests and potential transmitters of disease.

The concepts of biodiversity and invasion, however, are important for a critical analysis of tiger mosquitos, as the two terms are closely entangled with scientific concepts of nature, the environment, space and the attribution of responsibility.

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4   BTI is a biological larvicide made from bacteria. When granular BTI is added to breeding waters, for example, it destroys the epithelial cells in the intestines of tiger mosquitos.

5   Fall's concept of biodiversity is based on the works of David Takacs (1996), a scholar in science studies.

At this point, Fall summarizes: "The idea of biodiversity nevertheless inexorably changed our relationship to these localized elsewheres, overturning [...] how we identify who is responsible for defining and solving specific problems" (Fall 2013: 169). This statement illustrates that – regardless of the role of tiger mosquitos – the underlying concept of European diversity has close spatial and meaningful linkages to something that marks tiger mosquitos as belonging "elsewheres." The categories established here, however, are temporary and subject to change, allowing us to understand how and why Asian tiger mosquitos bear political relevance: They are an invasive species and serve as a vector for a whole series of infectious diseases and, as such, are problematized as a public health risk.

Tiger mosquitos have emerged on European territory on a regular basis since the turn of the millennium. In 2007, they caused an outbreak of chikungunya in Italy, affecting approximately 330 people. Outbreaks in France followed in 2010, 2014 and 2017 with 2, 11 and 17 cases, respectively. The last chikungunya outbreak in Italy was in 2017 with 245 cases (ECDC 2017: 8).

Given the potential of Asian tiger mosquitos to transmit numerous 'tropical' infectious diseases, the mosquitos have been classified as 'invasive' instead of exotic – in relation to European Union territory. That means they have the potential to serve as a disease vector. This potential has caused some disturbances, which have had an impact on the way in which states generally deal with invasive species. One of our informants in Germany – a biologist who is involved in monitoring the mosquitos in Southern Germany – describes how authorities determined who was responsible for monitoring and controlling the insects (his statement refers to the situation in Germany):

And then – it started right when we began monitoring albopictus, so ... Just the – who is going to pay for it? Which of the authorities or ministries is interested in the results? The Ministry of Health? Question mark? So, the Ministry of Health says: "Is the mosquito transmitting any diseases?" And you say: "It does, potentially." "Is it doing it now?" "No. Currently it isn't." "Then they're not our responsibility." [laughs] And the second ministry, the Ministry of the Environment asks: "Are they an invasive species?" "Yes." Then they define invasive species like this: An invasive species is a species that is invasive and eliminates other species. So they ask: "Are these albopictus eliminating other species?" "No. They aren't." "Then they aren't our responsibility." Then comes the Ministry of Agriculture. They could... They can actually finance things that are potential transmitters. So, for example, sand flies and biting midges or things like that. But only if they transmit disease to animals. So they ask: "Can tiger mosquitos infect animals that are relevant for agriculture?" And then you think: dogs! They infect dogs with heartworms. But dogs are not agricultural livestock. Which means they aren't their responsibility either.

This vignette illustrates how tiger mosquitos refuse to fit into the operating categories of administrative bodies. They cause confusion (not only) for the authorities – or, as Anna Tsing puts it, they cause "friction" (2005). "Friction" occurs where global connections have local impact and initiate new types of relationships and structures that are not covered by traditional concepts and regulations, and that must be understood as unpredictable and disorganized but also as creative. When controlling Asian tiger mosquitos, "friction" is caused by the continued ambiguous status of the mosquitos. They did not pose an acute risk to public health while research for this paper was being conducted, because there had not yet been an endemic colonization of the local (human and animal) population with the viruses deemed necessary for that to be the case. Thus, they were not a 'public health' issue at the time. Nor could tiger mosquitos be considered a threat to native species, even though they are new arrivals to the European ecosystems and have the potential to cause problems and disturbances in the future. But again, these are only potential problems. Accordingly, the mosquitos were not the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment. In addition, the infectious diseases they transmit are not considered to be relevant for the livestock bred in Germany, so, the Ministry of Agriculture did not see them as their responsibility. Thus, *Aedes albopictus* are in an administrative limbo; they are a problem that has yet to develop, a potential scenario rather than a current threat. However, it is their very potential and the resulting uncertainty that establish the urgency for taking action against them. This poses an everyday challenge for the authorities responsible for controlling and monitoring the mosquitos, as they must find practical means to implement, negotiate and administer biosecurity in the face of these capricious insects.

In our Swiss setting, these efforts consisted of comprehensively mapping[6] the numerous locations in which mosquito traps were set up. These maps served two purposes: To document and visualize the trap locations. Mapping, therefore, reveals the networked structure of trap locations, because, similar to the ECDC, the maps are based on the European Union's NUTS (*Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques*)[7] and, thus, make the borders between countries, districts and municipalities visible.

Combing these two artifacts – trap locations and administrative divisions – also reveals another aspect of cartography: Maps contain statements that are "propositional in nature" (Koch 2011: 6), i.e. they say something about the relationship between these two artifacts and assign a truth value to it. In our Swiss setting, this involved delegating responsibility to specific actors, because the maps display

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6   The Swiss project in which we carried out our field research was funded by the Federal Office for
     the Environment.
7   This is a statistical tool that identifies and classifies EU-wide geographical reference values (see
     Eurostat 2015).

administrative subdivisions, thereby implying that tiger mosquitos found in these territories are the responsibility of the administrative unit that governs this area. The mosquitos are, thus, being politicized through a process which the human geographers Denis Wood and John Fels call "the power of maps" (Wood 1992).

According to the Cantonal law of 1958, municipalities are responsible for securing the hygienic conditions in their jurisdictions.[8] This legal situation, along with positive trap locations and connected to municipal borders, allocated local administrations the responsibility for dealing with mosquito infestations on their territory.[9] Maps mobilize responsibility. The political character of this tool is also demonstrated in the following vignette which brings us back to Ms. Frasa, who appeared at the start of this paper, and her balcony. Ms. Frasa has a theory about the origin of the pesky insects.

Ms. Frasa thinks the Italians are to blame – or 'multiple entanglements 3'

As we stood on her balcony with its gorgeous view over Lake Lugano, Ms. Frasa suddenly began to talk about her neighbors in the apartment above hers. These neighbors were an Italian family and used the apartment mostly as a holiday home. That meant they were often absent for long periods of time during which the apartment was essentially empty. The family had installed an automatic irrigation system to prevent the plants on their balcony from drying out during their absence. Ms. Frasa is convinced that this is the source of the tiger mosquito problem on her property (the blaming-the-Italians-for-anything-bad-happening attitude seemed to be a ubiquitous trait of many Ticinese).

Once Ms. Frasa finished explaining, Giulia asked her to show us around the yard, which is accessible from the balcony. On our walk through the yard, we discovered a grotto (a small cave) with two pools of water inside it. Giulia immediately took out her dipper to collect a water sample, inspecting it closely before showing her findings to Ms. Frasa. And indeed, numerous larvae were moving around in the water! The next generation of mosquitos was already growing in her yard. Giulia was

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8   Art. 73 of the Regolamento sull'igiene del suolo e dell'abitato (del 14 ottobre 1958) stipulates: "The fight against flies, pests (*gli insetti nocivi*), rats and generally unclean or dangerous animals because they favor the transmission of infectious diseases, is carried out by the municipalities and at their expense, according to the directives of the department" (Republicca e Cantone Ticino 1958).

9   In contrast to Germany and the Netherlands, tiger mosquitos are more populous in Switzerland and considered to be firmly established. In addition, they have already become a nuisance in certain regions (some of which are tourist areas) because the people in these regions are severely plagued by their bites. This impacts what methods are chosen to fight the mosquitos and the urgency for doing so.

well prepared: She had a package of BTI granules with her and showed Ms. Frasa how to use them.

Along the way, we also noticed a storm drain right next to the yard, which Giulia also decided to inspect on the spot. We noticed the first tiger mosquito even as we approached the first manhole. Lifting the lid, we immediately discovered a whole bunch of adult insects and some larvae swimming in the water. This was an unexpected discovery. Communal workers had only recently treated the local drains. Unfortunately, however, Ms. Frasa's house was on private property. Consequently, Giulia explained, communal workers would not come here, giving the tiger mosquitos space to breed. Controlling the insects here is not their responsibility but rather that of the estate owner. (Fieldnotes KH).

Thus, the same borders drawn on the maps mentioned above that made municipal administrations responsible for mosquito control also released them from the duty to pursue this task on property which is privately owned.[10] These borders mattered because they instructed communal workers where to conduct treatments against mosquitos – 'and where not to.'

The tiger mosquitos' search for their next blood meal, thus, entangles borders as a social category, chains of infection, and the differentiation between private and public space in a material and meaningful (if unintentional) manner. In fact, the emphasis European societies place on differentiating between private and public spaces poses a massive problem for controlling, monitoring and fighting the invasive tiger mosquitos (our informants in France and Germany were confronted with the same problem). The mosquitos, as true cross-border commuters, frequently choose breeding grounds on private property, i.e. private streets, yards, company properties. With this in mind, it is currently becoming evident that traditional differentiations and the borders intended to stabilize them are increasingly becoming the object of complex efforts to negotiate biosecurity. It is thanks to the flight paths of Asian tiger mosquitos that these upheavals have become visible.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates how the presence of an insect on European territory that was previously considered to be tropical has become a biosecurity problem. The mosquito's potential to transmit infectious diseases is meaningfully and politically entangled with scientific classifications of a European nature that distinguish between native and invasive species. The presence of tiger mosquitos is, therefore, connected with a call for action – this call for action is future-oriented. The paper also shows that administrative practices have not yet been adapted to the presence of tiger mosquitos in some of the settings we examined. In this respect, the insects

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10   However, communal workers are instructed to treat drains in private streets if these are accessible.

also have a productive effect: Measures must be renegotiated, responsibilities must be allocated and funds must be mobilized. Finally, the paper discusses how tiger mosquitos force us to examine questions of blame and responsibility. However, these should not be understood as moral issues; instead, their consequences are practical in nature. Where administrative authorities collide with civil society, public with private space, it becomes less and less clear who is responsible for searching out and treating the mosquitos' breeding grounds. Consequently, new political and ecological niches are being created for the insects.

At the same time, we observed that traditional boundaries and categories are no longer sufficient for describing the complex relationship between humans and animals today, let alone for regulating them. Tiger mosquitos are neither invasive nor simply exotic – but they do have the potential to become invasive in the future. They enrich European fauna (at least numerically) without actually contributing to local biodiversity. They can only be regulated by municipal measures if those measures extend beyond municipal areas of responsibility. They shift territorial borders by pushing border controls into containers, airports and commercial goods. Even though the biosecurity measures we described are preventive in nature, experts agree that tiger mosquitos are here to stay. Their survival tactics, which they share with other vectors and micro-organisms, are far superior to human countermeasures. The presence of the mosquitos on European territory, however, also demonstrates that our globalized and complex environments cannot be shaped at will – and that these environments will always contain both people and other species. To some of the latter, we are primarily their next blood meal.

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Continuities of thinking, Austrification and critique of modernization*

Adolf Helbok and folklore studies in Austria after 1945

Abstract: Using the example of folklorist and historian Adolf Helbok (1883–1968), a leading representative of racial-biological folklore research during National Socialism, this article shows how he and his work fit into Austrian folklore studies after 1945. It illustrates the persistence of epistemological perspectives and the simultaneous conceptual adaptations that were made, for instance, by orienting his "genius research" towards a new national ideology of Austria and, thereby, making these stocks of knowledge available. Despite his distance from the University of Innsbruck, Helbok was also part of a folklorist Austrian milieu which gathered primarily in the work for the Austrian Folklore Atlas. Until the 1960s, folklore studies in Austria was, thus, characterized in many ways by continuities of ethnic thinking which manifested in 'Austrified' knowledge formats and associated with a conservative, culturally pessimistic critique of modernization.

