

Europe: Insights from the Outside – An Introduction

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I.

This volume unites the contributions to the 11th and 12th 'Karlsruhe Dialogues', which took place under the title 'My Europe – Your Europe'. The Karlsruhe Dialogues were initiated in 1997 by the ZAK | Centre for Cultural and General Studies at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and are organised once a year in cooperation with other cultural institutions in the city of Karlsruhe. Through an open and reflective discourse that has given rise to the contributions in this book – and also by featuring performances from the arts, including film, readings, music, and theatre – the Karlsruhe Dialogues support a creative quest for insights and new approaches aimed at solving controversial issues within society at large. Scholars and experts from communities of practice and from civil society organisations highlight various aspects of the chosen topic, and both complementary and contradictory points of view are presented. In a globalised world, the transdisciplinary perspective of culture has taken on increased significance with regards to the interrelatedness of the local and the global. The recognition of the connections between the local and the global has become central to comparative cultural studies as a whole, as well as to our understanding of the co-evolution of science and society.¹ The inclusion of a sensual access to the topic through the often provocative contributions from the arts, and the opening introduction with an universal interdisciplinary overview make the Karlsruhe Dialogues unique. Their aim: to promote science in dialogue.

The original presentations and the written versions printed here were developed on the basis of a concept that goes beyond a thematically organised panorama of Europe's socio-cultural make-up, particularly in relation to multicultural and transcultural phenomena. The specificity of this concept and of this volume is that only persons with a non-European background were asked to reflect on perceptions, cultural values,² expectations, and developments of the European entity. In the first year of the programme, only non-Europeans living outside the continent were invi-

1 See *Helga Nowotny/Peter Scott/Peter Gibbons: Re-thinking Science. Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge 2001. See also *Caroline Y. Robertson-von Trotha: Schlüsselqualifikationen revisited. Ein altes Thema in Zukunftskontexten*, in: *ibid.* (ed.): *Schlüsselqualifikationen für Studium, Beruf und Gesellschaft. Technische Universitäten im Kontext der Kompetenzdiskussion (= Problemkreise der Angewandten Kulturwissenschaft 14)*, Karlsruhe 2009, pp. 17-57.

2 The written contribution by Hans Lenk, former holder of the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Karlsruhe (now the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) and President of the World Society of Philosophy is the only exception.

ted to speak. Their perspectives as 'outsiders' enabled them to 'open the eyes' of both people of European ethnic origins and those with a migrant background who however were socialised to a lesser or larger extent within Europe, revealing a number of new perceptions. The speakers gave voice to the expectations that a globalised world has of Europe. Additionally, Europeans' myths about themselves were often called into question and amended. This picture was supplemented in the Dialogues of the following year by a focus on immigrants within Europe, i.e. on those whose lives are now centred in a European country.³

By bringing together both European migrant perspectives and entirely non-European points of view, this volume casts new light on recent developments within the EU and on decisions the EU is taking about its direction in the coming years and decades, and opens these developments and decisions up to increased scrutiny. These unfamiliar perspectives help expose the limits of myths cherished by individuals or whole societies while at the same time sharpening perceptions of cultural heritage and its loss. Unacceptable cultural practises are also called into question in this way, opening up one of the major and most controversial European debates with regard to integration and its limits.

For all of these reasons, the Karlsruhe Dialogues were able to contribute to the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' in 2008. In addition to this, they were among the cultural 'beacon projects' while Germany held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2007. The Dialogues also enjoyed the patronage of the German Commission for UNESCO in both 2007 and 2008.

