European Anthropology as a Fortuitous Accident?
Reflections on the Sustainability of the Field

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ABSTRACT

Under what conditions does European anthropology emerge today as an intellectual project? European anthropology takes shape only provisionally, as a fractured, heterogeneous and uneven field, for the duration of time-limited research projects and meetings with Europe-wide participation. In the currently dominant socio-economic conditions of academic life, European anthropology as an intellectual project has little chance to develop, except as an accident. And yet, with more institutional stability for researchers and their conversations, European anthropology could be turned into a more inspiring intellectual endeavour that challenges the classic Anglo-Saxon way of understanding anthropology as a conceptual translation between 'our' modern and 'Other' worlds; it could also help us to reimagine the world anthropologies framework through the postsocialist and postcolonial lens as something other than a 'family of nations'.

Under what conditions can European anthropology exist today as an intellectual project? What kind of project is it and what kind of project could it become? In this article, I argue that European anthropology today emerges only provisionally: for the duration of a research project funded by a transnational body such as the European Research Council (ERC) or European Commission (EC), within the scope of organisations or journals with an explicit interest in thinking through the foundations of the discipline, such as the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) or the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), or during small-scale events with an explicitly Europe-wide perspective.

This article focuses on one of many such small events – a 2011 workshop called 'Anthropology Otherwise' – to illustrate what sort of

academic communities may arise in the fractured, heterogeneous and uneven field of knowledge we call 'European anthropology'. Inspired by Eduardo Restrepo's and Arturo Escobar's (2005) call towards a framework for world anthropologies, the 'Anthropology Otherwise' workshop was a place where anthropologists from all over Europe discussed different ethnographic traditions and how national and regional variations in the design of ethnographic fieldwork affect ideas about what constitutes 'our discipline'.

Anthropologists living and working in various European countries talked about similarities and differences in their practices, trying to figure out whether different field designs can produce anthropological knowledge, and they discussed the lack of a (shared) history of anthropology in Europe. The general consensus among the participants was that a researcher can use different fieldwork designs to contribute to anthropological conversations. Along the way, a sense of commonality and shared aims developed among the participants. After the workshop, a loose, informal network was created whose members are occasionally still in touch: some workshop participants continued to read and comment on each other's works and sometimes solicited and offered advice on how to navigate peculiarities of academic life in particular countries. However, this sense of shared epistemological and political concerns, despite the fieldwork differences, was relatively difficult to transpose outside the conference.

The 'accidental community' (Rosen 2018) that emerged during the workshop dissipated after several years, due to pressures of national academic job markets on precariously employed early-career researchers. Employment practices, tenure systems and publishing conventions in Europe are largely shaped by country-specific legal regulations, informal rules of practice, and national academic traditions, expectations and customs. Rarely spelled out explicitly, these country-specific rules, expectations and customs mean that 'European academia' is a fractured field that scholars cannot navigate with ease. Yet this is precisely what many early-career anthropologists have to do when looking for a job in Europe: at least fifteen out of some thirty-five workshop participants have moved to a different country since 2011, sometimes more than once.

Increasing precarity and uncertainty create the need for anthropologists to look for jobs throughout Europe; still, European academia remains rather strongly divided by country-specific particularities of academic life that are rarely discussed openly. Some of these particularities include the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the

UK, the requirement for a habilitation in German-speaking countries and Central Europe, and the 'title' (*zvanje*) system in former Yugoslav countries. Furthermore, with more institutional stability for researchers and their conversations, European anthropology could be turned into a more inspiring intellectual project. Redefining Europe through the postsocialist and postcolonial lens – and delinking 'Europe' from 'Western Europe' – could perhaps challenge the classic Anglo-Saxon way of understanding anthropology as a conceptual translation between 'our' modern and 'Other' worlds (see Hanks and Severi 2014). It could also help us to imagine the world anthropologies framework as something other than a 'family of nations'. And yet, such conceptual interventions into our disciplinary understanding of ourselves as anthropologists take time and organised institutional support that should be more than an accident. In the first section of this article, I briefly discuss what could be gained from such conceptual interventions. In the later sections, I focus on the 'gaps' of academic life in which European anthropology emerges today, suggesting that the intellectual project of European anthropology will remain an accident in the currently dominant socio-economic conditions of academic life. As long as the everyday practices of our discipline in Europe – such as employment, tenure and publishing – remain grounded in country-specific academic traditions, languages and power games (which lead countries to respond differently to the pressures created by the neo-liberalisation of universities), European anthropology will continue to be a more or less fortuitous accident. In other words, European anthropology requires explicit and Europe-wide 'rules of the game' in academia; it requires a negotiation, clarification and consolidation of everyday practices, rules and expectations which govern the life of academic workers on a European level.