Keywords: history of knowledge, folklore studies, racial-biological research, Nazi past, folklorist milieu, Austria, 1945–1965

The judgement of the present on people of the past can be unambiguous:[1] Since his death in 1968, the Innsbruck "folklorist and historian" Adolf Helbok has been perceived as a racist who used *völkisch* (ethnic) arguments and was a committed National Socialist. Thus, he was described directly as a racist and as a representative of National Socialist ideas (Bockhorn 1987) and was regarded as "the National Socialist folklorist"[2] (Bausinger 1999: 69). His 'research' was unambiguously classified under National Socialist perspectives in the course of the self-reflexive discussion of the history of science (Trümpy 1987: 172, 174) and his "lunatic theories of racial science" (Meixner 1990: 132), which he "did not abandon right until the end of his

2 Direct quotations from primary sources have been translated into English for better readability.

life" (Moser 2004), were explicitly condemned. This clear verdict from the perspective of cultural and folklore studies is also shared by historians (Cole 1996; Fehn 2000; Haar 2004; Pesditschek 2017, 2019).

Adolf Helbok, a native of the Vorarlberg region of Austria, is, thus, an example of an ideological and, because of his entry into the NSDAP in 1933, convinced and 'obstinate' National Socialist. Generally speaking, a differentiated analysis has been made of how Helbok developed into a National Socialist scholar. Many authors have already pointed out the astounding twists and turns in his scientific career, to which, as they discovered, he subordinated everything in an unscrupulous, tactical and agile manner, as is discussed in a particularly innovative and differentiated manner in Meixner (1990), Johler (1994a, 1994c) and Schmoll (2009). These assessments of his biography from the perspective of the history of science are sound. They are also supported by various facts: Helbok, for instance, had a portrait bust made for himself in 1964. He commissioned the sculptor Kurt Schmid-Ehmen, who was not only appreciated by Adolf Hitler but also designed the imperial eagles for the Berlin Reich Chancellery and the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds.[3] The clearest evidence for the categorization of his person is seen in the current popularity of his writings (and those of his students) in the circles of the New Right – and this is where the only voices that contest Helbok's National Socialist position today can be found.[4]

What is overlooked here, however, are the effects of this clear classification of Helbok as a "bad folklorist" and National Socialist: His activities after 1945 are rarely theorized, his publications from 1945 to 1968 are usually simply ignored and his work is consistently kept away from the professional center of postwar folklore studies. In 1968, for example, Leopold Schmidt wrote in an obituary that Helbok had actually always been a historian and that he had received "a professorship for folklore studies […] without ever having studied folklore" (Schmidt 1968: 177). This retrospective '*damnatio*' (however correct it may be in terms of substance) forgets the fact that Adolf Helbok remained closely connected with the field of Austrian folklore even in the years after his forced removal from the university. It also forgets that he continued to be involved in teaching folklore studies at the University of Innsbruck and, thus, in the university-academic milieu of the discipline: He continued to take doctorates in folklore studies[5] and was also present at celebrations at the institute. This also differentiates the previous position, according to which

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3   Bust of "Univ. Prof. Dr. Adolf Helbok," cast bronze, base made of breccia, 16 × 19 × 6.2 cm, height
     28 cm. The object has been in the Vorarlberg museum in Bregenz since 1976 (inv. no. N 0674).

4   By way of example, cf. the contribution in the "right-wing intellectual journal" *Sezession* (Vonder-
     ach 2008). Cf. also the reference to Helbok's work by the right-wing extremist Bund freier Jugend.
     Accessed November 19, 2019. Available at: http://www.doew.at/erkennen/rechtsextremismus/
     neues-von-ganz-rechts/archiv/juni-2004/bfj-wieder-im-netz.

5   As, for example, the consistently and openly racial-biologically arguing doctorate by Margit Gröhsl
     (1949). In addition to Adolf Helbok, this doctorate was supervised by Karl Ilg and Hermann Wopfner.

Helbok, after 1945, remained "excluded from university life for the rest of his days" and that a "withdrawal of academic discourse by a ban on participation in it" had taken place (Meixner 1990: 132). Even if it is true that, in contrast to other Nazi folklorists, such as Richard Wolfram, he neither regained a university position nor received teaching posts, it should not be forgotten that Helbok was by no means scientifically inactive but that he continued to publish numerous texts after the end of the National Socialist regime up until his death in 1968. In a way, he brought and fitted himself and his work into Austrian folklore studies after 1945 and was, thus, discursively present. He tried, for example, and with some success, to instrumentalize his previous "genius research" as a necessary basis for an Austrian consciousness and to present his research on Austria as an argument against his removal: The "love of his homeland" had always moved him to a "promotion of Austrianism" (Helbok 1945);[6] the attempt to (re-)interpret his own works in the postwar period, which was not, however, accepted without further ado by some of his contemporaries.[7] Furthermore, Helbok was an important actor in postwar German language folklore studies despite, but maybe also sometimes because of, his National Socialist sentiments and especially in view of his close connection with folklore studies in Austria. He was in contact with subsequent generations of folklorists, shaped their thinking, was able to convey a very specific idea (which, to some extent, is still effective today) of folklore studies to a broad public through various newspaper articles and, by means of his participation in the Österreichischer Volkskunde-Atlas (ÖVA; Austrian Folklore Studies Atlas) and by means of his attempts to tie in with international prewar contacts,[8] shaped the field of folklore studies in Austria up until the 1960s.

This also puts into perspective the image which is often presented to the outside world of rigorous university personnel measures against leading Nazi representatives of the "borderland university" ("Grenzlanduniversität") in the years 1945/46, among them the rector and historian Harold Steinacker, the ancient historian Franz Miltner – and the folklorist Adolf Helbok.[9] It is well-known that the latter attempted

6   A helpful collection of all (denazification) files on Adolf Helbok can be found in Goller (1999: 166ff.).

7   Contrary to this position, however, an anonymous "confidential information on the situation of the folkloristic pulpit" simply states that Helbok "in lectures and publications [...] most decidedly [stood up for] the Third Reich and [...] gladly took a stand against Austrianism," quoted from Goller (1999: 162–164).

8   There are, for example, indications of international funding applications by Adolf Helbok, such as within the framework of a mountain farming project by the United Nations or the US Rockefeller Foundation, which would need to be investigated more closely, cf. e.g. the correspondence between Adolf Helbok and Viktor Geramb, which is held in Graz.

9   On denazification at the University of Innsbruck, see Goller and Oberkofler 2003: 16–17. The characterization of Helbok proved to be controversial; thus, the historian of science Gerhard Oberkofler came into conflict about this with the legal historian and folklorist Nikolaus Grass, who accused Oberkofler of "having sung the praises of great Nazis such as the blabbermouth Helbok"

to use ideological disputes which he, as an early member of the NSDAP (he joined the party on April 12, 1933, with the number 1531808),[10] had conducted with authorities within the diverse National Socialist power apparatus as exonerating evidence for his alleged fundamental position against the regime after 1945. It also shows indirectly that Meixner's finding that removal from the university under personal law is an unsuitable way of coping with the past is still true (Meixner 1990: 132).

At present, Helbok is presented as a scientist with an objectively failed life and a largely forgotten body of work (Pesditschek 2019: 308). Up to now, many of his actions have been pathologized in terms of psychology as quarrelsomeness, egomania, opportunism and insincerity; or his positions have been interpreted in an individualizing way from quite understandable motives, such as his alleged "extraordinary simplicity of mind" (Pesditschek 2019: 307). To us, a perspective that attempts to look at Adolf Helbok, as Friedemann Schmoll has phrased it, as a scientific apologist of an occidental European cultural area after 1945 (Schmoll 2009: 117) seems more purposeful than such a biographical pointed emphasis of character traits. It should be noted that this is not undertaken with the biographical intention of remembering him as an important figure but rather with the aim of using his example to illustrate how folklore studies, and particularly the discipline in Austria after 1945, can be understood. The basis of our explanations are, besides scattered and to date only rarely considered archive material, the rather unknown texts by Adolf Helbok which were published after 1945. This is by no means a complete evaluation of all existing sources that have a connection to Helbok. Our goal is not a final evaluation, we are rather developing a perspective from the anthropology of knowledge that will help one to understand how the field of "folklore studies" presents itself in Austria in the second half of the 20th century.

Starting from the source material reviewed and based on these considerations, we will first examine Helbok's view of the end of National Socialism, which illustrates his continuing sympathy for the regime even after its collapse, since this development was by no means welcome to him even years later. This points to a continuity in his thinking which remained largely untouched by the supposed caesura in 1945. Such an unbroken continuation of his work is also evident in his concept of culture, which continues to resort unabashedly to racial concepts after 1945 and is the subject of the second section. In the third and fourth part, we focus on his "genius research" as folklore studies knowledge that was Austrified after 1945 and which epistemologically refers to National Socialism – in a very similar manner to the way the new-old knowledge of the ÖVA apparently offered similar possibilities for

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(Oberkofler 2008: 293) and of having "glorified" them (Oberkofler 2008: 430). The reason for the dispute were the statements about Helbok in Oberkofler (1969b) and the depiction in Oberkofler 1969a: 146–150.

10 Staff notices on Adolf Helbok, in: University Archive Innsbruck, staff file Helbok.

functionalization. Finally, we will discuss Helbok's diagnosis of the 1950s and 1960s, which bears witness to his strong critique of modernization and his conservative-hierarchical stances. On the one hand, this view is in many respects in keeping with the prevailing professional tone of his time; yet, on the other hand, it also clearly refers to racial and anti-democratic ideas.

How did Adolf Helbok manage to retain his presence in Austrian folklore studies despite the loss of his chair? Which strategies and networks helped him after 1945, without a direct connection to the university, to continue his active research and publish as a folklore studies scholar? What role did the Institute of Folklore Studies at the University of Innsbruck play, and especially his successor Karl Ilg? What can be demonstrated about folklore studies in postwar Austria based on the way he was dealt with?

The focus is not on the ideological justifications of National Socialism undertaken by Helbok and the numerous and nimble adaptations of his biography by means of omission and rearrangements.[11] Rather, we ask about the scientific field called 'folklore studies' in which Helbok also had his – albeit controversial – place in the second half of the 20th century. It becomes clear once again that the year 1945 is not primarily to be understood as a caesura for folklore studies in Austria – despite the task undoubtedly existing of reestablishing itself as an academic subject, as Herbert Nikitsch writes (2005: 80) – but that a sense of "continuing on" dominated in many ways.[12] A look at the folklorist Adolf Helbok, his work and unbroken network after 1945, thus, makes it possible to fathom the scope of thought and action of this specific discipline, which, as Konrad Köstlin has put it, remained self-sufficient in the course of this Austrification (Köstlin 2002: 410) from a perspective of the anthropology of knowledge. The situation of this discipline in a structurally conservative country with a fundamental authoritarian potential also becomes visible.

Memories of an "imperishable shame in human history"[13]

> For a researcher of the people, who was faced with the fulfilment of life-guarding ideas, more than the small existence of a human being was lost at that time, and for a conscious German all this was the outward sign of the deep and tragic misfortune that affected our people. (Helbok 1963: 176–177)

The end of the National Socialist regime was tantamount to a personal tragedy for Helbok, which he openly expresses in his autobiographical memoirs; it also meant

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11 These found, for example, in Johler (1994b) and Pesditschek (2019); cf. also the documents in Adolf Helbok's staff file in the Austrian State Archives/Archiv der Republik, Federal Ministry for Education, Second Republic.

12 Nevertheless, many (even more recent) publications take 1945 as their starting point but also focus precisely on this "carrying on and continuing," cf. Bockhorn (2006); Eggmann et al. (2019).

