Migration

Concepts for the Study of Culture

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Edited by
Doris Bachmann-Medick, Horst Carl,
Wolfgang Hallet and Ansgar Nünning

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Doris Bachmann-Medick and Jens Kugele

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1 Introduction

In the summer of 2016, the leader of the Austrian right-populist party FPÖ in Graz uploaded a video to Facebook that led to considerable public controversy. It depicted the then 36-year-old local politician lecturing male refugees about appropriate norms of behavior toward European women. While his addressees for these rules of conduct were meant to be male asylum seekers ("Sehr geehrte Herren Asylanten"), the German language video would, of course, never reach them. In reality, its populist rhetoric was aimed at Austrians, especially at his own party members with their strong anti-immigration views. Its message was that refugees did not know how to behave around European women, and that the FPÖ would uncompromisingly oppose the harassment of women by refugees. The text of the message is as follows:

> Dear (male) Asylum Seekers, In light of recent unpleasant events that we have heard of, and in light of the beginning of the bathing season, and since in our culture, thank God, women are permitted to dress more liberally, it is important to keep some rules in mind: (*a blond female manikin, in summer attire appears to the left of the picture*) Here, one does not look at women provocatively (*a sign with the word "No" in German and misspelt in Arabic appears in the upper right corner of the picture*), whistle at women provocatively, or act in any way so that they might be made to feel uncomfortable. And one certainly does not harass women in a club (*he comes closer to the puppet*), or grab them by the butt or the breasts (*he does both*). Anyone who is guilty of these offenses must know that there is a party (*an FPÖ sign appears to the left*) that will ensure that those who abuse the right of asylum will be quickly returned to where they originate (*a sign with an image of an airplane is seen)*. So, dear (male) asylum-seekers: behave yourselves. And most importantly: keep your hands off our women!!! (*a sign with this demand appears on screen*).[1]

Though purportedly aimed at protecting Austrian women from sexual harassment at the hands of a surging refugee population, the politician's misogynist

and sexist performance was so brazen and crass that he was forced to 'temporarily' remove the video the very next day from his website (perhaps under pressure from his party).[2] His response to the storm of protests was to make light of the video, suggesting that its provocative humor was intended to attract attention. But he also justified his position by arguing: "I am interested in having a discussion on the rates of assault and rape, which have risen sharply since last summer, and that we take all necessary steps to prevent a repetition of the events of Cologne and Darmstadt, as well as of numerous isolated cases."[3]

The explicitly and embarrassingly sexist language used in the video may lead one to believe that it could only be aimed at a small segment of die-hard FPÖ supporters on the political fringe. However, the bizarre video reflects a specific grammar of exclusion, which has gained ground lately even within mainstream European discourses on migration. A core characteristic of this register of exclusion is its justification in the name of liberal values. It posits a liberal gender and sexual regime common to Austrian society as a whole that (Muslim male) migrants alone presumably do not share. The use of a language of gender and sexual equality as a form of border control (Ticktin 2008) characterizes the Orientalization of the European migration discourse by thus positing a radical, cultural alterity between European host societies and (Muslim) migrants.

The argument of this chapter unfolds in two steps. We first scrutinize this recent discursive turn using an anthropological perspective, which is *not* anchored in any expertise in 'foreign cultures' that the discipline is often presumed to possess. What defines a specific socio-cultural anthropological *approach* to societal phenomena in our view is its sensitivity to context, its perspectivity and reflexivity. The first section delineates a few basic principles underlying our understanding of migration and culture. It begins with the definition of the category of a 'migrant.' Although the question of *who* is a migrant, or *what* constitutes migration, is rarely posed, we argue that the answer to these questions is neither self-evident nor inconsequential. Because it shapes the discourse on migration in academia, as it does in politics, the very idea of who is a migrant needs careful scrutiny. We then address the concept of culture, which is central to both anthropology as a discipline and to the current discourse on migration. We point out that the use of the concept of culture can have radically different and even con-

2 Colette M. Schmidt. "Die kurze Filmkarriere des Armin Sippel." *derStandard.at, Blog: Colette M. Schmidt* (3 June 2016) <https://derstandard.at/2000038145880/Die-kurze-Filmkarriere-des-Armin-Sippel> [accessed: 14 March 2018].
3 Armin Sippel FPÖ. "Sehr geehrte Herren Asylanten ..." *Youtube*, Videobeschreibung nach 5. Bearbeitung. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smwsVwplyDc> [accessed: 14 March 2018].

tradictory political implications. Finally, the first section addresses the specific pitfalls of a culturalist interpretation of migration, while exploring parallels with other discourses in which culture assumes a pivotal position.

The discussion of cultural fundamentalism, which postulates a radical cultural alterity between the (European) host society and incoming (Muslim) migrants, bridges the first and the second sections of the chapter. The latter then examines the shifts in the discourse on migration against the backdrop of European integration. We go on to analyze the increasing equation of the category of migrants with Muslims and explore the resultant Orientalism that pervades current discussions of migration and (absence of) integration. Some dilemmas of the discursive dichotomy between the European Self, posited as 'liberal,' and the Muslim Other, constructed as 'illiberal' that is used to stigmatize primarily migrants and asylum seekers from North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia are also delineated in this context. In conclusion, we outline what in our view would constitute an adequate response to this highly problematic binary opposition.

