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European Ethnology, Cultural Anthropology, Volkskunde in Austria

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Historical overview

In Austria the discipline is established in universities, in museums archives and collections, and in associations and societies. Outside of universities and the academic field it is referred to as “folklore studies” (Volkskunde). The two university departments at Vienna and Innsbruck are both called “Institute for European Ethnology”, whereas the department at Graz calls itself in English “Institute for European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology” (taking “European Ethnology as a more contemporary translation of “Volkskunde” in the German denomination). The different denominations not only indicate contemporary developments and local academic policies, but also convey a historical dimension of the discipline in Austria.

In the late 19th century folklorists of the German-speaking crown-countries within the Habsburg monarchy established an organisational and institutional basis for collecting and researching an “indigenous”, mostly agrarian, folk culture. This institutional foundation still exists today. These first steps still represent the foundation of most contemporary collections.

Many regional history and applied arts museums, most of them existing since the early 19th century, gradually opened up folklore sections and collections. Institutions were founded in order to document, to foster and propagate mostly the oral traditional culture (for example, today’s folk song archives). Amongst these, the “Folklore Society” (Verein für Volkskunde), founded 1894 in Vienna, and its museum, the “Austrian Museum for Folklore” (Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde), were central. Up to the present the society is the editor of the “Austrian Journal for Folklore Studies / European Ethnology” (Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde) as the central scientific publication body in Austria. A second representational institution is the “Austrian Professional Association for Folklore Studies/European Ethnology”

(Österreichischer Fachverband für Volkskunde), which was founded in 1958. Apart from representing professional interests in various contexts, this organisation hosts the Austrian Conferences for European Ethnology every third year.

The early academic history in Austria is characterised by research interests that the new discipline of “Volkskunde” shared with other faculties and which are documented in teaching activities in various fields: In Innsbruck, the Germanist and student of the Grimm Brothers Ignaz Vinzenz Zingerle had been lecturing about German mythology and archeology since 1859; in Graz Indo-Germanist Rudolf Meringer, with his material culture and linguistic approach („Words and Things“), founded the so-called “Graz School of Historic House and Building Research” (Grazer Schule der Hausforschung), and at the University of Vienna Slavist Vatroslav Jagić, Germanist and Archeologist Rudolf Much and Indologist Michael Haberlandt held lectures about a number of topics, which they announced as “ethnographical”, “ethnological”, “anthropological” and “folkloristic”. This puzzle of original disciplines and academic fields documents the complex genealogy of Austrian “Volkskunde”, within which the “ethnographic”¹ focus, as followed predominantly in Vienna, harks back to to the pluri-ethnic character of the Habsburg monarchy.

After the end of First World War, which brought about a geographically reduced Republic of Austria within the borders of the German-speaking countries of the previous empire, the discipline focused on (Germanic) national issues and respective cultural phenomena. The role of folklore research during the 3rd Reich was, as elsewhere, tragically corrupt and inglorious. Even during the first decades of the Second Republic, founded in 1945, the discipline served national purposes of national identification, until folklorists in the late 1970s eventually opened up towards a supranational orientation and towards interdisciplinary research (initially on a social scientific base, which has recently changed towards cultural perspectives). Today the discipline is characterised by the multitude of thematic fields, epistemological approaches and methods.

University departments

¹ The term of “ethnography” was then not used in a methodological sense but indicated a discipline.

The following institutional portraits outline the history, research profiles and legal contexts of the three university departments of previous academic “Volkskunde”. Coincidentally in all three universities, and after vacancies of varying periods of time, in 2009 the chairs were filled with new professors and heads of institutes.² In this process of appointing new professors the cooperation between the three university departments intensified, as has the collaboration within the two professional associations, and with the folklore and ethnographic museums. This collaboration also shows in the co-editing of the “Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde” (Timo Heimerdinger, Johanna Rolshoven and Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber together with Margot Schindler and Konrad Köstlin for the Verein für Volkskunde) and in the joint improvement of curricula and student mobility within the Bologna context. Every year colleagues from all three departments meet in order to exchange their experience and opinions, to initiate research networks and coordinate disciplinary activities.