Rethinking European Anthropology

It is far from clear what might be 'European' about anthropology conducted in Europe or what is and should be the relationship between 'the multiple intellectual, institutional, and historical threads that currently make up the practice of social anthropology by those trained in, or currently working in, European institutions of higher education' (Green and Laviolette 2015: 265). In my view, it would make sense to work towards transforming European anthropology into a far more robust and integrated intellectual project for two reasons: epistemological and political.

First, the framework of European anthropology – rethought and redefined so as to include more than Western Europe – could potentially usurp the conventional way of thinking about our discipline as a form of conceptual translation within 'our' modern world, or between 'our' modern and 'Other' nonmodern social worlds and ontologies. The classic understanding of anthropological epistemology assumes that doing 'anthropology abroad' is epistemologically distinct from doing 'auto-anthropology' or 'anthropology at home' (e.g. Da Col and Graeber 2011). Anthropology abroad requires 'the juxtaposition of indigenous and exogenous concepts' (Strathern 1987: 25), in order to make sense of and to understand the strange and the Other in its own terms. Anthropology at home involves a reversed epistemological move: finding wonder and strangeness in the everyday that surrounds you and exposing the known and the intimate as artificial and constructed: 'people's commonsense understandings of the roles they play and their place in society are shown themselves to be contrived' (Strathern 1987: 28).

Yet such a classic understanding of anthropological epistemology leaves out all those people, places and practices that are neither quite clearly modern, nor quite clearly Other – which abound in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe and the Balkans pose an epistemological conundrum to anthropology, as regions hegemonically understood as undergoing perpetual modernisation, never quite managing to become 'proper' Europe, and rarely having enough resources to develop quite autochthonous or original and alternative socio-political forms and languages. This conundrum could be used to rearticulate and redefine anthropological epistemology as an exploration of scales and degrees of (dis)connection between unequally situated people, places and practices (rather than as a translation between 'our' and 'their' worlds). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2019: 218) suggests something similar when arguing that one element 'of the uniquely European approach to anthropology consists in precisely the exchange, going back to the imperialism and nation-building of the 19th century, between the domestic and the comparative'. This is an approach which anthropologists have been using for a long time (e.g. Green 2005), but it would benefit from being spelled out, clarified and further developed.

Second, European anthropology as a framework could challenge the replication of the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1995) in the ways we imagine our discipline. Restrepo and Escobar's (2005: 99) framework of 'world anthropologies' helps us to envision our

discipline as a global, plural and diverse intellectual landscape, but it does not provide us with specific tools to conceive of relevant actors and their relationships within this 'larger epistemic and political field in which anthropology emerged and continues to function'. One consequence of this lack is that most discussions and histories of 'other anthropologies' tend to use national lenses, focusing on, for example, Brazilian, Mexican, Russian, Polish anthropology, and so on.

European anthropology could be useful for envisioning world anthropologies beyond the image of a 'family of nations' not just because of its regional scope. More importantly, turning to 'Europe' as a relevant framework also requires transforming the meaning of this region in a way that 'dethrones' Western Europe as the sole arbiter of Europeanness and modernity. As Maria Todorova (2012) and Tanja Petrović (2014) argue, 'Europe' needs to be expanded so as to include Eastern Europe and the Balkans as its legitimate parts, also including in this way decolonial and postsocialist perspectives into the very meaning of Europeanness:

> the task for Balkanists and East Europeanists consists not so much of 'provincialising' Europe but of 'de-provincialising' Western Europe, which has heretofore expropriated the category of Europe with concrete political and moral consequences. If this project is successful, we will actually succeed in taking up the challenge posited by Dipesh Chakrabarty by 'provincialising' Europe effectively for the rest of the world, insofar as the European paradigm will have broadened to include not only a cleansed abstract version of power, but also one of dependency, subordination, and messy struggles. (Todorova 2012: 74)