General key questions provided the stimulus for all the authors whose contributions have been published here: What is characteristic of Europe and what positive qualities distinguish it? How do migrants – whether those with or without citizenship in a European country – evaluate and perceive life among their new neighbours? Many associate Europe with the dream of freedom and egalitarianism. For others, Europe is a continent of double standards, where legal freedoms certainly do not apply equally to all groups in everyday life. The general public often prefers to look away when these rights are violated – whether by the host society or by members of the immigrant communities. Does this situation lead to the impression that the presupposed 'European Dream' is nothing but an illusion? And what is understood by the concept of freedom and human rights in different cultural groups? Necla Kelek points out that the concept of freedom is culturally conditioned.⁴ It implicitly addresses issues of intellectual and corporal autonomy that arise within

3 *Robertson-von Trotha, Caroline Y.*: Die Dialektik der Globalisierung. Kulturelle Nivellierung bei gleichzeitiger Verstärkung kultureller Differenz, Karlsruhe 2009.

4 See Necla Kelek's text 'The Freedom that I Mean... or *The Heart – or Wurst – of the Matter*' in this volume, pp. 81-92.

the socialisation process. If immigrants have never experienced Western-style independence and self-responsibility themselves, then they often have inherent fears on the individual level, which makes discussion of these issues on the transcultural level very difficult. Thus, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is often dismissed as a culturally conditioned document of Western societies. This is discussed in the contribution by Hans Lenk, who addresses the question of the common characteristics of Europe's unity of values.

The speakers were also asked whether Europe is a continent in transition, a multicultural construct, or a geopolitical entity with global responsibilities. With reference to the pluricultural experience of India, Anil Bhatti points out that discussing culture and diversity implies a discussion about what he calls the "renegotiation of the coordinates of life world."⁵ Hybridity and the complexity of change on the one hand, and cultural stigmatisation and xenophobia that reinforce the reaction of self-chosen isolation on the other hand (an isolation that includes the organisation and strengthening of cultural-ethnic identities), are all part and parcel of the mosaic of European civil societies. They cannot be fully understood without reference to both collective and individual pasts, and to the memories and anxieties these pasts encompass. The life world is a question of perspective. Or, according to the words of Bhatti: a map of the world from the perspective of New Zealand looks very different from a map centred on Europe.⁶

II.

Europe is a complex political, geographical, cultural, and socio-economic entity, to mention only a few of the attributes that could be named. It is a continent that has undergone rapid change in the past decades: due to glasnost and perestroika, technological developments, demographic trends, work migration, and globalisation – again mentioning only some of the major motors of change. It is a continent which has in the past twenty years been particularly concerned with itself and its own far-reaching processes of transformation, centred around the reunification of Germany and the end of bloc politics after the fall of the Berlin Wall. European nation states have experienced change both within their own boundaries and shifts with regard to their levels of sovereignty within the political entity of the European Union. European societies have undergone massive transitions at varying speeds. Simultaneously common values and very differing models of civil society exist among EU member states; coalitions of alignment vary over time; and there are many disparate, and often radically differing, images of the continent's future development. Europe increasingly has to address questions both with regard to integration within the process of European unification and with regard to its role in a globalised world society. By focusing on its commitment to the concept of 'diversity in unity' on the

⁵ See Anil Bhatti's text 'Remarks on Culture and Diversity' in this volume, pp. 43-50, p. 43.

⁶ Ibid.

basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, critics have called into question many of Europe's self-perceptions and collective memories, as well as many of its practical actions at home and abroad.

The geopolitical and socio-cultural nature of Europe cannot be analysed and critically questioned without close attention to its medial dimension. Images are ubiquitous in our globalised, media-driven information society. The internet and in particular the exponential growth of new social networks have led to a massive increase both in the availability and distribution of information. These trends have also led to a resurgence in what could be called organised propaganda, with new forms of politicisation and emotional mobilisation becoming visible. Some refer to an extension of the Cold War, or to the 'clash of civilisations' now being fought with new means. Irresponsible and responsible reporting in the traditional media can excite latent emotions very quickly and unexpectedly – the deep impression of the images of September 11th is a case in point. Developments in communications are also making it increasingly difficult to separate domestic and foreign policy in terms of their consequences. Satellite technologies allow whole immigrant communities to follow events 'at home' in their mother tongues as if they had never migrated. The consequences for processes of adaptation to a new local cultural environment are far-reaching: the impetus to learn the language of the host country and take an interest in its everyday affairs is greatly reduced. Furthermore, this often affects the following generation by strengthening the tendency to form ethnic colonies. Local events are unexpectedly interpreted in larger geopolitical contexts that are either unforeseeable or whose significance, with reference to cultural identities, is often underestimated. This is no less true of genuinely unacceptable situations that have established themselves and become structurally significant over the course of time than it is for the misuse of local events for purposes of a tendentious politicisation. Our memories of past events, positive or negative, make up our identities. The primarily subjective preconceptions that develop in this way are essential ingredients in our sense of community, in our perception, and in our actions as human beings.