2 Conceptual Remarks

2.1 Problematizing Migration

The very problematization of migration is predicated on its becoming a political challenge for host states. In Central Europe, the earliest theoretical work on migration was first conducted at a time when the phenomenon had already become politically problematic (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973; Esser 1980). As long as workers from abroad were needed and thus welcome, neither politics nor academia recognized the need to understand various facets and implications of migration for the host society or the migrants themselves. What lent urgency to an academic understanding of migration was the need for policy prescriptions as migrant workers stayed on in host countries instead of returning home. Migrants as permanent residents came to be seen as a *problem for the state* (due to the financial burden placed on the welfare state and the presumed divided loyalties of migrants) rather than a *solution to the problem* of temporary labor shortages after 1945. That the first comprehensive study on migration in German-speaking countries was titled 'Sociology of the Problem of Foreign Workers' (*Soziologie des Fremdarbeiterproblems*) speaks volumes (see Sökefeld 2004, 11–15). One recognizes here how the category of the 'migrant' is less a neutral tool of sociological analysis, but rather belongs to the realm of socio-political semantics – what

anthropologists term an 'emic' category. Such a contextualization of an 'analytical category' like 'migrants' is useful in tracing semantic shifts over time in allegedly timeless categories. It also reveals how the seemingly neutral descriptive or analytical term is situated in a concrete socio-political discourse.

A migrant is not simply someone who moves and relocates her place of residence, even if such naive definitions sometimes appear to be self-evident. In the global North, mobility of citizens *within* a nation-state is not only regarded as unproblematic; it is, on the contrary, welcomed and promoted as characteristic of modern economic flexibility. The term 'internal migration' has largely disappeared from use in the global North, where one is encouraged to be mobile, not to migrate. The difference goes far beyond terminology. Mobility reflects the desired norm – migration, an undesirable anomaly. Mobility of comparatively affluent pensioners even within Europe does not make them migrants. Migration is thus not a special form of mobility, but rather a particular interpretation of mobility, which is linked to the political-normative discourse of nation-states and the global political hierarchy in which the respective states are embedded (Karagiannis and Glick Schiller 2006, 163). 'Migration' can thus be unrelated to the movement of people or the crossing of nation-state borders. For example, while Germans settled in Mallorca or Londoners owning homes in the south of France are not considered migrants, the so-called 'second-generation migrants' are subsumed under the category of migrants although they are born in the countries of their residence.

Citizens of powerful states in Europe or America, who have moved all over the world, never regarded themselves as migrants and were never perceived as such in their homelands either. Their relationship to their new place of residence was described by using other categories, namely traders, entrepreneurs, investors, missionaries, teachers, civil servants, bringers of civilization, development aid workers, expatriates, estate-owners, or colonizers, and explorers. In short, they were anything but migrants. Citizens of powerful Western states, irrespective of where they have found themselves, could always rely on the energetic support of their states of origin whenever their rights or interests were seen to be violated. The difference to the fundamental vulnerability and the feelings of helplessness of most migrants could not be greater. In short, a German in Uganda is by definition not a migrant, while a Ugandan in Germany is very likely to be classified as one.

The ultraconservative former Bavarian Minister of the Interior (and for a short time Bavarian Chief Minister), Günther Beckstein, notorious for his advocacy of a highly restrictive migration policy, coined a slogan in the 1990s, which epitomizes the prevalent understanding of who migrants are: "We need people who are useful for us; not those who use us" (*Wir brauchen Menschen, die uns nutzen*

und nicht die uns ausnutzen). Indeed, migrants are first and foremost *undesirable people*; people who are not welcome where they want to live. However, the demarcation between welcome/desirable and unwelcome/undesirable people is anything but a neat one, which leads to ambiguities in the public perception of who a 'migrant' is. For example, the Indian IT expert, who is sought after by *Siemens* but not necessarily by German society, is often not classified as a 'migrant.' What sets him apart from unskilled migrants are the expectations directed at him (for instance, unlike 'migrants' he may not even be expected to learn German). The term 'highly qualified migrants,' which is sometimes used for this category of foreigners, suggests their grudging acceptance as a 'necessary evil.' The controversial slogan coined in the 1990s by the German CDU politician Jürgen Rüttgers – "(We need) Children rather than Indians" (*Kinder statt Inder*) attests to ethno-nationalist preferences. In short, in Europe migration continues to be a question of how to deal with foreigners considered to be undesirable. Foreigners who are welcome are not subsumed under the category of migrants. In public discourse migrants are an unwelcome burden on the exchequer whose entry should be prevented at best or, if they are already there, whose integration, assimilation, incorporation, is by definition a problem. The centrality of these concepts within migration research reflects the traffic between academic and demotic discourses, revealing not only the political ends that much academic research on migration serves but also how politics saturate the conceptual foundations of academic discourse.

2.2 Uses of 'Culture' in Anthropology and Political Discourses

A key term in the description of the so-called 'migration problem' is 'culture.' What is striking about the use of the concept in academic and political discourse is its enduring ambiguity. It is not only reflected in a multiplicity of understandings, differing considerably in their semantic structure, and resulting in widely divergent, even contradictory, analyses and conclusions. It is also clearly borne out in a comparison of the anthropological concept of culture with those deployed in current mainstream descriptions of migration.

Although the term "has undergone a career of multilinear development" (Brightman 1995, 527) and embodies anything but a substantial consensus within anthropology, it encompassed two fundamental innovations. First, it introduced a decentralized view of the world and, thereby, a *new understanding of the world*. Whereas academic racism and evolutionism ordered human diversity hierarchically and placed white West (Europe and USA) at the pinnacle of civilization, the anthropological concept of culture initiated a kind of Copernican shift. The

concept, which affirmed both the psychic unity and diversity of mankind, radically questioned the postulated hierarchy. It also allowed Western culture to appear as one culture among many, at par with the others and not as a model for all these. The anthropological concept of culture was thus an anti-hegemonic and emancipatory tool against the superiority and civilizing mission of the Western world. Moreover, such a concept of culture also brought with it a *new understanding of man* that challenged the classical Enlightenment conception shared by liberalism (Boggs 2004). In a now classic article, Clifford Geertz noted that humans without culture would not be rational beings, but rather lacking in orientation. He concluded that "there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture" (Geertz 1973, 49).