From this perspective, the European project is about the messy struggles over power and continuous challenges over whether one is properly, or sufficiently, modern and European (see also Dzenovska 2018). Combining such a postsocialist perspective with Frantz Fanon's (2004: 235–239) call to invent and make discoveries beyond (Western) European socio-political and economic models, we can understand 'Europe' as a set of deadly contestations and violent experimentations over how to organise states, societies and institutions that have been led both in Europe and globally. Such a vision of Europe can help us to rethink and redefine classic ways of understanding anthropological epistemology: instead of looking for socio-cultural differences that need to be translated between modern 'us' and nonmodern 'them', the proposed shift means studying how it becomes possible to make claims to the status of being modern (or nonmodern) at all. If Europe refers to a project of deadly contestations and violent

experimentations over how to organise socio-political and economic relations, the framework of European anthropology might help us to explore how some differences come to matter more than others and how some start to have violent or lethal consequences. Postsocialist and decolonial understandings of Europe are useful for exploring how relations between people are regulated through various scales and degrees of (dis)connection.

These are some rough, preliminary sketches of conceptual interventions that the framework of European anthropology makes. They leave a lot of questions open. Yet developing these and similar sketches into a more sustained conversation is near impossible. As we will see in the following, in the contemporary organisation of university life in Europe, such conversations can take place only as an accident.

Can There Be European Anthropology beyond Neoliberal Academia? The Two-Tier System of Anthropological Knowledge Communities in Europe

Europe-wide networks and projects in socio-cultural anthropology started to become common more or less alongside the neoliberalisation of universities. I refer here mostly to the anthropological projects and networks enabled by the European Union Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (FP1-FP7 and Horizon 2020), which have been taking place since the mid-1980s. Another excellent example of a Europe-wide anthropological network is the professional association EASA, established in 1989 (see D. O. Martínez 2016).

The link between 'European science' and the 'neoliberalisation of universities' is perhaps not coincidental. In any case, the framework of 'European anthropology' seems to be related to both processes. As Francisco Martínez (2016: 354) points out, 'One of the reasons for the present-day errant status of European anthropology is that it shares many of the same problems, doubts and challenges of the European Union as a socio-political project'. The scattered, accidental and enthusiastic character of events and projects that may be described as 'European anthropology' is likely shaped by the current socio-economic transformation of universities (Heatherington and Zerilli 2016). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what a European anthropology might look like beyond 'projectarisation' of research funding (see Heatherington and Zerilli 2017; Ivancheva 2015).

One serious consequence of the projectarisation[1] of contemporary anthropological research in linguistically and culturally diverse European academia is the two-tier system which separates 'international' and 'national' (language-based) knowledge communities. Most anthropological knowledge communities in Europe are bound by their respective language boundaries and 'the question of language always enters into any reflection over the nature and character of European anthropology' (Eriksen 2019: 214). The 'European' knowledge community in socio-cultural anthropology is being developed in English, more or less in parallel with national, language-based knowledge communities, with little conversation or understanding between them. Dismantling this two-tier system and reframing anthropological knowledges in Europe into a shared, common framework would require a lot of negotiation, mutual learning and time. Yet time is precisely what is lacking in the project-oriented European science. Proliferation of one- to three-year project-based research and teaching positions does not allow a sustained conversation and growth of ideas in new and unexpected directions even in local/national knowledge communities, let alone working towards shaping a new, Europe-wide one.

Projectarisation means that researchers who are mobile internationally need to choose which intellectual conversations of the two-tier system of knowledge production to contribute to. Many mobile, international researchers primarily contribute to the English-language anthropological discussions. They rarely have the time to integrate themselves into and to learn how to take a part in the local language-based communities of knowledge. This means they are less attractive for permanent academic positions in a non-English-speaking country where they may spend several years living. This further prevents scholars from working towards a shared knowledge framework for European anthropology. As an example of this, several of my colleagues have said that, to get a permanent job in German academia, one needs to be very visible in the German-language conversations in anthropology, in addition to having 'international experience'. This informal criterion of 'visibility' in the intellectual debates in a certain language, coupled with a requirement for 'internationalisation', clearly illustrates the two-tier system of knowledge production in Europe.