Living together in local communities has become more complex in Europe. Europe is rich and diverse in terms of ethnicity and culture. This shared public space has become less and less forgiving of omissions and misjudgements in integration policy. In nearly all European countries, integration is now understood as one of the key tasks of our time. In Germany, the first ever national integration plan has now been developed. It was devised in cooperation with immigrants and immigrant organisations and was presented to the public in July 2007.⁷ The "necessity of a col-

⁷ 7. Bericht der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration über die Lage der Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in Deutschland, December 2007, pp. 35; <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Publikation/IB/Anlagen/auslaenderbericht-7.property=publicationFile.pdf> [15. 10. 2010].

lective and coherent approach to integration policy as well as the continuing importance of shared fundamental principles as the basis for the European integration effort⁸ has been emphasised at the international and European levels. Within the EU, national strategies for integration policy differ sharply from one nation to another, and range from the strongly assimilationist approaches of countries such as France to the much less assimilationist policies of the United Kingdom and others. The British model of a society based on the principle of multiculturalism has faced criticism since the bombing attacks on the London Underground in 2005 and the attack on Glasgow Airport in 2007. Both of these attacks were carried out by so-called 'home-grown terrorists' – young British citizens from immigrant families – and the perpetrators could not in any way be described as young adults with no prospects for the future, an observation that also pertains to those who carried out the September 11th attacks.⁹

The implementation of integration policies reveals serious deficits in all EU countries, although these efforts have been given high priority in some places. In this context, the development of a coherent strategy at the level of EU policy is an urgent and formidable task. Several issues need to be clarified: How should we define integration? Which cultural differences ought to be protected in keeping with UNESCO principles, for example, and which differences are incompatible with pluralistic constitutional democracy? How can we learn from the experiences of other countries? The aim of setting up contemporary standards of informed cultural best practices is paramount for transcultural understanding. And how can we establish an on-going dialogue on the subject? This dialogue should include insights from outside of Europe that give impetus to rational political counsel at both the international and local levels.¹⁰ Furthermore, and most challenging of all, how do we involve citizens from all cultural backgrounds? None of these questions are new.

8 Ibid., p. 284. The German original reads: "Notwendigkeit eines globalen und kohärenten Ansatzes in der Integrationspolitik und die weiterhin bestehende Wichtigkeit der gemeinsamen Grundprinzipien als Grundlage für den europäischen Integrationsansatz".

9 In these cases young intellectuals either as students or already established within a profession were involved.

10 A European example at the local level is CLIP (Cities for Local Integration Policy), a network of 30 European cities working together to support the social and economic integration of migrants; <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm> [15. 10. 2010]. Of particular importance is the UNESCO Convention leading in Germany to the White Paper 'Shaping Cultural Diversity' which was co-authored by scholars and practitioners from many areas and makes concrete recommendations for action: *German Commission for UNESCO* (ed.): *Shaping Cultural Diversity. Recommendations for Action from Civil Society for the Implementation in and by Germany of the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005), White Paper, Bonn 2010; http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bibliothek/unesco_weissbuch_Englisch_2010.pdf [15. 10. 2010]. The Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) is a younger and ambitious institutional network intending "to bring people together from across the Mediterranean to improve mutual respect between cultures and to support civil society working for a common future of the region." See also the Anna Lindh Report 2010 'Euromed Intercultural Trends'; <http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/AnnaLindhReport2010.pdf> [15. 10. 2010].