Mainstream anthropology meanwhile is reserved towards the concept of culture at best, and, at worst, is completely dismissive. Ironically, just as 'culture' became increasingly salient in the humanities and social sciences (the 'cultural turn'), a critical stance towards the concept attained hegemonic status in anthropology (see Brightman 1995). Serious distortions in the assessment of societal reality were seen as a result of the concept. Criticism was directed at the idea and treatment of culture as territorially bounded, spatially isolated, or as an immutable, functionally integrated system. Further, the concept was seen to contribute to the Othering of the anthropological research subjects (Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; see Karagiannis and Randeria 2016).[4] The increasing prominence of the concept in various political discourses was also a cause for concern among anthropologists, for culture has become the central concept of political practice and the 'key semantic terrain' of our time (Benthall and Knight 1993, 2). For many in the discipline, however, who often feel more comfortable on the political margins, the popularization of culture caused unease. In sum: increasing scepticism towards the analytical fruitfulness of the concept of culture, on the one hand, and its parallel ascent in political discourses, on the other, led anthropologists to treat 'culture' not as an analytical term but as an emic category – that is, as one belonging to the semantics of the societies under study.[5]

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4 Due to its central conceptual importance for the discipline, the criticism of the concept of culture was always also part of a reckoning with the discipline's past. Thus the concept was often construed by its critics as the embodiment of all the errors and weaknesses of the discipline (Brightman 1995, 510). Arguably, evolutionism, structural functionalism, and area studies in the post-war era bear far more responsibility for the notorious tendency in anthropology to treat communities as territorially bounded and isolated wholes.

5 Criticisms of the anthropological concept of culture notwithstanding, the aspects it encompasses – pluralism, historicism, holism, relativism, and behavioral determinism (see Stocking 1968) – remain topical for social-scientific thinking, as is evident in recent discussions of plu-

Edward Said rightly pointed out that "the notion of a distinct culture [...] always get(s) involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'Other')" (Said 1978, 325). Thus, political discourses in which 'culture' plays a central role can be divided roughly into two groups, depending on who speaks and whose culture is referred to. In the first case, culture constitutes a central category of collective self-representation to which political demands are linked. Here, culture is considered as something positive, valuable and in need of protection. In the second set of discourses, 'culture' is employed to depict the Otherness of certain groups, especially Western representations of non-Western collectivities. The concept of culture, which carries negative connotations, is viewed here as a problem. While nationalism and multiculturalism can be assigned to the first category of discourses, to the second belong, for instance, the developmental discourse, the UN discourse on human rights and, last but not least, the discourse on migration. European discourses on multiculturalism and migration constitute a special case. The discourse on multiculturalism is primarily sustained not by migrants themselves but by the elites of host societies, who view the cultures of migrant minorities as contributing to cultural diversity. Yet this recognition implies a self-congratulatory liberalism on the part of host society. The ethnic majority celebrates itself, here, as an open and tolerant society welcoming of cultural diversity. Since multiculturalism has remained marginal to the mainstream discourse on migration, especially on the continent, and has thus had little political impact, it is not examined here.

2.3 Culturalist Representations of Migration

The status of the concept of culture within the discourse on migration has changed over time. While the culture of migrants was considered in early conceptions to be only *one* aspect of the larger problem of integration, later interpretations increasingly elevated culture to be the central issue. Despite repeated reminders of the inadequacy of culturalist interpretations of migration and/or the academic treatment of migrants as strangers/Others (Meillassoux 1980; Çağlar 1990; Sökefeld 2004), the view that the culture of migrants is the key to understanding their attitudes, behavior, and degree of integration into host societies has now attained hegemonic status. Culturalist interpretations of the migration problem

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ral modernities over the last couple of decades (Eisenstadt 2000; Gaonkar 2001; Therborn 1995, 2003; see Karagiannis and Randeria 2016, 80).

are rooted in a concept of culture that locates it in spatial terms, tends to interpret it as static and assigns it the power to determine behavior. Leaving individual migrants little agency, it reduces them to their culture and assumes them to be identical with it. It is typical for this cultural-behavioral determinism to eclipse competing interpretations based on class affiliation, education level, rural or urban background, gender etc., factors which would be used, as a rule, to explain the individual behavior of members of the host society. Migrants on the contrary are treated as a unified and homogeneous community whose members are imagined to be at the mercy of the overwhelming force of their respective 'culture.' It is not only assumed to completely shape their attitudes and conduct but they are also seen as powerless and unwilling to act against the dictates of their culture. Thus, while Euro-Americans are considered to *have* culture or cultures, migrants are imagined to be automatically and fully determined by their culture/s (Brown 2006, 150–151).

In such a culturalist understanding of migrant behavior as inevitably rooted in local customs, all explanations focus on their home societies rather than on the receiving society, regardless of how long migrant families have been living in the latter (see Schiffauer 1983). The territorial boundedness of culture suggests that migration also constitutes an *unavoidable* problem for the host society, and above all, a problem for the unity (homogeneity) and cultural integrity of the host society (Stolcke 1995, 8). Migration is perceived as a threat that could have a disintegrating effect on the host society as the sheer number of foreigners in their midst 'overwhelms the public.'[6]

As a discourse that *culturalizes* political and social problems, the discourse on migration exhibits striking similarities to culturalist interpretations in the human rights discourse supported by UN organizations, as well as within development discourse, which hold the culture of various non-western societies responsible for their development deficits or poor human rights records (see Merry 2003; Sökefeld 2004). Common to all discourses that use culture as an explanation for an issue is the attribution of undesirable practices, institutional weaknesses, or political problems to cultural norms. Interestingly, migration discourse is unique in doubly defining something as both a violation of norms of the host society

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6 The 'overwhelming of host populations' is an important rhetorical figure in political discourse on migration that assigns the vulnerable victim the blame. In the early 1990s, leading politicians of the ruling Christian Democratic Union in Germany explained away the racist riots against immigrants in German cities like Hoyerswerda and Rostock by arguing that the massive abuse of the right of asylum had "overwhelmed the local population" that felt threatened by the numbers of the newcomers (see Deutscher Bundestag. *Drucksache* 12/3162 (13 August 1992): 1–2; DISS (1992): 53, 65).