The two-tier system of knowledge communities persists also because of the model of scholarly mobility that is promoted by the European scientific institutions and in which international researchers

are largely perceived as 'proxies' for new ideas. International scholars who take jobs for one to three years in ERC, EC or similar research projects are supposed to enable circulation of new concepts, theories and methods throughout Europe. The hidden background assumption of the model of scholarly mobility in Europe is not unlike that of the 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*) model of migration in Germany between the 1950s and 1970s: the assumption is that, once the international researchers complete their work abroad, they will go back 'home' to further support circulation of skills and knowledge. While scholarly work requires continuous conversations over a longer period of time, taking people – researchers – as proxies for new ideas means approaching them primarily as what Marina Blagojević (2009: 65–96) calls 'transmitters', rather than as 'creators' of new scholarly knowledge.

This projectarisation of research and the two-tier system of knowledge production mean that many researchers who pursue careers throughout Europe may find themselves in the gaps of the fractured and uneven space of European academia. In my view, scholars need clear and consistent rules for tenure-track positions and publishing in the whole of Europe in order to have freedom to lead challenging and exciting intellectual conversations, to work towards creating a European knowledge community, and to prevent themselves and others from falling through the gaps of the two-tier system. The workshop 'Anthropology Otherwise' clearly demonstrated just how little anthropologists who live and work in different parts of Europe know about one another – including how mostly clueless we are of our variegated disciplinary histories and everyday academic practices.

What Was the 'Anthropology Otherwise' Workshop About?

Funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, around thirty-five anthropologists and ethnologists from thirteen countries gathered for five days at the Petnica Science Center near Valjevo, Serbia. The main goal was to discuss methodological and epistemological similarities and differences between Anglo-Saxon anthropologies and Eastern European ethnologies. More specifically, the focus was on similarities and differences between the 'immersion model' of research (loosely defined as Anglo-Saxon, which involves spending an extended amount of time, usually a year or more, in one location) and the 'back and

forth' model (loosely defined as Balkan/Eastern European, whereby researchers make repeated short visits to a fieldsite for a month or so at a time, for many years or even decades).

Eastern European ethnologies in the twentieth century mostly employed the back and forth model: ethnographers often travelled in teams to a nearby fieldsite; they stayed in the fieldsite for a few weeks; they travelled back to the workplace to teach, write and publish; and they repeated the same routine at the same fieldsite for years, or even decades (Halpern and Hammel 1969; Hofer 1968; Mihăilescu et al. 2009). This model has been changing, often informed by discussions of methodological and epistemological issues in English-speaking anthropologies (Simić 2010). On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon anthropologies in the twentieth century predominantly relied on a long-term stay of a single researcher in a distant fieldsite, a model that was initially promoted by Bronisław Malinowski (Kuper 1996).

This dominant research design has also been changing on several accounts: through multi-sited ethnographic research (Marcus 1995), 'native' anthropology and fieldwork at 'home' (Ryang 1997), as well as through collaborations and experiments with the studied people, other researchers and various activists (Rappaport 2008). Another goal of the workshop was to experiment with the format of an academic event. Instead of the more common exchange of paper presentations, the participants joined one of four discussion groups and attempted to reach an agreement over the key points, by trying out a consensus-based decision-making process.

Imagined as a place to discuss ethnographic research practices, the workshop was far from unique. Many small workshops with experimental formats and wide European participation have been organised before 'Anthropology Otherwise' – and in the ten years since it took place. Precisely because such small international meetings have become increasingly common, it is worth considering the specifics of European anthropology that emerged during this workshop.

The workshop had an explicit goal to think about different ways of doing anthropology in Europe. It offered an alternative way of differentiating 'world anthropologies', by focusing on the relations between 'Western anthropologies' with their immersive fieldwork model, and 'East European ethnologies' with their back and forth fieldwork model. The focus on fieldwork designs allowed the participants to go beyond the division to national anthropologies (e.g. British, German, Serbian and so on) and to discuss differences and similarities of research practices. Instead of theorising different possibilities of

writing anthropology in 'Western' and in 'Eastern Europe', the focus was on everyday practices of anthropologists and ethnologists generally, and on their fieldwork practices particularly. Since there are different ways of doing fieldwork research, what are their similarities, and what are the differences? What is gained and what is lost through particular ways of doing ethnography? Where does the link between geographical regions (the West and Eastern Europe) and the two models (immersion and back and forth) come from? In what way can elements of one model be translated into the other? How do researchers combine them? In what way is the boundary between them constituted? With these questions in mind, workshop participants engaged in four days of intense discussions.