13 Helbok (1963: 177).

the loss of his chair, although for him this by no means meant leaving the world of academia. Helbok, who was already 65 years old, described the immediate postwar period as "a five-year struggle for existence" (Helbok 1963: 177) which he, together with his wife and the newly acquired "Helbok goats," spent mainly in Götzens near Innsbruck: A partial ban on his writings, "house searches" (Helbok 1963: 153, 172–173) and, above all, a protracted struggle for pension payments were direct private consequences for him. He tried to portray himself in his defense writings as an ardent patriot, his previous works as works full of Austrian national pride; just as he wanted to use his participation in the Atlas der Deutschen Volkskunde (Atlas of German Folklore Studies) to underline his suitability for working on the ÖVA. Helbok wanted the controversies with the National Socialist Rosenberg office (Lutz 1983) to be understood as an attempt at resistance; just as the 'illegal' (as an early, prior to 1938 still illegal National Socialist in Austria) attempted to trivialize his party membership – a strategy which apparently, at least partially, succeeded (Johler 1994b). Numerous statements in which he asserted his claims and advocacy from an obviously (still) influential environment eventually helped him to obtain recognition of his full pension entitlement.

     Helbok's denazification from the official university side was, therefore, more of a cosmetic measure – apparently not an unusual practice at a university which, in the postwar period, increasingly turned to bourgeois-conservative ways of thinking again (Goller and Oberkofler 2003) and cultivated informal but, nevertheless, close relationships with many of its former lecturers and researchers: Helbok's link with the Innsbruck Institute can be read as an example of the continuing existence of collegial relations. Celebrations on the occasion of his birthday as well as numerous congratulations and obituaries point to Helbok's unbroken anchoring in folklore studies circles, thus, showing him as part of a broad network even after his exclusion from the university. On February 3, 1958, Karl Ilg organized a celebration of Helbok's 75th birthday in a university lecture hall on behalf of the Institute of Folklore Studies, to which a total of 105 guests were invited. The list of participants proves Helbok's unrestricted anchoring in Austrian Folklore Studies impressively.[14] Five years later, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, the jubilarian, a man who "despite great blows of fate remained unbowed," as Ilg wrote, is "rightly and gratefully acknowledged" (Ilg 1963: 4). These sentiments were expressed by the presentation of the autobiographical book *Erinnerungen. Ein lebenslanges Ringen um volksnahe*

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14 Thus, Hermann Wopfner, Richard Beitl, Anton Dörrer, Hanns Koren, Arthur Haberlandt, Ernst Burgstaller, Richard Wolfram, Leopold Kretzenbacher, Franz Lipp, Josef Haiding, Josef Ringler, Adolf Mais, Erika Hubatschek, Oskar Moser and Hans Commenda, among others, were invited; cf. the invitation on the occasion of the 75th birthday of the jubilarian, University Professor Adolf Helbok, written by Karl Ilg, January 14, 1958, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Institut." Cf. also the news in the Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde (1958: 50), the Tiroler Tageszeitung (1958: 5) and the Tiroler Nachrichten (1958: 5).

Geschichtsforschung (Memories. A Lifelong Struggle for Popular History Research) by Fritz Ranzi and Margit Gröhsl on behalf of all former students. As Ranzi writes in the foreword, this autobiography of the "first and so far only biologically oriented folk-lore studies researcher" offers a unique insight "into the scientific building" (Ranzi 1963: 5) of the same – from today's point of view, it is, above all, a testimony to the unclouded continuity of Helbok's thinking. The publication of the book, despite its contents glorifying National Socialism and being pervaded by racial thinking, perhaps also points to an unbroken social acceptability of such contents in many circles, even though there was also a consciousness that one belonged to a succes-sively smaller group as a follower of such ideas: Ranzi, for example, writes explicitly that the number of former students had decreased because many of them had died in the Second World War or had gone "into scientific exile" (Ranzi 1963: 5).

In any case, there could be no question of the jubilarian himself being driven into a scientific exile – he was actively and publicly congratulated on his respective birthdays, even beyond institutionalized university folklore studies circles: He was thanked, for example, by a "representative of the Tyrolese provincial government"[15] "for the fact that he had taken special care of the Tyrolese artists within the frame-work of their folkloristic-scientific work" (*Tiroler Tageszeitung* 1963: 3), probably referring to his genius research.

Helbok is celebrated elsewhere as "one of the most striking personalities of Innsbruck University in the decades since the end of the First World War" (*Tiroler Tageszeitung* 1968: 5). All this despite supposedly highly adverse circumstances, be-cause it was difficult then for someone who "conducts folk research and writes folk history" as the "National Socialist abuse" had led to the fact that "everything that is connected with the concept of people is burdened with hypotheses that must first be dismantled again" until a "natural, correct relationship" (*Dolomiten* 1968: 8) could again be established. On the occasion of his 85th birthday in 1968, Helbok is, thus, stylized as a double victim – paradoxically simultaneously as a victim of National Socialism, on the one hand, and of denazifying practices of the postwar period, on the other. Helbok, however, "had neither been diverted nor bent" in the face of this problem, indeed, "his rank is not diminished by this"(*Dolomiten* 1968: 8). Whether it can or should be assumed that there was an ignorance of Helbok's writings at this point or whether the opposite is the case is difficult to judge in retrospect.

At first glance, all the articles on Helbok at the time convey a (consciously?) 'harmless' impression; there is talk, for example, of him as a "researcher of the peo-ple," as part of the ÖVA or as an expert on Tyrolean artists. The detail of the presen-tation of his vita decreases more and more as one approaches the years around 1940, so that, for instance, Helbok's years at the University of Innsbruck, his research and

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15 By a 'Dr. Eigentler,' whose first name and party affiliation unfortunately remained unknown.

his work at the institute remain entirely undiscussed. The central focus is on his work on "talent research"; furthermore, he is often celebrated as the "creator of the great Austrian Folklore Atlas" (*Tiroler Tageszeitung* 1958: 5). This is certainly also due to the topicality and vividness of his project, although there would have been other things worth mentioning regarding his publications after 1945 which might not have been too advantageous or even less suitable for the press.

Against this background, Helbok proves to be a scholar who is integrated in various extra- and intra-university networks, and, while this networking was partially disrupted by the 'denazification,' it was neither interrupted nor permanently reorganized. Thus, a clear "continuing on" under the conditions of an ostensibly changed scientific landscape can be seen here. However, one clearly cannot speak of a new orientation. This persistence of epistemological perspectives with simultaneous conceptual adjustments[16] is also confirmed by the texts written and published by Helbok himself after 1945.

Continuities of thinking and writing

> Culture is a grown organism, grown on the ground and within its people, in which only the high achievements of poetry, music, art and science can flourish, but all of them always only in special *völkisch* characteristics. All culture is national and every form of a temporal world culture shows its national characteristics [...]. (Helbok 1963: 36)

Following National Socialist 'blood-and-soil' ideas and judgmental, narrowly defined concepts of high culture, Helbok defines culture in his autobiography as an "organism" grown from the symbiosis of soil and people: This was the precondition for cultural "high performances," such as poetry and art. Thus, he represents a difference-oriented understanding of culture, which means that every nation is to be equated with blood-related people, distinguished by its own "characteristics." Conversely, this also means that priority is always given to the "people's own" (Helbok 1953: 2), which is to be protected from external influences. The supremacy of the German area is also unquestioned – In the postwar period, this meant, above all, the emphasis of the "cultural wealth" of Austria in general and Tyrol in particular. This is derived from the creations of great "geniuses," understood in a biological sense as the result of particularly favorable "cross-breeding" in the line of ancestors, disguised as an identity-creating Austrian patriotism.

After a brief interruption, Helbok publishes his articles, with this understanding of culture and an intention driven by racial-ethnic and homeland-protecting motives, mainly in conservative (Catholic) newspapers, such as the *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, the *Volksbote* or the *Dolomiten* on various "home-cultural" topics. By means of these

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16   Cf. Timm (2019) on this, with similar findings on two comparable folklorists.

texts, he transported his ideas largely unchanged, although "packaged" differently and omitting certain vocabulary, such as the concept of race. By turning away from open National Socialist rhetoric, similar content was passed on in disguise with the help of supposedly innocent terms such as tradition, homeland or people, quite a popular approach among many "encumbered" individuals. Thus, he also succeeded in spreading his ideas by using conservative networks in 'non-scientific' formats, which reached a broader public. In 1953, for example, Helbok dealt with the question of "High-Rise Building or Homeland Style?" and argued that the prevailing housing shortage and the many accommodation facilities that were "unworthy of German members of the people" could be better met with a "people's own solution" rather than with the construction of "American" high-rise buildings. What was threatened in his eyes was particularly the "living space" of the farmers, who would represent the "natural, growth-promoting and folk-like counterpart of the modern, human-consuming metropolis" (Helbok 1953: 2). Besides Helbok's anti-American, modernization-critical thinking, explicitly National Socialist ideas also become apparent here: The protection of the peasantry, which under National Socialism had been stylized as a "nourishment," as a source of the original, natural and traditional, is (again) declared to be a desideratum for efforts to protect the homeland, which are supposed to protect and preserve the traditional, the homeland, a supposedly traditional architectural style in the classical folkloristic sense. In this way, National Socialist thinking is packaged into a newspaper-compliant version by means of supposedly unencumbered terms.

Elsewhere, Helbok sees the whole region of Tyrol – in contrast to "machine landscapes," regions of industry and transport – as a "union of natural and cultural landscape" (Helbok 1948c: 6);[17] he continues that the former was characterized by "essentially unspoilt nature" and by a predominance of the "style of the natural," the latter by the fact that "its buildings, even the smallest sheepfold, [...] somehow have something appealing, often picturesque," created by "the farmer" or the "old city dweller," and nature was merely "pictorial and decorative." Here, an idealized and romanticized space of the picturesque is revealed, a projection screen for the desire for imagined earlier contemplation. The "machine landscape" appears here as a symbol of the feared rationalized modernization and sober, mechanized progress, as a contrast to the "good old days." Compared to other regions, however, Tyrol had been "largely spared from the modern noise of the machine," even though the "old people" had been "more artistic everywhere."

Helbok describes the province of Tyrol as "the actual artist's province in Austria," as there were many "hotbeds of culture" here which increasingly brought forth this "talent for form" (Helbok, 1948b: 6)[18] in its population. He sees the reason for

17 Entire paragraph after Helbok (1948c).
18 Entire paragraph after Helbok (1948b).

this attested concentration in the "great and fortunate crossbreed of those gifted groups of man," the Illyrians and the Germanic Lombards, through whom "those dispositions came into the country" which "then were unfolded through the environment of nature and the influences of social, spiritual and cultural life." The "cultural forces among the people" had developed particularly well during the monarchy, but the precondition was always the "high dispositions," without which "the best cultural environment" was worth nothing. In a racial-biological manner, artistic achievements that correspond to an idealized 'highly cultural' canon are attributed to hereditary biological causes which are said to be only possible in interaction with correspondingly favorable factors. These include specific political conditions, and particularly non-democratic ones, as will be shown later.

Helbok becomes even more explicit in an article on fairy tales and folklore research in the newspaper *Dolomiten*, in which he emphasizes the great folk-cultural and folkloristic significance of this form of narration and its reproducers. He describes this practice as endangered, since "selection from which the cross breeding factors for the high-breeding of geniuses are supposed to emerge is on the decline" (Helbok 1954: 3). The early folkloristic professional paradigm of collecting and preserving is shown here in its biological and racial coloring. The aim of Helbok's scientific work was "more than ever to trace these primeval and original values among the people, to study and cultivate them." Helbok's central research focus in the postwar period was research on genius, the results of which he knew to incorporate in numerous texts including formats declared as "scientific."