and as behavior in conformity to the norms of the migrants' own cultures. The simultaneous construction of a phenomenon as a norm violation in Europe but as standard practice in other societies is predicated on defining it as behavior *out of place*, which parallels an understanding of migrants as people *out of place*. The term 'culture crime' (*Kulturdelikt*), coined by a conservative Austrian minister of the interior about ten years ago, makes this normative contradiction explicit: it is a violation of (our) norms but acting according to (their) norms.[7]

Interestingly, the same politicians who preach the importance of individual choice and responsibility resort to cultural, collectivist arguments when migrants are involved in offences (Fernando 2013, 154). Here, culture then points to the perceived insolubility or impossibility of dealing with a problem that is deeply ingrained. Thus, the resort to culturalist interpretations increases with the degree of difficulty in addressing a problem, the responsibility for which is simply attributed to the Other. As in the case of the UN human rights discourse and the discourse on development or corruption, recourse to the culture of the Others in the migration discourse attempts to explain away one's own responsibility by shifting the blame squarely on to the Other. All these discourses relieve the global North of its share of responsibility for the emergence of, and solution to, a problem (see Merry 2003, 64; Fernando 2013, 161). Perhaps the persuasiveness of culturalist explanations is due to their self-exculpatory function. Culturalist interpretations thus not only appear highly plausible, but it is also remarkably difficult to articulate objections against them.

A radical version of this culturalism in the domain of migration is cultural fundamentalism, which has gained considerable ground since the early 1990s. It can be understood as a discourse of political exclusion, which overstates cultural difference by overemphasizing the territorial boundedness of culture, its invariability over time, and its capacity to determine behavior. Among its central premises is the fundamental incompatibility of cultures (Stolcke 1995, 4). Cultural fundamentalism, thus, subjects culture to a dual naturalization. For one, the underlying ahistorical concept of culture erases the historical processes of cultural homogenization within the space of the nation-state. The newly formed national monoculture appears instead as *natural* and normal, reflecting an eternal and desirable state of affairs. Moreover, it claims that human beings *naturally* desire to live among those with whom they share a common culture. Interactions with cultural Others are said to constitute a challenge that could prove overwhelming. Claims that cultural similarity produces primordial ties, or that

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7 "Ausländerkriminalität: Fekter will 'Kulturdelikt' einführen." *diepresse.com* (7 August 2008) <http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/404624/> [accessed: 14 March 2018].

cultural difference leads to primordial mistrust and hostility, allows xenophobia to appear natural, and can be used to justify the presumed disloyalty of migrants (Stolcke 1995, 5–8). The cultural fundamentalism of recent decades in Europe frames migrants as a principal threat to the host society due to an alleged fundamental and insoluble incompatibility of their cultures with 'ours.' The imputation of incommensurability of cultures and its very naturalness reminds one how close the attribution of such fundamental 'cultural difference' is to the old language of 'racial differences.' Verena Stolcke goes so far as to suggest that the concept of culture enables the revival of a racist discourse that does not need to resort to the now highly discredited biological race concept (Stolcke 1995, 12). Cultural fundamentalism turns the underlying premises of the anthropological culture concept on their head. Whereas within anthropology the culture concept was conceived as an emancipatory and anti-hegemonic tool, in cultural fundamentalist discourse it justifies demands for unequal political treatment and political exclusion. If the anthropological culture concept was developed to overcome academic and political racism, cultural fundamentalism promotes racism in thinly veiled form.

3 The Exclusion of Migrants as a Liberal Imperative

3.1 European Integration, 'Fortress Europe' and the Orientalization of Migration

Cultural fundamentalist descriptions of the migration problem are intertwined with changes in the imagination of the 'Self' (the 'familiar') and the 'Other' (the 'foreign'), which are accompanied by processes of inclusion and exclusion. In our view, the central categories of the discourse on culture and migration in Europe have shifted considerably as a result of the process of European integration (especially an entitlement to freedom of movement within EU member states). Within the EU, national demarcations have increasingly lost their salience, though admittedly it is not always clear who belongs to Europe. But citizens of European states, who used to be classified as foreigners and therefore as migrants, have increasingly come to be included in the category of the Self. As a result of these changes, the differences between those who were considered only a few decades ago to be problematic migrants from southern Europe and their affluent western European host societies are no longer foregrounded, but instead their similarities

to the receiving societies are being emphasized. The erstwhile southern European migrant community considered to be a problem, for instance in respect of criminality and lack of education, has now completely disappeared from the migration discourse. Nothing of significance has changed in these communities of southern European migrants except for their politico-legal status as fellow EU citizens, which has altered how they are perceived and treated. The politics of desired mobility that is now promoted within the EU has normalized these groups.[8]

The erosion of the borders of the nation-states and of national communities in Europe along with enhanced opportunities for mobility for citizens of the global North since the 1990s have fostered a view of globalization as a flattening of the world (Friedman 2005). Yet to those in the global South facing all kinds of barriers to mobility it was always evident that globalization implies a highly selective mobility, or rather a reorganization of opportunities for crossing nation-state borders, for it results in a dismantling of only some borders, in the erection of others as well as in the reordering of some demarcations (Ferguson 1999, 234–254). Indeed, the dismantling of the intra-European borders went hand in hand with the construction of Fortress Europe, with attempts to make external borders of Europe as impermeable as possible to keep away those from the global South. Europe has never been more difficult to reach for those outside EU borders. The same is true of the USA, well before the election of Trump.[9]

The formation of a new collective European Self forged a new image of migrants. Following Frank-Olaf Radtke's caustic differentiation between 'foreign' and 'all too foreign' (Radtke 1996), one could say that, as a result of the inclusion of former 'foreigners' (i.e., those from the European periphery), the focus in the migration discourse has shifted to the 'all too foreign' (i.e., to those from the global South and, above all, Muslims). This semantic shift in the category of

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8 This is, however, neither a linear nor an irreversible process. Brexit, whose advocates sought to bring about an end to free movement, could turn EU citizens in the United Kingdom once again into migrants. The financial crisis, which was quickly represented as a crisis of the European South, allowed for a revival of exclusionary discourses (one thinks of the stereotypes of 'lazy and fraudulent Greeks,' who live at the expense of 'hardworking Germans') and thus revealed the fragility and contingency of the European project. The hundreds of thousands of Greeks, who have found work in European countries (mainly in Germany) since the beginning of the financial crisis, are not classified as 'migrants' as of yet. But that too could change.