European Anthropology as a Fractured and Uneven Space

The workshop discussions of fieldwork designs, methodology and early twentieth-century ethnographies revealed that European anthropologists do not know much about one another. On the one hand, there is a widespread lack of knowledge about locally specific disciplinary histories, field designs, and ongoing intellectual conversations in 'other anthropologies' in Europe (even more so globally). On the other hand, there is a similar lack of knowledge about rules and regulations of everyday academic life in different countries. Let me briefly turn to both points.

The 'universal' history of anthropology usually includes US-American and British and some parts of the French tradition and figures such as Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Bronisław Malinowski, Marcel Mauss and so forth. While this 'universal' disciplinary history can be written in different ways (see Golub 2017; Sykes 2005), all the workshop participants were more or less familiar with it. It was the many other, particular, locally specific, nationally and regionally defined histories of our discipline in Europe that were virtually unknown across languages. Our talks made it apparent how little we knew about the opening of the first ethnology departments and journals established in Poland; about the founding 'parents' of the discipline in Croatia; and in what way some of the knowledge these local scholars produced could be relevant beyond linguistic and national boundaries.

These local histories are tied up with particular, institutionally embedded ideas about the relationship between 'ethnography',

'ethnology' and 'anthropology'. For instance, there is an important historical difference between 'ethnology' and 'anthropology' – but it is a very different kind of difference in German and former Yugoslav universities. In former Yugoslav countries, 'ethnology' (*etnologija*) evokes the study of rural social worlds and customs, since it was historically understood primarily as a 'national science' (see Čapo 1991; Naumović 1998; Prica 2001). The term 'anthropology' (*antropologija*) evokes the cutting-edge theories about contemporary practices throughout the world, in urban as well as rural contexts (Milenković 2008). In German-speaking academia, however, the term 'ethnology' (*Ethnologie*) historically referred to a theoretical study 'that classified and generalized the results of a strictly descriptive ethnography' (Gingrich 2005: 87), while the term 'anthropology' (*Anthropologie*) carries associations of racism, genocide, and evolutionist physical anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is yet another split in German contexts between 'ethnology' (formerly *Völkerkunde,* now *Ethnologie*) as a study of the Other, and '*Europäische Ethnologie*' (formerly *Volkskunde*) as a study of Europe (ibid.). Historically shaped, these disciplinary divisions are still being negotiated and transformed. As Regina Bendix (2012: 364) points out:

> German-speaking scholars in the field once called *Volkskunde* have come to speak of their discipline as the *Vielnamenfach,* the 'field of many names'. Looking at academic institute names from the northernmost Department for European Ethnology / *Volkskunde* (Kiel University) straight down to the Institute for Popular Cultures, Popular Literatures and Media (University of Zurich) and the Institute for Cultural Research and European Ethnology (University of Basel), from the easternmost Institute for European Ethnology (University of Vienna) and via the Institute for Empirical Cultural Research (Tübingen University) to the westernmost Seminar for *Volkskunde* / European Ethnology and a Masters program in Cultural Anthropology / *Volkskunde* (Münster University), the profusion of names among some 20 degree granting university departments is indeed obvious.

The negotiation of the disciplinary names – and histories – is still open with respect to *Völkerkunde* as well. Members of the 'German Association for Ethnology' (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde*) decided to rename this professional society the 'German Association for Social and Cultural Anthropology' (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie*) during the 2017 biennial conference in Berlin. As Hansjörg Dilger (2018) emphasises, some participants claimed that 'social and cultural anthropology' as a name for the professional society 'has no recognition value in the public realm, where "*Ethnologie*" is

a firmly established name', and that *Anthropologie* in a German context 'stood for researches tied to racism and genocide'. Yet the new name of the Association was adopted with a two-thirds majority largely because it 'describes precisely what our discipline does: it researches the behaviour and ways of life of people in their diverse social and cultural life contexts' (Dilger 2018). Such negotiations provide a good example of multiple histories of 'other anthropologies' that usually remain unknown beyond their linguistic boundaries.