"Candaries" and the geniuses

> One must overlook the small-scale grouping of certain types of genius, their genealogical foundations, the process of the former symbiosis of the genome with the soil, the respective cultural and historical situation in life, everything together as a whole, in order to understand that meaningful historical process which allowed a folklore of unique beauty to mature. (Helbok 1963: 204)

Helbok repeatedly emphasized the nationally significant and identity-forming intention and function of his research for the newly constituting Austria, this "folkdom of unique beauty" (Helbok 1963: 204), especially in the postwar period and particularly in the context of the denazification process.

In his defense writings, he tried to place a publication he and his student Fritz Grünbeck were preparing on "The Geniuses in Austria from 1650–1850" as an argument in his favor. He writes, for example, in a document of November 26, 1945, to which a "memorandum" entitled "The importance of scientific research on Austrian geniuses for state policy" is attached, that it would be particularly "bitter" for him if he had to abandon his university research on this subject since he had now "finally found the promising way" to give his "best for the Fatherland Austria" at "a mo-

ment when determined commitment, as never before, is the duty of every reputable Austrian" (Helbok; cited after Goller 1999: 175–176). His commitment could now "finally" be used to "build" a consolidated state by showing a still young Austria "the reflection of its true nature, its older successes as a constitutive people, the proof of its organizational strength," a classical Austrian virtue since time immemorial (Helbok; cited after Goller 1999: 175–176). In this context, he also received support from his former teacher and colleague Hermann Wopfner, who, in the course of an expert assessment, found Helbok's studies to be "suitable" for "putting the significance of Austrianism in the right light, both externally and within the German people" and for "countering the cantankerous self-criticism of the Austrians."[19] Richard Pokorny, the administrative director of the University of Innsbruck responsible for the assessment, was unimpressed by this, however, and said that it remained "open to question whether Helbok, considering his appearances in the past, seemed internally and externally called upon to effectively promote purely Austrian culture."[20] Even if this strategy did not bear fruit regarding Helbok's university career, he published a large number of essays on this topic, especially in the ten years after 1945; in addition to the newspaper articles already mentioned, he also published in the context of right-wing newspapers and university-related commemorative publications (*Festschriften*) (e.g. Helbok 1948a, 1948b, 1948c, 1960c);[21] some of his texts also appeared outside Austria in the journal *Schweizer Familienforscher* (Helbok 1957, 1958, 1960a, 1960b, 1961, 1962). This can be read as a further indication of the specific exonerative function of Swiss networks and publicity bodies for encumbered Austrian folklorists (Kuhn 2017).

Using the pseudonym 'Candaries,' Helbok published several "articles on genius research" on the various federal provinces in the *Berichte und Informationen des Österreichischen Forschungsinstituts für Wirtschaft und Politik* (Reports and Information of the Austrian Research Institute for Economics and Politics) between 1947 and 1950 (Candaries 1947a, 1947b, 1949, 1950); it was not until 1951 that texts appeared again under his real name (Helbok 1951). Herbert Alois Kraus (1911–2008), who later became one of the initiators of the *Verein der Unabhängigen, VdU* (Association of Independents), and Hans Zeilinger (1921–2011), long time Editor-in-Chief

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19 Hermann Wopfner, 'Expert evaluation' on Adolf Helbok. December 4, 1945, in: University Archive Innsbruck. Staff file Adolf Helbok, cited after Goller (1999: 180). On Wopfner's biography, cf. Meixner and Siegl (2019).

20 Political review assessment by Richard Pokorny, the administrative director of the university, in the name of the assessment committee regarding Adolf Helbok. May 3, 1946, in: University Archive Innsbruck. Files of the rectorate no. 247 from 1945/46.

21 Richard Heuberger (1884–1968), Austrian historian (Medieval History) also at the University of Innsbruck was also retired in the course of denazification, although not undisputedly, cf. Goller (1999: 75–81). Helbok also wrote an essay for a *Festschrift* in honor of Harold Steinacker, cf. Helbok (1955b).

of the VdU/FPÖ[22]-related newspaper *Neue Freie Zeitung*, were mainly responsible for this journal (Pesditschek 2019: 280). This points to Helbok's political and habitual affiliation with the "third camp" ('Drittes Lager') the so-called "alumni" ('Ehemaligen') (Reiter 2019).

The word Candaries is a composite of the Latin *candidus* (white, bright, shining) and *aries* (ram); literally, therefore, it translates to 'bright ram' (*heller Bock*), thus, alluding to Helbok. The reason for this course of action can only be speculated about due to a lack of sources; it is also questionable whether this was a personal decision of Helbok's or rather of the editors – in any case, somebody thought it necessary not to reveal the true identity of the author, which in itself speaks for a certain awareness of the problem, even if it does not tell us whose.

In addition to the assembled circle of Austrian, respectively Innsbruck, folklorists at the time – Josef Ringler, Richard Wolfram, Karl Ilg, Arthur Haberlandt, Ernst Burgstaller and many others – Adolf Helbok also contributed congratulations in the course of a *Festschrift* in the *Schlern-Schriften* published in honor of Wopfner with his programmatic text *Zur Methodik der Volkscharakterkunde* (On the Methodology of Folk Character Studies). The "task of folklore studies" was the "study of folk nature and thus of folk character" (Helbok 1948a: 101),[23] a character which was something lasting, "the memorable, the peculiar," materially consolidated, for example, in settlement forms and building styles. All of this, like the people themselves, was "bound to the soil and the natural and social environment in its creation and [...] conditions of life." On the basis of this premise, colored by "blood-and-soil" ideology, geniuses, understood as "higher and highly gifted people who were successful in life and thus went down in history," did not appear by chance either but were a "phenomenon of popular growth." A cartographic survey of their regions of origin showed the "clearly defined [talent] landscapes which suggest the idea of the fruit of the symbiosis of earth and folklore," as Helbok called them, in several places. The regions described by his research on talent are then each characterized by prevalent talent types. Regarding the years of birth between 1650 and 1840 in Austria, Helbok distinguishes between "visual artists, musicians, poets, writers, humanities scholars, natural scientists, technicians and organizers (statesmen, diplomats, military leaders, administrative officials, business leaders)." It remains unclear what their individual success could be measured against and which criteria would have to be fulfilled to become part of these statistics. In any case, he concluded from his research that Austria, and Tyrol in particular, was a refuge of geniuses: This is the

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22 FPÖ: The *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria) is a right-wing and populist party in Austria. It was founded in 1956 as a successor party of the Verband der Unabhängigen (Federation of Independents), which assembled the national-liberals and the pro-Germanics after 1945.

23 This paragraph until the end of the chapter refers to Helbok 1948a.

result of his analysis, based on an unspecified reconstruction and interpretation of undefined data. In the context of this *Festschrift* contribution, Helbok also writes relatively openly about the hereditary biological foundations of these geniuses: In the past, for example, "very specific mating processes among their ancestors" were observable, which had almost exclusively taken place "within the same or similar occupational groups and social levels." Helbok ignores possible social or historical reasons for this behavior; instead, "blood-and-soil" concepts are mixed with racial ideas: As preconditions of genius, he identifies "certain inbred crosses […], i.e. families that have been purebred for their professions or talents unite, thus reinforcing a disposition."

However, a comparison of the historical and contemporary present situation also opens up the possibility of tracing changes, which Helbok certainly saw: Not surprisingly, in line with his modernization-critical and cultural-pessimistic orientation, he also diagnosed a downward movement here. "The departure of the gifted and the reduction of the performance measure as well as the ethics of work are the deep serious illnesses which have been identified in recent years by a responsible folk research"; thus, people had worked harder in the past and had achieved higher quality results. Helbok puts this in direct connection with the fact that in earlier times, for example, 'children of unmarried' were not accepted into guilds or that "the social origin was generally very much more scrutinized." He, thus, interpreted this in Social Darwinist terms as a consequence of socially selective measures which, in Helbok's understanding, are synonymous with racial-hereditary biological measures: It was a result of the "liberal 19th century" and its political consequences that more and more "unsuccessful" people had many children; in earlier times, this had been a privilege of the "successful." Helbok also saw his task, and that of folklore studies, as counteracting such developments.

The Austrian Folklore Studies Atlas and the "Greats of Austria": Strategies of Austrification

Helbok also wanted to have corresponding research on geniuses included as part of his work on the *ÖVA* some years later. When the *Gesellschaft für den Volkskundeatlas in Österreich* (Association for the Folklore Studies Atlas in Austria) was founded in 1955, not only Karl Ilg, Viktor von Geramb, Ernst Burgstaller and Arthur Haberland were involved, but also Richard Wolfram, known for his leading role as head of the Cultural Commission South Tyrol carried out by the SS Ahnenerbe (Dow 2018; Köstlin 2014). The collaboration on the ÖVA also enabled Helbok to become involved in German folklore studies again: In October 1958, for example, he took part in the Folklore Studies Congress in Nuremberg and gave a lecture on the subject of "The Austrian Folklore Atlas" in the section "Work Reports of Folklore Studies Institutes

and Enterprises."[24] The ÖVA, thus, facilitated a restorative normalization and stabilized existing German-speaking networks for Helbok, which also included Richard Wolfram, Karl Ilg and Richard Weiss.

Helbok had originally intended – as he explains in *Der österreichische Volkskundeatlas – seine wissenschaftliche, volks- und staatspolitische Bedeutung* in 1955 – to draw "a complete picture of the social, material, spiritual and mental culture of Austria" in which a "map series of the Greats of Austria (1650–1850)" (Helbok 1955a: 9) was to play a special role. An undertaking that was not implemented in this way since, in the end, there was no corresponding map, as Richard Weiss noted with satisfaction in his review (Johler 1994b: 593). Similar to many of his colleagues, Helbok made use of the term *Volkskultur* (folk culture) and understood it as an "expression of the life of the people" (Helbok 1955a: 12). Staying true to his focus on settlement research and the knowledge format of the atlas, he relies on maps that are supposed to provide "an insight into the narrower folk culture," first of all, for instance, again "the series settlement and house building"; "in this way," a "coarse-meshed but objective picture of life of our folk culture" (Helbok 1955a: 11) was to originate which, at the same time, pointed out "ancient cultural borders" which "are made visible by the cartographic method of folklore studies" (Helbok 1955a: 10). In this context, the explicit use of "folk culture" is striking; Helbok apparently used (although it is also questionable to what extent this was intentional or not) newly occupied concepts of a folklore studies that behaved in a reformed way. The National Socialist Helbok was probably well-advised to adapt his terminology and formulate contents more implicitly in the context of his work for the ÖVA; the fundamental openness of interpretation of the term 'folk culture' obviously proved to be compatible with his thinking.

In this respect, 'folk culture' appears to be a grateful conceptual candidate for a discipline that wanted to position itself as objective and purged from earlier stocks of knowledge externally, but which, at the same time, often wanted to follow on virtually seamlessly from the past internally (Schmoll 2013). Similar observations could be made, incidentally, about the term *Volk* (people) used in many places, which, instead of the concept of race, was (and in many places still is) perceived as supposedly less or not at all encumbered. In addition, Helbok also explicitly associated his work with a "folk-political task" (Helbok 1955a: 14), to which folklore studies in general and in connection with the ÖVA in particular should do justice. Moreover, folklore studies should not be pursued as an "occupation of individual scholars that is remote from life" but should hold "immediate value for the population" (Helbok 1955a: 10), in the sense of an auto-affirming cultural self-assurance.

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24   Program and list of participants of the Folklore Studies Congress (also: Eleventh German Folklore Studies Conference) in Nuremberg, October 20 to 25, 1958, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Institut."