The issue of cultural diversity and integration includes a deeply political dimension alongside its more moral and practical aspects. In February 2008, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, illustrated this fact with his declaration that "assimilation is a crime against humanity" in front of approximately 20,000 Turks gathered to see him in Cologne, Germany. And in Holland, the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh just two years after the assassination of the right-wing politician Pim Fortyn emotionalised the cultural pluralism debate and led to broader levels of solidarity against liberal cultural policy.

With the publication of Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* in August 2010, an unusually broad and highly controversial debate on integration has been ignited in Germany, a debate that involves all political parties. This includes the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD), which wants to expel Sarrazin from the party. More interesting is the fact that Sarrazin's assumption that many Arab and Turkish immigrants are unwilling to integrate, is prevalent among many Germans, most of whom have not read Sarrazin's book (and are therefore not necessarily supporting his hypotheses on the hereditary role of genes in the distribution of intelligence). These examples, which could be supplemented by many more, underline one of the few general theorems accepted by almost all sociologists: cultural, ethnic, and national identities are open to politicisation and mobilisation.

A number of basic and conflicting issues can be outlined concisely: The first of the dilemmas facing Europe with regard to integration can be effectively illustrated through the biographies of many of the contributing authors. Several of them have chosen to live in Europe because they face restrictions or even severe persecution in their native countries. Others have grown up in Europe, but find themselves subject to death threats because traditionally oriented families and in particular fundamentalist groups within the immigrant communities have imported practises in violation of basic human rights to Europe, and unquestioningly defend these practises as a part of their culture: now, in many communities of third generation immigrants, the conflict between modernising reformists and orthodox traditionalists has become more acute and not less. Women feel threatened because they are no longer prepared to remain silent in the face of the unjust traditional practices of patriarchally structured immigrant communities. Migrants themselves are often out of touch with the extent of the changes and varying perceptions that are being articulated in their countries of origin. The balance among orthodox traditionalists, fundamentalists, and modernising reformists is changing as part of a complex non-linear process of self-segregation and desegregation, of construction and deconstruction. Within migrant communities, very different and often controversial views of the role of culture and questions of integration prevail. These are deeply influenced both by local conditions in the chosen countries of migration and the initial impetus for migration. They include more general complex underlying attitudes toward the

balance between protecting one's own cultural heritage and being open to the dynamics of change, a dialectical process that involves local communities, national state policies, and framework conditions. The issue of integration taken as a complex whole has many facets and cannot be effectively considered on the basis of generalisations. Shared everyday cultural values and principles make up an important part of this whole.

The second dilemma surrounding the issue of integration is the fact that structures of segregation contributing to the development of 'parallel societies' can be identified and that there have been active efforts to further develop these segregational tendencies among some groups.¹¹ There is a growing awareness that the various failures of states and mainstream European cultures to recognise and embrace contemporary cultural diversity as part of a historical process initially contributed to this development, but this does not change the current situation. The formulation of appropriate measures of inclusive social and cultural policies are needed. A discussion on the implementation of incentives and also strict sanctions is part of this debate. Moreover, in political practise, diversity has yet to be recognised for its value and potential; it is merely portrayed as a manifest challenge to the fabric of society. In this respect it must be remembered that many European countries, especially those of Eastern Europe, still regard themselves as culturally homogeneous – and this claim can indeed be substantiated to some extent by migration statistics.

The third dilemma surrounding the issue of integration is the progressive strengthening of stereotypes and prejudices on both sides. This development calls for determined efforts to discredit and debunk such stereotypes, which play a central role in the unequal opportunities characteristic not only of the educational system and the job market, but also of the housing market. The thesis of structural discrimination cannot be overlooked, and must be discussed.