Several workshop participants expressed a desire to know more about the minor, locally specific and usually overlooked versions of history of anthropology in Europe. Perhaps it would be possible to teach at universities a fragmented, yet consensual history of European anthropology, beyond the British and French traditions?

Such questions are often disregarded because the overall assumption is that none of this local and regional ethno-anthropological knowledge is intellectually relevant and that much of it is politically problematic. The careful reading of local and regional histories of our discipline that many workshop participants had to do in the course of their under-graduate studies in universities across Europe suggests this assumption is flawed, to an extent. Writing and teaching a common history of European anthropology requires a re-evaluation of such locally and regionally specific ethno-anthropological 'canons'. The workshop session on rethinking 'the oldies' (that is, early twentieth-century ethnographies from South-Eastern Europe) demonstrated how important it can be to engage in such a re-evaluation. These older ethnological canons include not just the hoarder-like or politically problematic authors, but also scholars who experimented with possibilities of learning from modernity, difference and Otherness, and who produced new ways of understanding social life in Europe along the way.[2] The methodological and epistemological richness of 'other anthropologies', and important points of intersection between them, are lost when only the Anglo-Saxon version of anthropological history is taken into account.

One illustration of what can be gained if we think across European anthropological traditions is the back and forth fieldwork model discussed during the workshop. Rather than simply discarding it in favour of the Anglo-Saxon research model of long-term single stays, the workshop presented an attempt to see what, if anything, from East European ethnological fieldwork traditions can be re-evaluated as potentially useful for anthropologists anywhere in the world. Instead of approaching the back and forth research model as a relic of a bygone era of old-fashioned and politically problematic ethnographic

Eastern European nationalist 'hoarding', it can be understood as a stand-alone fieldwork design with certain advantages and disadvantages that need to be discussed (cf. Günel et al. 2020). Such re-evaluations of locally and regionally specific bodies of anthropological knowledge and ethnographic practice are important for the project of European anthropology.

The second thing that became clear during the workshop was just how different academic life is in various corners of Europe. Leaving aside the distinction between Anglo-Saxon anthropologies and Eastern European ethnologies, the differences can be astonishing for outsiders even within a single Western European country. For instance, the participants from Germany indicated that the complicated relationship between *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* structures not just intellectual conversations, but also everyday practices of anthropologists – it shapes decisions on who to invite as a keynote speaker at conferences or as a member of research teams; in which journals to publish your work; whose classes to attend if you are a university student; or whose works to value, read and cite. *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* are often presented as more or less the same discipline abroad, but they are kept clearly distinct within the German intellectual context.

The fact that many universities and/or cities in Germany have two departments for anthropology is a strong pragmatic reason for maintaining disciplinary boundaries between socio-cultural anthropology (*Völkerkunde*) and cultural anthropology (*Volkskunde*). Namely, there is a reasonable fear that dismantling the boundary between *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* would also mean fewer academic jobs for all anthropologists. None of this was known to any of the workshop participants who did not speak German. It is these kinds of particularities – and the outsiders' lack of knowledge about them – that make European anthropology a fractured and uneven space. The tacit knowledge about academic hierarchies, divisions, expectations and informal rules in different countries should be spelled out clearly if the researchers are to move throughout European anthropological landscapes with more ease and so contribute to producing European anthropology as a knowledge community.

Different Research Designs, the Same Discipline?

One key question loomed in the background of discussions of fieldwork designs at the workshop: if our discipline has had four or five

different names in different corners of Europe (social anthropology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, European ethnology, ethnography), are we talking about the same discipline? If Eastern European ethnologists have been described as 'granaries where generations of ethnographers, one after the other, hoard and preserve their knowledge' (Hofer 1968: 313), does it make sense to compare them with Anglo-Saxon anthropologists at all? Does the important postcolonial criticism of Anglo-Saxon anthropology (Asad 1973) have any relevance for understanding Eastern European knowledge traditions? What conditions should be met to answer such questions with a 'yes'? In order to engage with such complex issues, the participants turned to their everyday fieldwork practices. The discussion of fieldwork designs became a conversation about similarities and differences in doing anthropology. How different in fact are 'immersion' and 'back and forth' as fieldwork designs? How different is the knowledge they produce?[3]

Back and forth and long-term single stays are two models with different frequencies, dynamics and practical procedures for immersing oneself 'into' the field. However, since both fieldwork designs require immersion, the participants agreed that the quality of anthropological knowledge produced does not necessarily depend upon the model used during fieldwork. In other words, proper anthropological knowledge could be produced by using both fieldwork designs: back and forth as well as long-term single stays.