The Department for European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Graz

At the University of Graz, students can study degree courses (Bachelor and Master) in European Ethnology at the “Institute for European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology” within the Humanities Faculty. In this specific denomination, the controversial debate of disciplinary identity since the early 1970s is still present. The German name of the department „Institut für Volkskunde und Kulturanthropologie“ refers back to the disciplinary tradition of folklore studies as well as to the theoretical renewal and international positioning within the German-speaking countries. With the name of “European Ethnology” for their reformed Bologna curriculum Graz fits into the Austrian nomenclature for the discipline. In the summer term 2013 474 students were enrolled in European Ethnology: 321 in the Bachelor degree course, 29 in the Master degree course, which started in 2009, complemented by 40 PhD students. Academic staff comprises two full professors (Johanna Rolshoven, Katharina Eisch-Angus), two associate professors (Helmut Eberhart, Burkhard Pöttler), one post-doc senior lecturer (Johann Verhovsek), as well as one post doc and one prae doc university assistant (Judith Laister, Johanna Stadlbauer). Apart from the offices and classrooms, the department is equipped with a workshop for visual anthropology, an exhibition gallery and a project room, and an institute library with more than 20,000 volumes. They also

² Timo Heimerdinger (Innsbruck), Johanna Rolshoven (Graz), Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (Vienna).

hold the „Meringer collection“, a historic collection of material objects by the linguist and material culture researcher Rudolf Meringer (1859-1931).

The “Institute for Folklore Studies” was founded in 1949, although the discipline had been taught at the University of Graz since 1924. The institute founder and leading figure was Viktor Geramb (1884-1958), who obtained his *venia legendi* (license to teach) as the first Austrian scholar to finish his habilitation qualification for Volkskunde in 1924, followed by being appointed as the first extra ordinate professor for the discipline in Austria in 1930, and attaining his chair in 1949. In 1913, Geramb had established the folklore section at the Styrian Museum Joanneum, and founded the “Styrian Heimatwerk“, a regional folklore organisation, in 1934. From 1924 to 1939 Geramb represented the discipline in Graz, until he was evicted from the university by the National Socialists, returning, however, in 1945. He served as institute director until 1955, after that his former students Hanns Koren (chair from 1955-1972) and Oskar Moser (chair from 1972-1984) took over. From 1986-2007, Editha Hörandner followed, and since 2009 Johanna Rolshoven heads the department. Other renowned personalities in Graz were the internationally known comparative folklorist Leopold Kretzenbacher (1912-2007), the folk medicine researcher Elfriede Grabner, who completed her habilitation qualification in folklore studies as the second woman in Austria, and Elisabeth Katschnig-Fasch (1947-2012) as a pioneer of urban anthropology, and of a socially engaged and politically aware cultural science.

Currently, thematic emphases are laid on the areas of urban anthropology and governmentality studies, on the anthropology of borders and difference, on mobility studies, museum studies, the research of visual culture, material culture, religion and spirituality as well as of the history of science. The methodological profile comprises subject and process-oriented research approaches, ethno-psychoanalytical reflexion and field research supervision, and semiotic based cultural analysis. The common ground for empirical, theoretical and historical research of everyday life lies in reflexive approaches and in an integral gender perspective. Based on the research emphasis on urban anthropology, a continuous cooperation of the department with colleagues from the department of architecture of the Technical University Graz has been established, managing to create a specific bridging profile as specialists for both social and architectural space. Furthermore, the department is part of the interfaculty doctorate program „Visual culture/s“ for which Johanna Rolshoven is the spokesperson.

Twice a year, the journal „Cuckoo. Notes on everyday culture“ (Kuckuck. Notizen zur Alltagskultur), founded by Elisabeth Katschnig-Fasch in 1985) is published in Graz. Central media also include the publication series „Graz contributions to European Ethnology“ (Grazer Beiträge zur Europäischen Ethnologie), based at the department and published in Marburg, Germany, by Jonas, and the online publication platforms www.iacsa.eu and www.mobileculturestudies.com. The latter will be turned into an open access journal in the near future. In autumn 2013 a new institute based publication series „Cultural Studies in Architecture“ will be launched at Jonas. Johanna Rolshoven is a member of the Ethnologia Europaea advisory board.