9 Thus there is something hypocritical about the European outcry against Trump's plans to erect a wall along the border with Mexico, given that the European Union has for years now been spending billions for security and surveillance designed to prevent migration from outside the EU. The outsourcing of this task to non-European states is unlikely to prove any more humane in its consequences than a wall.

migrants parallels an Orientalization of the migration discourse. This in turn has far-reaching ramifications for the cultural coding of migration, which is increasingly structured by narratives of the incommensurability of Western values with those of the rest of the world. One consequence is the radicalism of cultural fundamentalism with its premise of the incompatibility of cultures along with the Orientalization of the discourse on migration.

Today, Muslim migrants bear the brunt of the hostility to immigration in Europe. Muslims are seen to embody a dual threat for the host society. The first is clearly evinced in the saturation of migration discourse by the language of securitization. The Latvian actor and director Alvis Hermanis succinctly expressed this controversial view: "Perhaps not all refugees are terrorists, but all terrorists are refugees or their children." Hermanis decided to cancel his contract with the *Thalia* Theatre in Hamburg because the latter is committed to the support of refugees in Germany. In his view, "a simultaneous support for terrorists and for the victims of Paris is out of the question. [...] The Paris attacks show that we are at war. In every 'war' one must decide which side to support. [...] The era of political correctness is over."[10]

Muslim migrants are also perceived as a threat to European (Western) culture and civilization. The exclusionary character of references to Europe in their association with Islamophobia are made explicit in the German reactionary, populist *PEGIDA* movement ('Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident'). Ironically, some of its leaders are radical nationalists who have taken upon themselves to protect European culture, despite their full-throated criticism of, or even outright hostility to, the strengthening of European integration. Europe appears to be a mere fig leaf that thinly veils their exclusionary agenda. Just as cultural arguments replaced discredited racist arguments justifying discrimination, the reference to Europe sidesteps the German nation by providing an alibi against the charge of 'old-fashioned' nationalism. This is especially important in Germany, where nationalist language is often discredited politically on historical grounds. In short, resorting to concepts of 'culture' and 'Europe' allows such discredited and marginalized positions to gain legitimacy within public discourse, bestowing exclusionary politics with a potential for mass mobilization.

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10 "Ein Volksfeind," *Spiegel Online* (12 December 2015) <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-140390066.html> [accessed: 14 March 2018].

3.2 The Construction of Muslims as Illiberal Others

A critical analysis of the construction of Muslims as 'undesirable Others' would have to begin not with the Muslims themselves, but first and foremost with the protagonists, who exclude. In other words, in order to deconstruct the construction of Islam in dominant contemporary discourse, it is necessary to consider how the exclusionary Self is invented. Moreover, current fundamentalist depictions of the migration problem differ in one important respect from earlier culturalist descriptions in the 1980s. Not unlike the representation of culture in the UN discourse on human rights and the discourse on development aid, within the latter culture was always portrayed as a (problematic) characteristic of the Other. Culture was thus an explanation for the behaviour of foreign Others but not one's own. The argument had two aspects: a) the culture of migrant groups hinders them from adopting the universal, liberal values that prevail in western societies; b) the failure to assimilate to these ideal values has far-reaching negative consequences for the migrants themselves. In cultural fundamentalist discourses, by contrast, some liberal Western values, earlier understood to be universal, are increasingly particularized. These are now framed as fundamental elements of European culture (Uitermark, Mepschen, and Duyvendak 2014, 235). It is for this European Self that the culture of the (Muslim) Other poses a problem.

The "human right to homeland" – that is, the right to cultural familiarity and homogeneity within a demarcated space free of foreigners – formulated by Jörg Haider, the leader of the Austrian far right in the early 1990s, exemplifies this trend. One's own culture is imagined here not only as worthy of protection but also represented as threatened, even under siege. Keeping migrants away now becomes a legitimate demand in defence of one's own culture. This form of cultural protectionism, also referred to as neo-culturalism (Uitermark, Mepschen, and Duyvendak 2014; see Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Uitermark 2013), allows for another inversion of the anthropological culture concept that we have discussed briefly above. Whereas the anthropologists who coined and advocated the concept of culture imagined Western economic and cultural imperialism as a threat to the cultures of the rest of the world, the cultural fundamentalist discourse on migration reverses the relationship by placing 'Western' culture as under threat from the rest of the world.

But what constitutes this vulnerable Western culture? The following anecdote from a panel discussion in a European capital in early 2016 provides us with some clues. The panel addressed the highly-charged topic of state welfare and benefits for refugees. The intention of the organizers was to question the argument often put forward by critics of a liberal refugee policy that refugees constitute a financial burden on the state's social welfare budget. But in the absence

of critics of a liberal refugee policy on the panel or in the audience, the critical discussion failed to materialize. The consensual panel discussion was followed by assenting statements from the audience in favor of taking in refugees. The panel chair, however, felt compelled to play devil's advocate, so she began by questioning the compatibility of the values of the refugees with those of 'our own' liberal order. She posed the provocative question as to whether the refugees share 'our' opposition to anti-Semitism and to homophobia.