With its programmatic decisions regarding the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' in 2007, the European Union initiated increased discussion of proactive measures – these decisions were quite controversial, and need to be discussed in a correspondingly complex manner.¹² Universal equal opportunity encompasses many disparate issues. Gender equality and freedom in the choice of one's partner, for example, remain major challenges for the acceptance of significantly non-integrated communities. For this reason, strategies for the improvement of socio-economic participation need to be discussed alongside strategies addressing the simultaneous problem of socio-cultural barriers. Above all, we need to become more proactive.

11 *Bundesministerium des Innern/Bundesministerium der Justiz* (eds.): Zweiter Periodischer Sicherheitsbericht. Kurzfassung, Nov. 2006; <http://www.bmj.bund.de/files/-/1481/PSB.pdf> [15. 10. 2010].

12 *European Commission* (ed.): Putting Equality into Practice: What Role for Positive Action?, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Unit G.4 March 2007; <http://biblio.ugent.be/input/download?func=downloadFile&fileId=733550> [15. 10. 2010].

A particularly disturbing development can be observed in many European societies: racism and the politically motivated criminality of the radical right are on the rise. We are presently experiencing higher levels of cultural discrimination due to the projection of stereotypes and the lack of opportunities to correct these stereotypes. The concentration of ethnic communities in certain – usually socially and economically less attractive – areas with cheaper living accommodation in many European cities reinforces this development.¹³ This is equally true of criminal acts motivated by xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Europeans, in particular those with darker complexions, experience discrimination in their everyday lives and are increasingly subject to racist attacks as well. These developments stem from a latent ideology of 'white power' and from a lack of awareness of the historical fact of Europe's ethnic diversity. At the same time, a process that can be described as the dialectics of racism can be increasingly observed.¹⁴ It is not only people from Middle Eastern countries who face discrimination on the basis of their distinctive ethnic appearances, but also those who only vaguely differ from preconceived cultural norms. An increasing Islamophobia can be demonstrated in all European countries. The acclaimed and respected Egyptian academic Nasr H. Abu Zaid, who sadly died this year, points out the paradoxical function that this kind of prejudice and marginalisation appears to be filling: "Europe seems to be well identified only in comparison with Muslims and in the face of Islam; but how much of Europe's identity is actually a reaction against its own history and some of its own citizens?"¹⁵ The problematic nature of orientalism – as something that emerges from the transfiguration of a seemingly oriental (fairy-tale) world and a simultaneous Islamophobia – needs further consideration: the contrast between Europe and the Islamic world cannot be described as a stagnant opposition when the borders between the two are slowly disappearing. The force of potential politicisation remains however, even when cultural difference is diminished.

The French philosopher Bernhard-Henri Lévy, who was born in Algeria, stated the following in an interview on the subject of feelings of belonging: "Tolerance is the weakest form of love"¹⁶ – we are not *tolerant* toward our friends. The motto of 'tough love', for example vocal criticism, the definition of limits, and constructive confrontation, is considered – or at least was considered, prior to the era of political

13 See also the Sinus Sociovision survey 'Die Milieus der Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland'; <http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung4/Pdf-Anlagen/migranten-milieu-report-2007-pdf,property=pdf,rwb=true.pdf> [15. 10. 2010].

14 See for example Nasr H. Abu Zaid's text 'Islam in Europe/Europe Against Islam! Europe, Open Your Eyes' in this volume, pp. 67-73, p. 70: "If things continue to go as badly as they are at the moment, this alienation, and the way it both feeds and is fed by the resentment of mainly white, Christian or post-Christian Europeans, could tear apart the civic fabric of Europe's most established democracies."

15 Ibid., p. 71.

16 *Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen* (ed.): *Kulturaustausch. Zeitschrift für internationale Perspektiven*, No. 3, Vol. 57, 2007, p. 20.

correctness – a demonstration of respect and affection in the Anglo-Saxon world. This is precisely the type of respect that is directly or indirectly demanded by the contributions in this volume and that could represent – in the form of 'constructive intolerance' – a new, challenging tone of interaction among members of pluralistic societies.

III.

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