The meaning of 'immersion' was also intensely discussed. The participants thought that immersion constitutes the necessary requirement for any kind of high-quality ethnographic fieldwork – including back and forth and long-term single stays. Echoing Tim Ingold's (2008) discussion of anthropological immersion as a 'study with people' (as opposed to a 'study of people'), conference participants asserted that 'becoming immersed' means learning how to share concerns with people one works with, rather than simply to perceive such concerns. If participant observation means learning to see, hear and touch things in a new way and to 'attend to what others are doing or saying and to what is going on around and about; to follow along where others go and to do their bidding, whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you' (Ingold 2014: 389), then it is of paramount importance for any fieldwork design (see also Shah 2017). The participants also agreed that 'language immersion' requires continuous practice and that immersion can be important for other kinds of practices, such as activism and journalism (cf. Kirsch 2010).

Imagining European Anthropology Otherwise

To conclude, let me offer a brief speculation on future forms of European anthropology as a counterpart to the earlier critical reflections upon the current actually-existing 'accidents' of European anthropology. Should there be a set of Europe-wide institutions that would operate similarly to national research institutions, only on a larger scale? Or would it be possible to ensure such stability beyond the overarching, centralised institutional framework? Could European countries define joint 'rules of the game' in academia in order to facilitate non-projectarian forms of mobility that would also support long-term intellectual conversations? There are no clear answers to these questions, but it is important to keep in mind that they shape the character of our disciplinary endeavours, enable particular conversations to emerge, and prevent others from taking place or continuing.

In my view, European anthropology is ideally organised as a non-national and decentralised project, sensitive to socio-economic inequalities among its participants, and open to discussion, negotiation and experimentation. It is 'first and foremost processual, in the making' (F. Martínez 2016: 354) and it is characterised by the shared goals of its participants to communicate, collaborate and learn from one another. Yet European anthropology should establish a strong balance between this processual and decentralised character of its intellectual conversations and the security and predictability of employment, research and publishing. Bringing stability back into the lives of scholars is important in order to ensure longevity of their intellectual conversations and disciplinary sustainability. This, among other things, requires levelling out the 'playing field' of employment throughout Europe. In order for anthropology to exist, anthropologists have to survive. In practical terms, the standardisation of expectations for employment, promotion and tenure throughout Europe is not possible without a large-scale change of the organisation of academic life on national levels – precisely the level that has been undergoing profound transformation over the last thirty years. Perhaps it is time to redirect this large-scale change in a manner that would save two-thirds of anthropologists in Europe from precarity and poverty (according to an EASA Position Paper, 'more than 60 percent of all anthropologists associated within EASA are working under precarious conditions, ranging from 95 percent of those under 30 years old to about 40 percent of those aged 46–55 years'[4]). Without such explicit efforts to reorganise the political economy of universities, and as long

as precarity and neoliberal definitions of knowledge-value are the key features of academic life, European anthropology will remain an accident – a beautiful yet temporary one.

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Notes

1. Catherine Baker (2014) uses the term 'projectariat' to describe the position of simultaneous precarisation and privilege of the local workers employed in the projects of international organisations involved in peacebuilding, democratisation and peacekeeping in former Yugoslav countries. By extension, under 'projectarisation' I understand the process of organising the production of scientific knowledge through project cycles that generate 'projectariat' – an increasing number of precariously employed scholars who are also privileged due to their relatively high salaries.
2. See, for instance, Filipović 1945 or Bogišić 1884. Elsewhere (Brković 2018) I discuss in detail how Filipović and Bogišić developed different epistemological strategies to offer original analyses of the joint family (*zadruga, zadružna porodica*) in the Balkans.
3. The same question is discussed in more detail in Brković and Hodges 2015.
4. Available at: https://easaonline.org/downloads/other/EASA%20Position%20Paper%20Precarity.pdf (accessed 14 September 2020).

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