The focus on the treatment of Jews and homosexuals as the epitome of a particular liberal order of values is reminiscent of the argument of the anthropologist Matti Bunzl, who has argued that in Europe the treatment of both groups can be taken as indicators of entire eras and their political projects (Bunzl 2004). Bunzl reads the shift in the current hegemonic imaginations of Jewish and homosexual alterity as major signs of the postmodern construction of Europe. In his view, European integration undermines the prerequisites for the construction of national Others (such as Jews and homosexuals), or even makes them obsolete as objects of Othering by unsettling the integrity of the nation-state. Drawing especially on the rhetoric of extreme right-wing parties, whose traditional images of the Jewish enemy had been replaced by corresponding Muslim ones, Bunzl posits that in Europe today Muslims have taken the place of Jews or homosexuals as the quintessential Others (Bunzl 2005).[11]

The chairwoman's aforementioned remark, however, goes beyond the new valorization and inclusion of former Others into the postmodern, transnational European Self that Bunzl points to. What is striking here is that the valorization of the previously despised and discriminated Other is employed today for the demarcation and exclusion of Muslims. Abandoning longstanding images of foreigners and enemies in 'post-national' Europe thus seems to reinforce the earlier colonial Orientalist schism between East and West. Though the features that characterize the West and the East may have undergone a change, the dichotomy remains intact and is confirmed anew.

The chairwoman's remark reveals a crucial aspect of contemporary constructions of European-ness and its Muslim alterity. Regardless of its opposition to Islam, the core of the emergent European Self is neither Christian nor religious, but rather *secular*, *liberal*, *enlightened*, and *tolerant of differences*. So the educational courses that are envisaged as key components of new integration plans for migrants address not Christian but liberal values, such as freedom of speech,

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11 It should be noted here, however, that Bunzl's argument is based on rhetorical shifts in Austria, which perhaps have parallels in some Western European countries. Extreme right-wing parties in the European periphery are most definitely anti-Semitic and homophobic.

freedom from violence and abuse, equality of men and women, tolerance of diversity, and coexistence, etc. The increasing prominence of 'tolerance' in recent hegemonic migration discourse is anything but accidental. Wendy Brown comments on the relationship between 'tolerance' and culturalist interpretations of conflict:

> When political or civil conflict is explained as a cultural clash, whether in international or domestic politics, tolerance emerges as a key term for two reasons. The first is that some cultures are depicted as tolerant while others are not: that is, tolerance itself is culturalized insofar as it is understood to be available only to certain cultures. The second is that the culturalization of conflict makes cultural difference itself into a (if not *the*) salient site for the practice of tolerance or intolerance. The border between cultures is taken to be inherently volatile *if* those cultures are not subdued by liberalism. So tolerance, rather than, say, equality, emancipation, or power sharing, becomes a basic term in the vocabulary describing and prescribing for conflicts rendered as cultural. (Brown 2006, 150)

European nations celebrate themselves as open and free of prejudice, as societies that function in accordance with the principle 'live and let live' (laissez-faire liberalism). In these societies of allegedly free self-fulfilment of the individual, Muslims are *out of place* because Islam is construed as irreconcilable with liberal principles. The making of the liberal Self thus emerges in tandem with the construction of an illiberal Other, whom entry into Europe should be rightly denied. These discursive figures reveal the function of liberal values as a new register of exclusion. Exclusion here is not related to one's own illiberal and intolerant attitudes, but is instead held up in support of a liberal, tolerant, and progressive world-view. As noticed by Fernando, this paradoxical liberal ethic of tolerance – namely, intolerance of intolerance in the name of tolerance – reveals the inherent contradiction of liberalism, which results from the simultaneous commitment to individual autonomy on the one hand, and particular moral norms on the other (Fernando 2014a, 224–238).

3.3 Gender and Sexuality as Markers of Cultural Difference

The strategic character of the polarization between the liberal, enlightened, and tolerant culture of European-ness and the authoritarian, reactionary, and intolerant culture of the Muslim Other is especially visible in the selectivity with which the dichotomy is deployed. Although 'culture' comprises a broad spectrum of values, norms, and forms of conduct, the opposition as framed above is reduced by and large to gender, and is focused on sexuality. Whereas sexual equality and tolerance towards the sexual self-determination of the individual are con-

strued as core elements of the liberal Self, the rigid control of female sexuality, and the rejection or persecution of homosexuality are considered essential to the nature of the Other (see, among others, Ticktin 2008; Butler 2008; Fassin 2010; Scheibelhofer 2013; Fernando 2014; Uitermark, Mepschen, and Duyvendak 2014). The notorious interview script (also known as the *Gesinnungstest* or the Muslim questionnaire)[12] designed by the state of Baden-Württemberg to interrogate the attitudes of Muslims toward the German liberal order is a good example of this tendency. Twenty of the thirty questions included in the interview form concern gender and sexuality.

Questions of gender lend themselves to the drawing of strict boundaries and have, during the course of history, repeatedly proven to be potent instruments of polarization. The position of women in family life and society has long been at the center of modernization and development policies in the (semi-)periphery, and it has frequently been used as an index of a society's level of development or civilization in earlier narratives. Even critical references to culture in the global South (and the associated criticism of cultural relativism) in the UN discourse on human rights are deeply interwoven with, and at times dominated by, questions related to gender. Both the *focus on gender* and the *culturalization of gender relations* are thus characteristic of numerous discourses that offer the West the opportunity to set itself apart from the rest and to occupy the moral high ground (Strobel 1993). In short, gender has unsurprisingly developed into a key cultural terrain, on which the superiority of the West – and correspondingly the 'lamentable' state of non-western societies – is often staged. Honor killing, widow immolation, forced marriage, veiling of women, and clitoridectomy are key elements of this dramatic language, which implies the call on white men (and women) to save brown women from brown men (Spivak 1999, 284).