In view of the preceding political upheavals in the first half of the 20th century, the ÖVA should serve to create an Austrian consciousness for the 'young' Austrian nation state that was still in the process of being built: The "Austrian folk culture" should be raised, recorded and finally be presented to its bearers, the people – all this would strengthen "Austrianism" as it would become aware of its "importance" as a superior "German cultural body"; as Hans Moser noted in 1954, a general trend in the context of Austrian folk culture, which sought to refute the view, often articulated before the war, that Austria was historically and (folk-culturally) face-less (Moser 1954: 209–210). The notion of a folk culture that was rich in tradition and had a long history could be understood as a resource that was able to fill this diagnosed idealistic vacuum in the postwar period.

Nevertheless, Helbok appears in the ÖVA staff directory only as a founding member and co-editor of the first volume, and, thus, his cartographic texts on geniuses appeared exclusively elsewhere. The reason for this may have been the different disputes within the publishing bodies.[25] In any case, Helbok saw the relevance of atlas research for state and national politics in analogy to his research on geniuses in the identity-creating function for the Second Republic. The ÖVA introduced the Austrian "people to its kind," made them "aware of it through memorable images" and, thus, created "the basis for those enterprises which will effectively fight the internal damage. In this way, we unite and strengthen from within" (Helbok 1955a: 17). This could serve to counteract an attested loss of identity of the Austrian population, thus, protecting it from presumed pathologies of the present, from "damage." What Helbok counted as such can be discerned from this last publication, which appeared shortly before his death and which he concludes with a consideration of the present.

"Civilization, mass and urbanization":
Diagnosis of the present as a critique of modernization

> I must explain this: Once all right came from the lords, today from the "people" who lose their identity. Greatness, human greatness, intellectual strength, masters, experts, artists, however, stood, seen from our point of view, at the beginning; we, on the other hand, are silting up and are more and more dependent on surrogates, machines, robots, because we are racially (= in terms of breeding) downgrading. Once upon a time, the opposite was the case, when people of an entirely different format were bred. Life was hard and great minds invented the basic tools of life. (Helbok 1963: 154–155)

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25 From 1958 to 1967, there are extensive correspondences, circulars and "ripostes" between Ernst Burgstaller and Adolf Helbok, but also indications of conflicts between Richard Wolfram and Karl Ilg, cf. University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Allgemeiner Posteinlauf" and box "Volks-kunde: Volkskundeatlas." Cf. also Kretschmer (1981: 3) and Pesditschek (2019: 288–293).

"Civilization, mass and urbanization" (Helbok 1967: 401), a critique of technical progress, narratives of the disintegration of society in modernity, elitist polemics against a democracy of the "masses," ideas of the "good old days" in which life had been harder, people more industrious and creative because they had been "racially (= in terms of breeding)" more perfect: All these are recurrent topoi in Helbok's texts, formulated in his *Erinnerungen* but also in his last two-part publication *Deutsche Volksgeschichte. Wesenszüge und Leistungen des deutschen Volkes*. The latter was published by the Deutsche Hochschullehrerverlag, the later right-wing extremist Grabert-Verlag, which reprinted the work as recently as 2005 because it continues to enjoy popularity in certain circles (Pesditschek 2019: 301). In the last years of his life, "his only concern was the final form and printing of this ultimate work, which concludes the entire arc of his work," as was written with much pathos about Helbok, the "venerable historian" (Greber 1967: 13) in the context of a reverential report of the daily newspaper *Tiroler Tageszeitung* on the second volume which was published at that time: A historical treatise, beginning with a chapter on the presentation of the "Germanic character" (Helbok 1964: 9) in the early period and ending with Helbok's reflections on the present, "Civilization, Mass and Urbanization – the Way into the 20th Century" (Helbok 1967: 401). With "scientific impartiality," Greber writes, "Helbok also pursues the questions about origin and blood," yet in this "irrefutable question about the racial peculiarities and hereditary connections" he remained free of "prejudices, judgements and classifications" and "thus free of any connection to the all too often changing spirit of the times" (cited after Helbok 1964: 9), as can be read in the blurb along with many extremely positive reviews. Indeed, the book is pervaded by an argumentation that is critical of modernization, even defeatist, which is also articulated in numerous letters, here combined with an open regret about the collapse of the National Socialist regime. Thus, for example, Helbok wrote to Karl Ilg in 1960: "It is unalterably clear to me that after the failure of the Third Reich we will continue to slide on the inclined plane of atomization until our downfall."[26] In the same year, he confirmed this pessimistic scenario of decline with a self-exaggerating reference to the conflicts within the ÖVA: "I have never held a grudge against it because while I am fully aware of the outstanding work I have been able to do for the Atlas, I am aware of the male weaknesses that have become so evident since the days of the collapse of the hopes of the nation's best in 1945."[27] With the National Socialist view of the present that is openly formulated here, Helbok also reveals his otherwise carefully hidden revanchist anti-Semitism when he continues in the same letter:

26 Letter from Adolf Helbok to Karl Ilg, November 29, 1960, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Volkskundeatlas."
27 Letter from Adolf Helbok to Karl Ilg, November 23, 1960, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Volkskundeatlas."

> After that last concentrated force that stood against the East was crushed by Jews and big capitalism, the hopes for the full development of the organic popular construction in the middle of Europe also broke down. Today this core problem is hidden under the rubble of the atrocious propaganda about the Third Reich, the Jews know why.[28]

The final chapter of Helbok's last book is a fitting example for this, in which he turns to the present, which he sees as weakened and crisis-ridden. For this purpose, he takes a look back into a past he glorifies in order to contrast it with the negative of the 20th century. He regards the bourgeoisie as a "store of spiritual and moral values" (Helbok 1967: 421)[29] as well as a carrier of culture; similar to the peasantry which functions as a guardian of the "manner [...] of its people." He understands the farmers' land as a field of social Darwinist selection, where only the strongest with the best predispositions survived, an "eradication of inferiors" was its distinguishing feature; whoever was weak or incapable of work "went under – or later moved to the growing and increasingly technical big city." The influence of "Western peoples" had brought industrialization to Germany and, thus, subsequently caused "urbanization." Large urban centers "breed [...] subhumans" as the local industry "[promised] wages even to those who had previously been unfit for proper use because of a lack of talent, weak will or sickness." In this way, "inferior [...] people" had now also acquired the means to found a family – the "old process of cleaning the people from inferior hereditary asses" had, thus, come to a standstill. As a direct result, and following Nazi rhetoric on race hygiene, Helbok names the "increase of the lower class" and the simultaneous "decrease of the upper class in town and country." Another consequence of the urban expansion was democracy, which did not correspond to the Germanic spirit but had emerged from a "Mediterranean mixture of peoples"; instead of a "ranking by blood" there was now a freedom and equality of all – in Helbok's elitist understanding, this was not a welcome development but only an expression of the feared "massification."

Leopold Schmidt reacted to these remarks in his review with little enthusiasm; without becoming more explicit, he simply states that Helbok's late work, "in terms of content as well as its mentality," followed on seamlessly from his "major works" (Schmidt 1965: 198–199). This is not surprising; after all, the first part was probably written largely during Helbok's professorship at the University of Leipzig between 1935 and 1941; the second volume, however, was mainly written after 1945 (Pesditschek 2019: 301–302), which once again illustrates the unshaken continuity in Helbok's thinking. In conclusion, Schmidt cannot help but make a polemical remark and comments succinctly on the presentation of German history, which Helbok tends

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28 Letter from Adolf Helbok to Karl Ilg, November 23, 1960, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Volkskundeatlas."

29 Entire paragraph after Helbok (1967).

to understand as a rise of the German people that was always hindered from the outside: "Something always happened to get in the way" (Schmidt 1965: 198–199).[30] Schmidt describes Helbok and his German folk history as a relic of times gone by, distancing himself from it all, describing it as no longer having anything to do with "our folklore studies," with "our questions," professionally, objectively; one had "learned to see things differently in many years of very objective work." This is obviously a new attempt to draw sharp boundaries. However, obituaries of Helbok after his death in 1968 paint a much more complex picture, which rather proves disagreement instead of a clear demarcation – both within and outside academia. As Schmidt himself will write in an obituary, "perhaps, in view of Helbok's death, it should be considered what lives on of his achievements, and whether everything about his studies has actually become past and scientific history."

Unbroken. National socialism and folklore studies in Austria until the 1960s

In his obituary, Karl Ilg titled Helbok a "distinguished representative of the thirties and forties," his death was "arousing sympathy in wide circles of folklore studies," no matter how one had felt about Helbok "scientifically and politically," his "work capacity was admired by everyone" (Ilg 1968: 6).[31] Thus, for example, the efforts of the deceased for the folklore atlas in particular and the cartographic method in general deserved special recognition. Exactly what was recorded and attempted to be proven with these methods is left out, nor are any publications mentioned from 1938 to 1945. Simply and only indirectly it is said about Helbok's dismissal in 1945 that he "had been active" at the Innsbruck Institute until "the end of the Second World War." In comparison with other obituaries, Ilg's text proves to be relatively informed, respectively reflected; for example, in the *Dolomiten*, Helbok is described outright as the "doyen of local folklore and history," a "pioneering researcher of Alpine and German folklore and historiography […] to whom many students are indebted" (*Dolomiten* 1968: 24). This flattering and uncritical recognition and the effective ideals of an integrative-conformist professional unity point to Helbok's stable anchoring in folklore studies circles, despite all the conflicting vanities, personal animosities and disputes that pervaded folklore studies in Austria at the time, especially in the context of the Atlas project.

Leopold Schmidt, on the other hand, takes a completely different line; according to him, Helbok was actually a historian, a more than clear attempt at writing Helbok out of the discipline. Here again, Schmidt acts in a distancing way, trying to

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30 Entire paragraph after Schmidt (1965).

31 The identical text was published in the *Tiroler Nachrichten*, the *Tiroler Bauernzeitung* and the *Sonntagspost*.

portray him as a foreigner to the subject, as the present folklore studies in Austria no longer had anything in common with such content and paradigms. An anecdote by Wolfgang Brückner, who remembers that "the majority" of excursion participants at the Folklore Studies Congress in Konstanz in 1961 had refused to meet Helbok and listen to a lecture given by him "because they felt that this idea of the organizer Ilg was an imposition," can also be read in this way (Brückner 1988: 7).

That these attempts at distancing oneself were more wishful thinking and, thus, remained rare, however, is illustrated by the striking simultaneity of the most diverse (often problematic) scientific and political positions. From this perspective, the images of a clear break with National Socialist ideas and of the repositioning of the discipline as a whole, which is readily disseminated to the outside world, appears to be an illusion: Adolf Helbok embodies this in an almost ideal-typical manner in his post-1945 words and his connections to Austrian folklorists, especially to the Innsbruck Institute. The laudations and obituaries published in the most diverse places testify to a widely unbroken anchoring of his person in a wide range of networks, while the postwar publications by Adolf Helbok illustrate a clear continuity in his folklorist work, clearly interspersed with NS regime loyal and racial thinking, which was only externally concealed by some semantic adaptations. Both serve to relativize the image of a clearly restructured and reformed ethnology after 1945 – in terms of personnel and ideas.

At the same time, Helbok becomes visible as an important figure in Austrian folklore studies of the 1950s and 1960s. Just as his biography presents itself as a controversial and deeply episodic persistence, so too does the discipline in the years after 1945. Thus, the effort to keep the family peace proved to be even more dominant in Innsbruck than elsewhere, also in view of regional retrospections: Here, Karl Ilg had a networking and helping effect in favor of Adolf Helbok. Ilg was well aware of his own importance, which he also formulated remarkably openly in a letter to Helbok in 1960:

> I did not get to know you personally, Professor, until after 1946, the year in which I habilitated here in Innsbruck. But hardly had I settled here in Innsbruck as an assistant when I, together with Professor Wopfner, tried to make the political and academic authorities aware of the impossible situation you found yourself in at that time and to obtain your vindication under all circumstances. I did this not only because I felt that your treatment was completely unjustified, but also because I myself had already begun to appreciate you as a young boy who had gotten to know the "homeland." It was obvious that a major part of our subsequent efforts for your person had to fall to me as I am from Vorarlberg.[32]

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32 Karl Ilg to Adolf Helbok, March 14, 1960, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Volkskunde: Institut."