International cooperation relations at Graz comprise the exchange with universities in Germany, Finland, Croatia, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland. From autumn 2013, the growing network will include an Erasmus cooperation with Istanbul University. Moreover, the department co-founded together with the departments at Munich and Basel the International Doctoral Colloquium and the PhD program „Transformation in European Societies“, which has become part of a network with departments in Copenhagen, Tel Aviv, Murcia, Edinburgh and Derry. Further research activities exist with university departments in Slovenia and France as well as with non-university researchers and research groups based, amongst others, in Bremen and Stuttgart/Tübingen, in the context of ethno-psychoanalytical field research and supervision. _These international relations are continually extended based on a self-understanding of being part of critical humanities, and positioned at the interface of global transformation processes and local responsibility.

European Ethnology at Innsbruck University

In Innsbruck students can enroll on European Ethnology at a BA, MA and PhD level, and are then placed in the Department of History and European Ethnology. Due to local political distortions the BA program stagnated for some years, and only restarted in the winter of 2012. Hence the number of students is relatively low – but shows a rising tendency: In the summer term 2013, the BA course comprised 80 students, 33 students were enrolled in the MA, and 19 students in the PhD program. The curricula are partially intertwined with those of the disciplines of History and of Comparative Literature. However, a full degree in European Ethnology is offered on all levels.

In Innsbruck, European Ethnology is the only anthropological discipline and follows a concept of Cultural Studies with an interdisciplinary outlook in three regards: firstly, as a discipline which contributes to theoretical debates beyond disciplinary and institutional borders. Secondly, as an empirically and historically engaged cultural and social science. And thirdly, following the *Volkskunde* tradition of looking at local and regional culture in a self-confident way and with a post-modern, self-reflective approach. Erasmus contacts and exchanges exist with a number of German-speaking universities. However, the favourite exchange places amongst students are the English-speaking University of Yeditepe in Istanbul, the University of Venice and the University of Babeş-Bolyai at Cluj in Romania.

Academic staff at Innsbruck comprises two professors (Timo Heimerdinger und Ingo Schneider), one assistant professor with tenure track (Silke Meyer), one post-doc position (Jochen Bonz) and one Senior Lecturer (N.N.). Associated with the department is an endowed professorship for intercultural communication and risk research (Gilles Reckinger) and a number of third-party funded research positions (e.g. Michaela Rizzolli and Martina Röthl, both funded by the Austrian Academy of Science).

European Ethnology at Innsbruck looks back to a turbulent history. First attempts to institutionalise folklore studies at Innsbruck University connect to the name of Ignaz Vinzenz Zingerle (1825–1892). Following the tradition of the Brothers Grimm, he combined philological with folkloristic interests and edited several volumes of folktales. In 1923, Hermann Wopfner (1876–1963) founded the “Department for Historic Settlements and Local History in the Alps” (Institut für geschichtliche Siedelungs- und Heimatkunde der Alpenländer). While Wopfner represented a patriotic idea of Tyrolian local history, his colleague Adolf Helbok (1883–1968), from the early 1920s, went in a direction of a nationalist and racist science of Germanness. In 1929, he was appointed the directing chair of the „Atlas of German Folklore in Austria“(Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde (ADV) in Österreich).³ In 1941, having spent a few years in Germany, Helbok returned to Innsbruck and the newly created Chair for Folklore Studies (from 1939 “Institute for Folklore Studies”) at the now “German Alpine University”. In 1945 he was suspended by the interim Tyrolian government and the emeritus Wopfner, his predecessor, returned to the *Volkskunde* institute. From 1961 to 1984, Karl Ilg (1913–

³ In 1932, he took on the scientific directorship for all of the ADV. Austria related ADV-material is still held in Innsbruck.

2000) represented the discipline. In an oddly euro-centred fashion of European Ethnology, Ilg conducted fieldwork amongst Tyroleans in European colonies in Brazil, Chile and Peru.