Over the last decade, questions of sexuality have moved sharply to the center of the public debate on gender. The fundamental opposition between the European (or Western) Self and the Muslim Other has increasingly been articulated as a *sexual clash of civilizations* (Fassin 2010; Fernando 2013, 2014a, 2014b). Eric Fassin observes, regarding the sexualization of the French Republic with respect to migration:

> More and more, [...] the French republican motto has been redefined as *sexual* liberty, but also *sexual* equality, while the third term, *fraternity*, has generally been replaced by *laïcité*. This is manifest in particular in all the documents concerning immigrants, such as the 'integration contract' they have been required by law to sign and observe since 2006. In particu-

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12 "30 Fragen für den Pass." *Zeit Online* (11 January 2010) <http://www.zeit.de/online/2006/02/gesinnungstest> [accessed: 14 March 2018].

lar, equality is now defined exclusively in terms of gender, thus leaving out race or class. In the same way, *laïcité* is primarily understood as *sexual* secularism – insofar as it pertains to women and sexuality [...]. (Fassin 2010, 513–514; see Fernando 2014b, 694)

If deviation from the liberal sexual norms now championed ironically by reactionary right wing parties establishes one's cultural alterity and is the basis for calls for exclusion, sexuality has developed into a discourse of border control and social closure (Ticktin 2008; Fassin 2010). Complete integration thereby implies the sexual normalization of migrants (Fernando 2014a, 2014b), which has been expressed succinctly by Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in his warning to migrants "to be normal or leave."[13] Interestingly, the remarkably persuasive force of this liberal register of exclusion has led to shifts in politically conservative discourse as well. Since migrants are increasingly being identified with conservative values, European conservatives, who earlier were neither advocates of women's emancipation or gay rights, are beginning to adopt progressive values, or at least a progressive rhetoric on these issues (see Uitermark, Mepschen, and Duyvendak 2014, 242). These developments have lead to a shift in some of the long-standing fault lines within European host societies. Coupling the demand for exclusion to a commitment to liberal values enables committed Europeans to deploy the same arguments as xenophobic nationalists. Similarly, the critique of the veil enables an unholy alliance between blatant sexists and women's rights advocates.

Secular women from Muslim migrant families and high-profile gay men often figure prominently in exclusionary discourses that stage a confrontation between the sexual progressiveness of the West and the sexual backwardness of Islam, since women and gay men are often regarded as particularly vulnerable to Islamic, patriarchal aggression.[14] The British journalist, former editor of *Breitbart News*, and founder of the *Gays for Trump* movement, Milo Yiannopoulos, points to the danger Islam poses for the achievements of the feminist and gay movement:

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13 "Dutch prime minister warned migrants to 'be normal or be gone,' as he fends off populist Geert Wilders in a bitter election fight," *The Telegraph* (23 January 2017) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/23/dutch-prime-minister-warns-migrants-normal-gone-fends-populist/> [accessed: 14 April 2018].

14 The Maghreb-French feminist organization *Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, which enjoys remarkable political support in France, constitutes a prominent example of the depiction of the Islamic threat from the perspective of women who are at risk and thus require protection (Fernando 2013). The Dutch populist politician Pim Fortuyn, by contrast, was one of the first openly gay politicians to successfully combine traditional left-wing themes like secularism, gender equality, and the emancipation of gays with a neoliberal, populist, and anti-migration agenda (Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Uitermark 2013).

I'm not talking about Islamists. I'm not talking about terrorists. I'm not talking about radical Islam. I'm talking about mainstream Muslim culture. [...] There are eleven Muslim countries in which I could be killed for being a homosexual. The state penalty is death. One hundred million people live in countries where the penalty for homosexuality is death. This is not radical Islam. This is mainstream Muslim society. Look what's happening in Sweden. Look what's happening anywhere in Germany, anywhere there are large influxes of a Muslim population. Things don't end well for women and gays. The left has got to make a decision. Either they want female emancipation and it wants gay rights or it wants Islam. It's got to pick [...].[15]

The stereotypical juxtaposition of orders of gender and sexuality is enabled by the interpretation of politically dominant positions that are historically contingent, and yet rendered as universally applicable and unalterable values of entire religious collectives. Such an Orientalist view ignores, for one, the diversity of ideas and practices among migrants, as well as among members of the host society,[16] and conceals, for another, the similarities and overlaps between the ideas and practices within the receiving society and the migrants. While, for example, the criticisms of sexual freedom and same-sex marriage in conservative Western and religious circles are interpreted as political issues, similar positions, when advocated by Muslims, are framed as cultural problems (Fernando 2014a, 254). The notion of the fundamental incompatibility of two opposing cultures can only be established by virtue of double standards. Furthermore, the dramatization of cultural differences is exaggerated by means of the juxtaposition of a few 'significant' symbols, which function as the symbolic embodiment of entire cultural orders. The concentration on the veiling of women in Islam is characteristic for this discursive strategy. It reveals a parallel with the preoccupation with clitoridectomy (or harmful 'traditional' practices) in the discourse on human rights as well as criticisms of multiculturalism and cultural relativism, whereby reference is repeatedly made to such practices as a way to stigmatize entire cultures.

That the practice in question is often controversial within the societies where it is practiced is concealed by its elevation to the status of a definitive cultural

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15 "Milo: 'The Left Has Got to Choose between Gay Rights or Islam.'" *Breitbart Tech* (14 June 2016), <http://www.breitbart.com/milo/2016/06/14/milo-orlando-left-got-choose-gay-rights-islam/> [accessed 14 March 2018].

16 There is good reason to doubt whether liberal attitudes towards sexual self-determination, claimed as common to all Europeans are shared by a majority of them. As late as 2001, after Social Democrats in Berlin cheered their new party-chief Klaus Wowereit's public acknowledgement of his homosexuality, 80 % of German men responded in a representative survey "that they would react negatively or very negatively if they themselves had a lesbian or gay child" (Klauda 2008, 125).

characteristic. Customs that protect women from violence (among which veiling is sometimes counted, see Merry 2003, 64) are often similarly overlooked. It is not decisive for the selection and elevation of symbols around which to organize exclusionary discourses that they constitute real or acute problems that required redress, but rather that they are well suited to the dramatization of radical cultural alterity between new migrants and host societies. There is a major public debate on the legal status of the burka in Germany, for example, despite it being a very marginal phenomenon in the German public sphere.