The motives for the support, therefore, lie, on the one hand, in paternalistically conceived relationships and a proximity to his origins, which is also evident when Ilg flatters Helbok submissively in 1961 by writing that he "always set an example as a Vorarlberg researcher."[33] On the other hand, professional and ideological close relationships also seem to have existed, which are evident in similar scientific questions, in jointly shared categories (most centrally the polyvalent concept of "*Volk*" (people) (Ilg 1971), which is ultimately connected with a nationalistic-ethnic cultural concept) and in joint conservative efforts to persevere (Heimerdinger and Kuhn 2020). There is substantial evidence that this folkloristic "Innsbrucker Weg" (Innsbruck way) (Johler 1994b) shows preserving and restorative continuities to a folklore studies that had been pursued since the 1930s, especially regarding methodology and research interest(s). This is also the reason for the prolongation of traditional-nostalgic research approaches and the persistent delay of reorientation and reform which are becoming specifically apparent in Innsbruck Folklore Studies. In any case, the effects of this can be summarized in research projects that are not very innovative from today's point of view, in methodological stagnation and prevented theorization, and in delayed reform efforts until well into the 1970s. This region-related knowledge-anthropological balance sheet for the discipline at the University of Innsbruck is also valid overall: Folklore studies in Austria overcame *völkisch* National Socialist epistemologies only hesitantly and partially; it oriented established questions and compiled knowledge which had been researched prior to 1945 only superficially towards the idea of Austria of the Second Republic and functioned largely in the existing networks due to a "decided lack of open-mindedness" (Nikitsch 2005; 97). Thus, folklore studies correlated in many ways to Austrian postwar society. Its knowledge base could be used for an "Austrian consciousness," contributed to the construction of a specific "Tyroleanism," made possible a conservative criticism of modernization of postwar society with arguments for the protection of the homeland and was open to points of contact for "biological folklore research." An authoritarian, hierarchical view of the Austrian "people," combined with conservative views that are critical of modernization and, in the face of only superficial de-Nazification, with an open flank to anti-democratic positions, was characteristic of folklore studies in Austria.

Thus, Leopold Schmidt's position, expressed in a letter to Hermann Wopfner, regarding the composition of the circle of participants in the Austrian Folklore Studies Conference in Patsch near Innsbruck, also takes on a dimension that goes far beyond the specific event:

> The invitation of guests is probably determined by the respective local situation and therefore depends entirely on you. […] It seems more important to me to take into

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33 Karl Ilg to Adolf Helbok, December 29, 1961, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Vorarlberger Landeskunde."

account how the gentlemen concerned behaved during the National Socialist era when selecting the Austrian colleagues to be invited. For example, having to sit at a table with outright high traitors is completely unbearable to me.[34]

It is quite clear that he meant Adolf Helbok here – but not only him. Even if he was not the desired table neighbor for some, he was still on many folkloristic guest lists after 1945.

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34 Leopold Schmidt to Hermann Wopfner, November 11, 1948, in: University Archive Innsbruck, estate Ilg, box "Allgemeiner Posteinlauf."

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Jens Wietschorke

The politics and poetics of cultural cleavage*

Notes on a narrative

Abstract: Cosmopolitans versus communitarians, liberal elites versus globalization losers: Diagnoses of a fundamental cultural division of society are circulating en masse. This article discusses some implications of current narratives of division based on the example of the German debate but also with references from France, Great Britain and the United States, and it formulates a criticism of all too simple patterns of interpretation. It shows that the assertion of a dichotomically structured cultural cleavage plays, not least, into the hands of the right-wing populist discourse, whose core narrative is the juxtaposition of 'elites' and 'the people.' In a second step, the narrative of the cultural cleavage is historicized: Using the example the of the formative phase of scientific folklore studies in the second half of the 19th century, it becomes clear that diagnoses of division always fulfil certain functions within the cultural and scientific field. Finally, the article also states an increased need for cultural studies research in a field of discourse in which social problematic situations and political conflicts are time and again interpreted in cultural terms.

Keywords: cultural cleavage, social inequality, right-wing populism, globalization, anti-elitism, folklore studies

"Mind the Gap?" – An introduction

A conference was held at the Hafen City University Hamburg in April 2017 which, under the headline "Mind the Gap!," examined current discourses on social divisions. The 2016 presidential elections in the United States and the Brexit vote in Great Britain were identified as starting points of recent narratives of division. As the organizers Alexa Färber, Yuca Meubrink and Inga Reimers write in the conference announcement:

> Two elections broadened the public discourse on democracy with a new narrative in 2016: The result of the Brexit in the UK as well as the outcome of the presidential election in the US have been interpreted in a critical introspection as signs of a gap between actors of the public discourse and a part of the population which has

been underrepresented and therefore misunderstood. (Färber, Meubrink, and Reimers 2017).

Particularly for disciplines who work ethnographically, such as European ethnology/ cultural analysis, the question arises – as Färber, Meubrink, and Reimers state in their paper – how the narrative of the gap not only structures social debates but also concerns one's own scientific work because the classical ethnological difference between one's "own" and the "foreign" itself marks a gap which is negotiated in different variants:

> This articulation of a gap raises different questions especially for a discipline that uses ethnography as the main research method such as Social and Cultural Anthropology, which deals with both the life experiences of the socially 'other' as well as the internal and external ascriptions and dominant constructions of the 'other'. (Färber, Meubrink, and Reimers 2017)

This contribution takes up the debate on narratives of social divisions and provides a sketch of the problem from the perspective of cultural studies. On the one hand, the current popularity of diagnoses of a gap will be investigated, as they are evident not only in scientific texts but also in feuilletons, reportages or autobiographies. On the other hand, the cultural logic of the narrative of division will also be illuminated by a brief historical example. The narrative of division is by no means just a narrative of the present; culturalist interpretations of social inequality were already tangible in the 19th and early 20th century that identify the social and symbolic cleavage between educational milieus and popular classes as a key social problem. An empirical cultural science that conceives of culture as the "other side of the social" (cf. Wietschorke 2012: 349–355) must feel challenged when public discourse is so extensively concerned with cultural divisions. Are we today experiencing another massive culturalization of the social, as Wolfgang Kaschuba criticized already in the early 1990s in his inaugural lecture in Berlin (Kaschuba 1995)?[1] How new is this practice of culturalization after all? And what difference does it make whether, in the current diagnosis of society, social inequality is understood as a problem of material resources and distributive justice, or whether the topic is discussed primarily as a question of education and alienation? In this sense, the discourse on cultural cleavage follows political cycles, but it also shows very specific poetics: Narrative modes and patterns that reveal surprising parallels throughout history. The following considerations are intended as a tentative exploration of a field whose relevance to the political debate can hardly be overestimated. They can also help to understand the reflexes and projections that have always been associated with the idea of the 'common people' or the 'ordinary people' – be it in the sense of a reflexive historical

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1   On the culturalization of social inequality, cf. also the stimulative outline of the problem by Goetze (2006).

self-understanding of the discipline of folklore studies or in the sense of more recent and current conceptions of proximity and distance between 'elites' and 'the people.'[2]

Cultural cleavage: The anatomy of a contemporary diagnosis

Wherever one turns at the moment, there is talk of social division. The long-standing polarization of the political landscape in the United States has allegedly become a "hyperconflict" since Donald Trump took office (West 2019); in Great Britain, the Brexit process has been accompanied by persistent diagnoses of division; and in France, observers such as geographer Christophe Guilluy are diagnosing new "Fractures françaises" (Guilluy 2013). Headlines and book titles from Germany also announce a "divided country" (Hagelüken 2017) or a "torn republic" (Butterwegge 2020). The German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung n.d.) also reports a society moving apart. In all this, it is anything but a contentious issue that social inequality in European societies and on a global scale is on the rise. Ever since the financial and banking crisis of 2007 and 2008, the instability of late capitalist conditions and their social systems has been the subject of renewed discussion. Economist Thomas Piketty launched an international debate with his book *Le capital au XXIe siècle* (2013) in which social inequality is recognized as a core topic of the present. And in the light of the growing electoral successes of right-wing populist parties, there is also increased talk of social inequality and the frictions of what Oliver Nachtwey has called the "*Abstiegsgesellschaft*" ('society of social decline') (2016). There is by no means a lack of figures to support all these findings, especially for Germany which, in the words of Hartmut Kaelble, has become

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2   Research activities and contexts of discussion relating to this can currently be found in several sites of the discipline of folklore studies/European ethnology/cultural analysis. In addition to the Hamburg "Mind the Gap" workshop, the follow-up event in Klagenfurt can be listed here which was organized by Alexandra Schwell and Janine Schemmer in March 2018. Titled "Ethnography in Times of Populism. Mind the Gap 2," one question discussed was how the restraint in ethnographic research regarding "boring white people" can be explained. Bernd Jürgen Warneken has expressed similar thoughts in his call for the critical examination of widespread views of the lower social and educational classes (cf. Warneken 2019: 127). Headed by Moritz Ege, an event titled "Gegen die Eliten – zur Konjunktur eines Krisenmotivs" ('Against the elites – on the boom of a motif of crisis') took place at the University of Göttingen in 2018/19, which studied the reflections between 'elites' and 'the people' in several instructive experimental designs. Further contributions and publications can certainly be expected from this context. In addition, a newly published special issue with contributions from the panel "'I want to live like common people.' Narratives, semantics and pictures of the popular within the populist transformation of political discourse," organized by Sebastian Dümling and Johannes Springer at the 2019 SIEF Congress in Santiago de Compostela, also documents a current research interest in the topic (Dümling and Springer 2020). Finally, in 2021, a workshop by the informal network Kulturanalyse ('cultural analysis') on the topic of cultural cleavage will take place in Berlin – a research network which brings together empirical cultural studies and political economy and consists of representatives from both disciplines.

one of the most unequal societies in Europe since the 1980s. According to the German Institute for Economic Research, the 45 richest Germans own just as much as the poorer half of the population (Diekmann 2018). The Federal Government's Poverty and Wealth Report of April 2017 also found that social inequality in Germany is pronounced: While 51.9% of net wealth is concentrated in the richest 10% of the population, the poorer half can claim only 1% (Butterwegge 2020: 221). According to surveys as part of the German microcensus, the at-risk-of-poverty rate affects 15.8% of the population (Butterwegge 2020: 213). The trends in the European and global context, with very different national and regional patterns, also point to a further increase in inequality.[3]

Significant shifts in the discourse on social division have been observed in recent years. It is no longer just the growing social inequality that worries commentators in the arts, journalism and science but rather a new constellation of problems that can be summarized under the heading of cultural cleavage. Reference is increasingly being made to 'cultural' lines of division which overlap the social lines of division and call for new problem descriptions: On the one hand, the 'liberal elites' with a cosmopolitan attitude, on the other hand, the 'disconnected' globalization losers who do not want to or cannot orientate their lives in concert with the demands of flexibility and modernity. Sociologist Andreas Reckwitz, for example, does not stop at the observation that in late modernity we are (again) dealing with a class society because he does not understand this class society primarily as a political-economic fact but rather points out that it is also and especially about cultural classes (Reckwitz 2017: 275). Above all, he states, the new academic middle class and the new underclass are facing each other, and he continues that polarization at the level of education and cultural capital is the central characteristic that shapes the social structure of late modern society; while the type of educational attainment in the levelled middle-class society was hardly decisive for attaining a middle-class lifestyle, the contrast between the highly qualified and the low qualified is formative of structure in later modernity (Reckwitz 2017: 280). According to Reckwitz, upward and downward social mobility shape the (self-)perception of social groups in the new class society which, in his words, is a society of cultural class division (Reckwitz 2017: 277, 283).[4]