In 1976, the department changed its name into the “Institute of Folklore Studies (European Ethnology)” (Institut für Volkskunde (Europäische Ethnologie)).

Ilg never bade „farewell to folklife“ (Abschied vom Volksleben) as it was postulated by the new generation of scholars around Hermann Bausinger in Tübingen. In his relationship to the history of the discipline of Volkskunde during National Socialism he represented a mentality that preferred to simply draw the line under that time, rehabilitating Helbok and playing his scientific concept down as “rather romantic” still in 1995. After Ilg’s retirement, Leander Petzoldt (born 1934) was offered the chair in Innsbruck where he lectured from 1985 to 2002. Petzoldt’s main interest was in international comparative narration research.

After his retirement in 2002 the position was vacant for seven years, and in this time filled by visiting professors (amongst them Martin Scharfe, Irene Götz and Johanna Rolshoven). Ingo Schneider served as director of the department during these rather difficult years, when the university no longer supported so called „small disciplines“. In 2006, the Institute for Folklore Studies/European Ethnology was merged with the History Department. Since 2009 the new department was called the “Department of History and European Ethnology” (Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften und Europäische Ethnologie). After a troublesome time when so-called small disciplines were heavily under pressure, the vacant professorship was re-advertised and in 2009 Timo Heimerdinger accepted the offer. Two years later, Ingo Schneider was promoted to a full professor, thus giving the department two professors of European Ethnology. Main areas of research and teaching in Innsbruck centre around the research of emotions, narratology, border studies, the ethnography of mining, parenting culture, food, popular culture, religion and spirituality, tourism, around economic and visual anthropology, as well as around cultural heritage theory. Two publication series are located in the context of European Ethnology in Innsbruck: the journal „bricolage“ (since 2003) and the monograph series „Innsbruck contributions to European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis“ (Innsbrucker Schriften zur Europäischen Ethnologie und Kulturanalyse).

Although the department has merged with the Institute of History, European Ethnology has up to the present been taught as a full degree course. The curricula emphasise a

practical orientation, and thematic teaching areas are, whenever possible, broadened and intensified in student research projects (lately about the topics of borders, money or disgust), and in cooperation with museums (recent exhibition projects were on topics of sound and dirt). For her student research project „Money Matters. Dealing with money as cultural and social practice“ Silke Meyer has been awarded the Innsbruck University prize for excellence in teaching (Lehreplus! 2012) and the Austrian state award for teaching excellence (ars docendi 2013) in the category „innovative teaching concepts“. Concerning research, activities at Innsbruck have been developed on and comprise an engagement in the collaborative research centre HiMAT "The History of Mining Activities in the Tyrol and adjacent areas: Impact on Environment and Human Societies") over several years. This has also led to an integral role of Innsbruck European Ethnology within the university research cluster „Cultural Encounters – Cultural Conflicts“, which is the only Arts and Humanities network of this kind in Austria. In the framework of this cluster Timo Heimerdinger and Ingo Schneider contribute to the PhD program „Figuration Counter-Culture“.

Institute for European Ethnology at the University of Vienna

The “Institute for Folklore Studies” at the University of Vienna (Institut für Volkskunde) was founded at the beginning of the 1960s, and was renamed into “Institute for European Ethnology” (Institut für Europäische Ethnologie) in 2000. For a short time during the Second World War it had a predecessor institution in the “Institute for Germanic-German Folklore Studies” (Institut für germanisch-deutsche Volkskunde), founded in 1939 by Richard Wolfram and dedicated to NS-propagandistic research and teaching activities. Wolfram also worked for the National Socialist society “Ancestral Heritage” (Ahnenerbe) and for the „Commission of Saving Cultural Assets in South Tyrol“ (Kulturkommission zur Bergung der Kulturgüter für Südtirol), established by Heinrich Himmler in 1940 in connection with the Hitler-Mussolini agreement. After the department was dissipated in 1945, and Wolfram expelled from the university, it took two decades before a new chair for folklore studies was established. Again Wolfram took on the role of director after having been re-assigned his *venia legendi* in 1954 due to Austrian denazification laws. Until his retirement in 1971/72 he continued to follow his topical (folk dance and folk custom) and theoretical (cultural continuity since Germanic

times) preferences. He occupied the position at the “Austrian Folklore Atlas” (1952-1982) in Vienna, the only grand scale folklore project in Austria.