Characteristic of the strategic deployment of these cultural symbols is the resort to tendentious interpretations, which are enabled by their consistent de-contextualization. Anachronisms abound. Former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls juxtaposed the naked bosom of Marianne with the much-discussed burka, which meanwhile has been elevated in Europe to the core symbol of disrespect for, and oppression of, women in the world of the illiberal Other and is banned in countless public spaces. He expressed, with pathos: "Marianne's breasts are naked because she is feeding the people; she is not covered up because she is free! That is the republic!" (Böhmer 2016). The blatant sexism of reducing women to their role as nourishers of children aside, the interpretation of nakedness as freedom in Valls' pathetic comparison is striking. One must ask: would such an interpretation be possible were it not for the purpose of demarcation from the Islamic world?

The tendency to culturalize masks the fact that many of these allegedly 'significant' and culturally 'typical' practices are, as a rule, recent developments. The extended use of the headscarf among Muslim migrants in Europe is a development of only the last decades. In the 1980s, the headscarf was common only among older women. Not long ago, European-ness decorated itself in very different feathers. Although citizens in European metropolises today celebrate their openly gay mayors and politicians (and in so doing, celebrate their own liberalism), and express their postmodern commitment to diversity through the introduction of gay and lesbian figures in traffic lights, it is regularly forgotten that this liberal attitude toward sexual self-determination is decidedly new. The decriminalization of homosexuality (let alone its equality with heterosexuality) did not take place, even in some of the core countries of the European West, until very late in the 20th century. For centuries, the West claimed masculinity for itself and identified the Orient as synonymous with sexual deviance and promiscuity, effeminate men and disreputable women. Now that the West has discovered sexual self-determination for itself – and, similar to the criticism of anti-Semitism, not long ago – the East is accused of heteronormativity and the rigid disciplining of female sexuality. This retention of the boundary by means of a complete inversion of values and norms reveals that the celebratory tolerance afforded sexual

self-determination has less to do with an eternal liberal Western culture and more with Orientalizing exclusionary practices.

4 Conclusion: Entanglements in Past and Present

This chapter addresses an old issue, namely the Orientalist juxtaposition of the superior West and the inferior East, albeit one which has been reconfigured anew. Despite the sweeping social changes in the 19th and 20th centuries, this binary discursive structure remains robust. The ambivalent use of the concept of culture in the public discourse is left unchanged, depending on who is talking about whose culture. Nevertheless, the discursive means with which traditional boundaries and oppositions are reaffirmed is novel. The close coupling of the discourse on migration with Orientalism, i.e. the figuration of the 'Undesirable' as the quintessential 'Other,' is also recent. This configuration is essential to cultural fundamentalism. The cultural fundamentalist view of the incompatibility of the culture of migrants with that of the host society is premised on the assumption of radical alterity characteristic of Orientalism. The focus on gender and sexuality is the main symptom of the Orientalization of migration discourse. Although gender relations also colored the earlier juxtaposition of the West and East, the centrality of gender and sexuality to the organization of this dichotomy is new.

An anthropological perspective could help uncover the historical contingency of cultural constructions. It would reveal that the world is not a natural mosaic of distinct, mutually isolated cultures distributed across space, more or less (in-)compatible with one another. Rather, cultural alterity is constructed and reconstructed time and again. Cultural differences are not only products of particular historical circumstances and open to continuous transformation. But also, as postcolonial perspectives remind us, this history is a *shared history*, one that both unites and separates Europe from its former colonies (Randeria 1999). Cultural fundamentalism derives its persuasiveness by eclipsing, or even denying, this mutual imbrication of the European Self and the non-European Other. Radical alterity, and the political demand for exclusion predicated on such difference, become untenable from a perspective that foregrounds past and present entanglements (Conrad, Randeria, and Römhild 2013).

Global power relations, capitalist expansion, economic inequality, war, mass mobility, the exchange of ideas, images, goods, and technology, are inherent to the construction of what today is often perceived as 'culture.' Cultural processes/transformations within the Islamic world, as well as the hegemonic representations of Islam, are decisively shaped by the position of the Islamic world in the

global system. Whatever is considered by culturalist discourses to be backward and typical of a culture is a product of a complex dialogue, unfolding under conditions of global politico-economic inequality. Whereas culturalists and cultural fundamentalists in the West argue for the radical alterity of Islam and its incompatibility with the Western values by drawing on stereotypes of Islamic treatment of women, a focus on their entangled histories may reveal the colonial and bourgeois (i.e. Western) origins of this female ideal that today is regarded as 'genuinely' Islamic (Abu-Lughod 1998). Similarly, cultural fundamentalist interpretations of fundamental homophobia in Islam become less convincing once we recognize that a genuinely Western concept of pathological sexual identities was adopted in the Islamic world as a result of Western expansion. The fact that Muslim elites are essentially more strongly homophobic than non-elites is, therefore, not a function of their distance from the West, but rather a consequence of Western influence (Klauda 2008).

Rather than expecting anthropology to provide explanations of cultural particularity, it could be used instead to interrogate difference as a natural, ahistorical given. Cultural differences would then be seen as consequences of specific socio-political processes and not as their causes. Thus, the decisive anthropological question is not what effects cultural differences produce, but rather how particular differences come about, and how they come to be regarded as 'cultural' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Bunzl 2004a). With regard to migration, the key questions could be: what are the processes involved in the construction of a person or group as 'migrant'? And how are such constructions made and deployed?

Our chapter has attempted to address these very questions. By pointing to 'undesirability' as the essential defining characteristic of migrants, exclusion was identified as the central structuring principle of the discourse on migration. The Orientalization of migration, i.e. the framing of migrants as the quintessential Other and as a danger to the liberal European Self, is the most recent effort to justify such exclusion. This construction of radical cultural alterities goes hand in hand with the establishment of the border regime known as Fortress Europe. It remains to be seen whether such a move will prove to be more effective. But European democracies will be poorer because of these practices of exclusion.

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