The dimensions of education, culture and lifeworld in many current narratives of division have, thus, moved to the fore, and the diagnoses show a clear bipolar

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3   On the global inequality of wealth, see Piketty (2013).
4   Cornelia Koppetsch has criticized in her book review for the platform *Soziopolis* precisely this culturalist line of argument taken by Reckwitz and writes that where classical cultural sociology has still considered culture in its interaction with social structure, society seems to be graspable in Reckwitz' work only in the cultural, and that if everything becomes culture, the theory of society ultimately eludes empirical verification and becomes itself a work of art (Koppetsch 2017).

structure: While the anthology by Stephan Lessenich and Frank Nullmeier, published in 2006 under the title *Deutschland – eine gespaltene Gesellschaft* ('Germany – a divided society') still discusses 17 different constellations of division, which overlap in many ways (Lessenich and Nullmeier 2006a),[5] parts of the public discourse have now developed into a much more concise interpretation of the present: A dichotomizing description of the state of affairs that is based primarily on educational differences and sees new culture wars (Manow 2019: 33) in progress. The diagnosis that the cultural and everyday distance between the 'liberal elites' and the underrepresented and misunderstood 'common people' has been increasing over the past decades, above all, in light of what Nancy Fraser has called progressive neoliberalism (Fraser 2017), has of course been in the air for some time. However, this diagnosis experienced a real boom in recent years in the context of the debate about the shift to the right in Europe and the United States – in short, in connection with the so-called right-wing populism. The shock at the election and voting results of the US presidential election in 2016, the Brexit referendum in the same year and the 2017 parliamentary elections in Germany, in which the "*Alternative für Deutschland*" (AfD) achieved a nationwide result of 12.6% of the vote, was deep. Many commentators felt prompted by the events to look for explanations that bring cultural orientations and conflicts to the fore. Deutschlandfunk radio titled one of its broadcasts in March 2019 "*Die alten Konfliktlinien gelten nicht mehr*" ('The old lines of conflict no longer apply') and introduced it by saying that it was cosmopolitans against communitarians, world citizens against nationalists, globalization winners against globalization losers, and that social controversies were moving along new lines of conflict (Breuer 2019). The French philosopher Guillaume Paoli even reported a fundamental transformation of man and his subjectivity. The blurb to his book *Die lange Nacht der Metamorphose* ('The Long Night of Metamorphosis') states that it is not the economic situation but the affiliation to a certain cultural ideal that has become decisive and, thus, the "progressive" and "tolerant" were contrasted with the "backward" and "those who are old school" (Paoli 2017). Bernd Stegemann juxtaposes the two "halves" of the population in affluent societies at the start of his treatise on populism and writes that while one half refines their manners and liberalizes everyday life, the other half is angry about how much their lives are restricted by the constraints of work and poverty (Stegemann 2017: 7). Even a rather sober observer, such as sociologist Cornelia Koppetsch, speaks of a completely new calibration of the space of lifestyles and writes that the gulf of social distinction now runs between cultural-

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5   The opposing pairs discussed in this volume are: "poor – rich," "employed – unemployed," "secure – precarious," "capital – work," "old – young," "women – men," "parents – childless," "educated – uneducated," "elite – mass," "East – West," "North – South," "city – country," "Germans – foreigners," "believers – nonbelievers," "left – right," "mobile – immobile" and "winner – loser".

cosmopolitan and cultural-conformist forms of knowledge and appropriation (Koppetsch 2019: 115).[6]

In light of the debate on right-wing populism, political science analyses are now increasingly reverting to the old cleavage theory developed in the 1960s by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967). As a central approach to party and election research, this theory serves to explain the fundamental formation of political camps within a society (cf. e.g. Bornschier 2010; Oesch 2013). However, the old opposition between social democratic and Christian-conservative popular parties has been replaced by a new opposition between 'GAL' (Green-Alternative-Libertarian) and 'TAN' (Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) orientations in the interpretation of the current political landscape. (cf. Manow 2018: 77). In the German context, therefore, the Greens, on the one hand, and the AfD, on the other, act as the new lifestyle-based leading parties between which the alleged new cultural divide runs. In this sense, the political science cleavage theory with its culturalist lopsidedness is being repositioned: Simon Bornschier spoke of a "new cultural conflict" that underpins the new successes of right-wing populist parties (2010). According to the Swiss political scientist Daniel Oesch, the right-wing populist boom is not based primarily on a dispute about the economy and the fair distribution of resources but one about culture and the definition of identities (Oesch 2013: 34). This interpretation is a recognizable reaction to the findings of election research, according to which the new right-wing populist parties have been particularly popular in a traditional working-class milieu. However, if many workers no longer vote for the left, as the struggle for distributive justice and participation would require, then – so the conclusion goes – cultural and identity political motives must have moved to the forefront. In this way, traditional party ties have been replaced by camp formations in the lifeworld, as described by the conservative British journalist David Goodhart (2017) as a tribal conflict between the "somewheres" and the "anywheres". A recent study by King's College London and the Policy Institute quoted in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* found that the situation had even worsened, particularly in Great Britain in the wake of the bitter Brexit debates, to such an extent that the British were now split into two hostile blocks, and about half of the people do not even want to talk to the other side. It also stated that only 9% of the British population still feel something like a party affiliation, but 44% had developed a "Brexit identity" (Schindler 2019: 95). Even in the United States, a political camp formation is being stated that reaches deep into the structures of everyday life. Arlie Russell

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6   The overall thesis developed by Koppetsch – that the rise of right-wing populism is to be understood as a consequence of what she calls the as yet unresolved epochal upheaval of globalization – favors cleavage-theoretical explanatory models from the outset since it automatically distinguishes between two cultural camps: Groups that benefit from globalization and those that are overburdened by it (Koppetsch 2019: 14).

Hochschild's brilliant study *Strangers in Their Own Land: A Journey into the Heart of the American Right* (2016) is just one of the countless publications that have contributed to what she describes as the increasingly hostile division of the United States into two large camps.

New "cultural struggles" as a challenge for cultural studies

Such an exacerbation of the narratives of division over the past few years must make one pause for thought. It is precisely the pronounced tendency of many commentators to interpret the social frictions that have arisen in parallel with the rise of right-wing populism as cultural problems that makes this connection a highly relevant topic in cultural studies. Lessenich and Nullmeier were still able to state in 2006 that the multiplication of lines of conflict and divisions went hand in hand with a standardization of conflict perspectives and patterns, and that instead of the end of distribution conflicts proclaimed in 'post-materialistic' times, all cultural differences, even deep ones, were translated into problems of economic distribution (Lessenich and Nullmeier 2006b: 17). Today, almost 15 years later, the logic in certain segments of public discourse seems to be reversed: Even problems of economic distribution are translated into a cultural grammar of value orientations and lifestyles. Not only material inequality but also cultural deprivation is seen as the main cause of social tensions.

At first glance, the current diagnoses of a cultural cleavage or a cultural gap have some merits, but they are also problematic in several respects. This will be indicated in the following five argumentative steps: *Firstly*, it is the fundamental dichotomous structure of these diagnoses that fails to convince. Why should the manifold lines of conflict and tension of the present suddenly merge into a model that knows, first and foremost, two poles? Are the classifications of "cosmopolitan" and "communitarian" patterns of living not far too blurred? Can a diagnosis of society really take hold that treats what Manow calls general cultural resentments (Manow 2018: 79) as structure-forming factors? One of the authors who resists the temptation of making a simple dichotomous diagnosis of division is the Munich sociologist Lessenich mentioned above, who describes a complex dynamic of social closures of top against bottom, inside against outside, one against another and all against one. Lessenich shows that four axes are intertwined here: A vertical, horizontal, transversal and external axis on which various struggles for the distribution of positions of entitlement and legal claims take place (Lessenich 2019: 42). In addition, there are struggles at the level of late modern gender and age regimes, which, in turn, thwart the logic of the aforementioned axes. In short, Lessenich writes, modern democracy is a great game of closure, a complex and variable game of social inclusion and exclusion (Lessenich 2019: 81). The scheme of "cosmopolitans versus communitarians" falls far too short here.

Secondly, this dichotomous scheme ignores the enormous differences that exist between different national, regional and even local contexts. Philip Manow has pointed to the pronounced geographical variance of populist currents and concludes that for this reason alone, populisms in Europe and the United States cannot be explained by global references to new cultural cleavages between cosmopolitans, on the one hand, and communitarians, on the other, and that one cannot avoid dealing with political-economic realities and their histories if one wants to understand cultural affinities and political preferences (Manow 2018: 50). Against this background, it is astonishing that some current diagnoses of right-wing populism are read almost as cross-national analyses that allegedly contribute to understanding both Donald Trump's presidential election as well as the electoral successes of the AfD in Germany or the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* in Austria. One prominent example of this is Didier Eribon's autobiographical text (2009), which was published in France in 2009 under the title *Retour à Reims* but only became an international bestseller after 2016. The statement that *Retour à Reims* is a key work for understanding the social present in Europe and the United States, as the Berlin Schaubühne theatre claims in the accompanying text to its stage adaptation of the book,[7] is now rather rejected by Eribon himself.[8]

Thirdly – and this is a particularly sensitive point – many cleavage diagnoses adopt the interpretation of society propagated by the right-wing populists, whose successes they are in fact attempting to explain. After all, the cultural bloc confrontation between the disadvantaged "common people" and the self-indulgent liberal elites is a central figure in the thinking of right-wing populists. This also applies to the special status ascribed to identity politics in this complex: Is it really the resistance against feminism and 'genderism,' against anti-racism and political correctness that drives voters into the arms of right-wing authoritarian parties? As Manow pointedly asks: Has populism really emerged from the new lines of conflict in identity politics, and are we not in danger of taking the consequences for the cause, the epiphenomenon for the phenomenon? Should it not be cause for reflection if the class with the maximum cultural capital diagnoses populist protest as primarily an expression of a lack of cultural capital? (Manow 2019: 37) In short, as Jan-Werner Müller puts it, one does the work for the populists if one accepts their culturalized descriptions of problems without criticism (Müller 2019: 23). More than that: One participates in the division of the political left along the axis of identity politics/class politics which is currently the subject of broad debate – with the clear danger

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7   Accessed December 20, 2019. Available at: www.schaubuehne.de/de/produktionen/rueckkehr-nach-reims-2.html?ID_Vorstellung=2710.