Amongst the later professors and directors⁴ Helmut Fielhauer should be mentioned (director from 1980-1987). His social science perspective was responsible for broadening traditional Volkskunde horizons in a similar way as did the dynamics around Hermann Bausinger and his Tübingen colleagues and students since the 1960s. In 1994 Konrad Köstlin took over as chair of the department. For years Köstlin had been chairman of the “Société internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore” (SIEF), as well as of the “German Society for Folklore Studies” (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, DGV) from 1983 to 1987 and president of the Vienna Folklore Society. With Köstlin, the department intensified their international relations and changed its name into “Institute for European Ethnology” (Institut für Europäische Ethnologie).

Today, the Institute for European Ethnology with Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber as Köstlin's successor is committed to a contemporary, but historically anchored, empirical study of everyday culture. In this context the main research areas of the colleagues at Vienna are the ethnography and history of urban culture, ethnographic methodology, migration, popular culture, material culture, media culture, space, religion and spirituality, and the history of the discipline.

Academic staff consists of full professor Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (a second full professorship will be assigned in 2016), one associate professor (Klara Löffler), one assistant professor with tenure track (Bernhard Fuchs), two prae doc positions (Ana Ionescu, Lukasz Nieradzik) and two post doc positions (Alexandra Schwell, Jens Wietschorke). Funded by third parties are further research positions within an FWF-project on „Middletown Urbanity“ and an EU-project „FREE– Football Research in an Enlarged Europe“. Publications include volumes within the three publication series of the department, „Ethnography of Everyday Life“ (Ethnographie des Alltags, Böhlau publishing house), “Publications at the Institute for European Ethnology” (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Ethnologie) and „Reports from the Institute for European Ethnology” (Mitteilungen des Instituts für Europäische Ethnologie), in which accounts on staff and student research projects, conference volumes, degree dissertations and an annual review are published. Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber is co-editor of the journal „Historical Anthropology“ (Historische Anthropologie),

⁴ Károly Gaál (1975–1992), Helmut Fielhauer (1980–1987), Konrad Köstlin (1994–2008), Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (since 2009).

of the „Yearbook City Region“ (Jahrbuch StadtRegion), as well as acting as a spokesperson for the Viennese section of the editorial team of the „Journal for Cultural Sciences“ (Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften) and vice-president of the Folklore Society in Vienna.

Today the Institute for European Ethnology is part of the Faculty of History and Cultural Sciences at the University of Vienna and is involved in a number of research networks and activities. Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, for instance, is second spokesperson for the research cluster „Economy and society from historical and cultural scientific perspectives“ („Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft aus historisch-kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive), that regularly offers workshops, guest lectures and lecture series.

Since in 2008 the prae-Bologna diploma (Magister) curriculum has ceased, students can enroll on a BA course European Ethnology (6 semesters) and in a MA course European Ethnology (4 semesters). The curricula put a strong emphasis on methodological training, concentrating on historical and archive research, as well as on empirical ethnographic approaches. The MA course includes a student research project (2 semesters), which allows students to gain research expertise through a process of ‘learning by doing’, focused on various thematic areas like, for example, „summer retreats – transformations of a cultural practice“ or „tenant houses and council housing – the cultural and social history of living in Vienna“, the research results of which lead to exhibitions or other forms of publication. Since 2009 the PhD program has a new curriculum that establishes PhD dissertations to be accepted by an academic board in the course of a public presentation and defense. For the summer term 2013, 210 students were enrolled on the BA course, 51 on the MA course and 43 on the PhD course. International networks exist as Erasmus co-operations with the universities of Copenhagen, Jyväskylä, Poznan, Warsaw, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Lund, Umeå and Budapest.