8   Cf. the interview in the Swiss online magazine "Republik." Accessed December 20, 2019. Available at: www.republik.ch/2018/02/19/interview-eribon-teil1.

that these two core left projects will increasingly be thought of as being detached from each other rather than as intertwined.[9]

Fourthly, the talk of cultural cleavage sometimes includes implicit role assignments regarding the political distortions of the present. As Oliver Marchart has shown, liberal anti-populism operating with cleavage theorems, in its specific re-actualization of the figure of the 'elite' versus 'people', can easily tip over into what he calls an elitist paternalism that, in an inversion of populist invocations, considers the elite as 'pure' and the people as 'corrupt.' By identifying the "modernization losers" and those "left behind" with the pool of voters of the right-wing populist parties, the "people" are again imagined as a "threatening mass" that endangers the (neo)liberal social consensus (Marchart 2017: 14). If one takes this line of argument one step further, one could even arrive at the conclusion that the sweeping talk of 'the populists' is less of an analysis of existing divisions and more of a creation of new ones. Populism is then practically presented as the other side of liberal political reason – while the success of some anti-populist conservative-liberal parties is in fact due precisely to the adoption of content from "right-wing populists."[10]

Fifthly and finally, the role assignments mentioned previously have questionable effects regarding the cultural representation of the "communitarian" underclass. For several years now, reports and popular texts have been circulating that claim to better understand the rise of right-wing populisms in Europe and the United States by focusing on "regions left behind": on the "France profonde," the Saxon province or the areas of the US Midwest where above-average election results of the Rassemblement National, the AfD or Donald Trump were recorded. A pointed example of this was the *Der Spiegel* reportage published in 2017 by the award-winning journalist Claas Relotius who, under the title "In einer kleinen Stadt" ('In a Small Town'), portrayed the inhabitants of Fergus Falls in Minnesota as gun-loving rednecks with authoritarian character structures. Since Trump's election, Relotius claimed, the whole world had been wondering who these people were – and he provided a series of images of "these people" wearing baseball caps that say "hillbilly" or "white trash," who are sometimes called provincial, sometimes frustrated and sometimes lost and who can easily be believed to take the political option of a xenophobic gambler in the presidential office (Relotius 2017). This text was a fake, as has been extensively discussed, also by *Der Spiegel* itself. Not only were the details incorrect,

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9   The edited volume by Richardt (2018) is representative of this critical perspective on left-wing identity politics. Cf. on this the differentiated analysis by van Dyk (2019).

10   The blatantly failed "black-blue," conservative/far-right government in Austria is an example of this process: The *Österreichische Volkspartei* under Chancellor Sebastian Kurz paradoxically kept its 'populist' coalition partner, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, at a distance primarily by representing its agendas in refugee and domestic policy. Thus, it became possible that today, after the breakdown in the wake of the 2019 "Ibiza Affair," there is hardly any talk of agreement and cooperation in terms of content but rather of squandered moral prestige.

but the overall picture was distorted – as the residents of Fergus Falls themselves also objected when they spoke out publicly. This text is exemplary of the sweeping discourse about the voters of right-wing populist parties. By emphasizing lifeworld attitudes and patterns of behavior, as can be found, for example, in the pertinent bestseller *Hillbilly Elegy* by J. D. Vance (2016), liberal anti-populism here shows a paternalistic gesture that tends to declare the "populist followers" to be self-inflicted losers. Such narratives can establish themselves particularly easily on the horizon of division theory and cultural cleavage: The emphasis on the gap is what makes the cultural distance to "them over there" truly plausible.[11]

Cultural cleavages around 1900? Folklore studies in the process of formation

The assertion of a line of cultural division that runs through society is by no means new. In order to understand the current gap narratives, a look back at the history of social diagnostics can be helpful – also to recognize to what extent the articulated diagnoses correlate with very specific conditions of social contexts. Cultural lines of division were repeatedly discussed, especially in the period around 1870–1930: The formation of most social and cultural reform movements and modern pedagogy during this period is closely related to such diagnoses.[12] In the following, I will briefly show how arguments of division theory were put forward during the founding phase of folklore studies as an academic discipline. At the same time, I will tentatively explore the question regarding what this discourse might possibly have to do with the current discourse on cultural cleavage – in the sense of a diachronic experiment that promises insights into the current constellations.[13]

From the middle of the 19th century onwards, actors from the German educated middle classes began to advocate the scientization of folklorist practices of collection and documentation. At the same time, folklore studies were positioned as a reform project for dealing with experiences of loss in industrial society. Many arguments were based, not least, on a specific diagnosis of division which made the question of social inequality appear as a problem of education. Thus, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, for

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11   On this argument, cf. also Wietschorke (2019).

12   Kerbs and Reulecke (1998) is still recommended for an overview of the bourgeois social and cultural reform in Germany.

13   This example is taken from a context that I have discussed elsewhere. Thus, my current research interest in narratives of cultural cleavage is largely motivated by the fact that I was already familiar with some of the patterns of argumentation from the history of educational bourgeois discourses about the "common people" and the "gap" between academics and workers. In this sense, the diachronic experiment already lies in the logic of my examination of the subject. Cf. my comparative study on the settlement movement, the formation process of folklore studies and the discourse of self-reflection within German social democracy between 1900 and 1930 (Wietschorke 2010).

example, was convinced that, as he put it, the divorces of the estates were crossed by the great transverse line that merely divides an educated and uneducated society.[14] Against the background of the vehemently conducted educational policy debate in the 1850s about the equalization of the Gymnasium (academic high school or grammar school) and the Realschule (middle school) – and, thus, about the upgrading of an education which is oriented more at practical applicability than at humanistic ideals – Riehl's line of argument shows a fundamental ambivalence: On the one hand, Riehl turned against all approaches to educational popularization or popular education but, on the other hand, he strongly recommended that the educated approach the "people." This amounts to an estatist-conservative approach to the question of education which attempts to both question and perpetuate the gap. By addressing the social inequality of his time primarily in the sense of a cultural distance, Riehl positions education as the key issue of the time and simultaneously underscores the existing distances between the holders of educations patents and the "common people." What emerges as Riehl's ideal is an educated middle class which, after the experiences of revolution, symbolically opens itself downwards but is confirmed in its social leadership function precisely because of this action.[15]

Even fifty years later, educational reformers and folklore pioneers followed the antagonistic assessment of the situation along the cleavage between education and culture, formulated at the time, for example, by the national economist Gustav Schmoller, who stated that he saw the last cause of all social danger not in the difference between the opposites of possession but in the difference between the opposites of education (quoted after Rein 1896/97: 466). Anita Bagus has shown in a brilliant study that around 1900, several prominent actors with an interest in folklore studies used the argument of the cultural division to advance the establishment of folklore studies as an academic discipline. The continuing exacerbation of social inequality in Wilhelmine society was clearly recognized, but it was primarily reformulated as a cultural issue. An example of this is a passage from a contribution by the Leipzig philologist Eugen Mogk:[16]

> It is a recognized fact that the gap between the common man and the so-called higher classes in Germany has grown wider and wider in recent decades, so that the best of our people have raised the question: Where will it lead to if it continues like this? Social conditions, which are certainly one of the principal causes of this divide, cannot possibly have created this divide alone and increase it. [...] For several ages, a foreign spirit has roamed among the educated, which, in many parts, contradicts

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14 Quote after Bagus (2005: 245). Riehl's 170-year-old diagnosis bears an astonishing resemblance to Andreas Reckwitz' theses on cultural class division and the polarization at the level of education and cultural capital cited above.

15 Cf. in this context, the extensive discussion in Bagus (2005: 243–256).

16 For better readability, this quote has been translated from German.

the German spirit of the people directly, mocking what the simple man of the people loves and does, looking down from above on folkloristic custom and tradition. (Mogk 1899; quoted after Bagus 2005: 313)

The passage quoted is revealing: The distance between the "educated" and the "common people" is presented here as the effect of a "foreign spirit" and, thus, of a history of alienation that has overlaid and exacerbated the social contrast. The mutual cultural recognition and, thus, also the basic understanding of "what the simple man of the people loves and does" appears to be the basic recipe for social resolidarization. Albrecht Dieterich – another one of the prominent actors in the founding and institutionalization phase of scientific folklore studies around 1900 – also saw the main cause of social divisions in what he termed education that had become ill and recommended that the educated should have some understanding of the peculiarities of their people (cf. Bagus 2005: 381–382). Such statements are reminiscent of the current criticism of the arrogance and aloofness of the "liberal elites," who allegedly hardly ever move out of their bubble formed by their education and have little interest in the concerns of the "common people."[17] Even the antagonistic images of city and country that are tangible in the current discourses on cultural cleavage can already be detected in the founding narratives of the discipline of folklore studies, for example, in Adolf Strack, who especially emphasizes the contrast between the peasantry and the educated middle class. As Anita Bagus writes in her commentary, the gap between the educated and the people is, thus, declared to be an urban-rural antagonism (Bagus 2005: 316). With a view to the entire discourse, Bagus sums up in her monograph that the thematization of the cultural gap between the educated and the uneducated population is one of the most significant features of scientific folklore studies when it comes to its public legitimation (Bagus 2005: 312).

Mogk's line of argument is illuminating in another respect: It demonstrates, almost in passing, how the propagators of a new education, oriented to the ideal of the "popular," have positioned themselves in the cultural field of their time. Mogk ranks himself implicitly among the "best of our people" whom he invokes and are concerned about social division and called upon by him to take sides with the "German spirit of the people" and to distance himself from the "foreign spirit" that has moved in with the "educated" of his time. With this form of educational criticism, actors in the new discipline of folklore studies tried to assert themselves in the field – not least by crediting themselves with the symbolic benefit of the genuine "folk spirit." This constellation reveals something about the specific dynamics of the upgrading and downgrading that the "common people" have played in the history of the discourses of self-positioning of the educated middle class – or, to use Bourdieu's words, if a certain clarity is to be brought into the discussions about concepts such

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17 For a pointed discussion of the figure of the "liberal elites," cf. Strenger (2019).

as 'people' and 'popular,' one must remember that these concepts are, first and foremost, objects of dispute among intellectuals (Bourdieu 1992: 167).

Conclusion: The "common people" between proximity and distance

The "mirror effects" of statements about the "people" come into focus from the concept of the people as an object of dispute between intellectuals as a perspective of analysis. In the context of a renegotiation of the concept of class within growing social inequality and right-wing populist electoral successes, this question regains topicality: Who speaks about and in what context of the "common people"? Who speaks *for* the "common people," and who speaks *in their name*? What does it mean when they are perceived as "modernization losers" and notorious "communitarians"? After the cursory passage through current and historical variants of the discourse of cleavage, it has not yet been possible to offer a crystal clear assessment of the topic. A need for cultural studies research becomes evident here because so many assumptions are implied in the antagonistic assessments of the situation mentioned previously that should be of interest to us as scholars in cultural studies: Assumptions about the elites and the popular classes, about globalization and localization, city and country, inclusion and exclusion, home, community and education. In short, the theme leads to the center of the cultural negotiation of society. It should be cause for playing out one of the strengths of ethnographic and cultural studies: The ability to, as Rolf Lindner has put it, inquire locally in specific contexts whether the major social and cultural claims are true at all (Lindner, Johler, and Tschofen 2004: 169). In addition, there is certainly the special competence inherent in folklore studies and the successive disciplines associated with it to critically examine ideological appropriations of the concept of the people just as critically as classical patterns of elitist contempt for the people.

It may be possible to record one finding: The diagnosis of a division of society into two camps is not well suited to doing justice to the complexity of contemporary society. In fact, it seems particularly susceptible to problematic constructions of the "elites," on the one hand, and the "common people," on the other. As I have tried to show in this contribution, almost all diagnoses of an alleged cultural division of society into two antagonistic camps are connected to specific representations of the "common people" – the underprivileged, those left behind, the uneducated or "educationally deprived" milieus. Narrating social inequality as cultural cleavage, therefore, almost always means circulating cultural attributions which are highly indebted to this narrative of division. Thus, certain chains of equivalence can be observed which are established in the current discourse and which link units of meaning, such as "right-wing populism," "province," "country," "local ties" and "underclass." In many cases, specific interests and discursive strategies underlie the narratives of division: The historical example of the long founding phase of scientific

folklore studies which was briefly discussed here is at least a reminder that social inequality is declared a cultural problem not least when "cultural professionals" can hope to benefit from certain generalizations. The history of the discourse on and perception of the "common people" is, therefore, always also a piece of intellectual history. It is – perhaps especially – a piece of the social and knowledge history of folklore studies. This brings us full circle, because the gap which has recently been the subject of increased discussion in the discipline is ultimately a permanent topic of epistemology in folklore and cultural studies. This alone is reason enough to reflect in detail on the talk of cultural cleavage from a cultural studies perspective.

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