TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF EUROPE
OUTLINE FOR A TEACHING AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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The argument for an Anthropology of Europe
In pursuing an Anthropology of Europe we ought to start by making a critical appraisal of anthropology’s¹ legacy in its relatively short history as an identifiable academic discipline. This is the most necessary if one considers its rather peculiar and controversial origins, which makes problematic coming to terms with this discipline’s tradition. Given the plurality and diversity of schools, area studies, methodologies and theory (the astonishing fragmentation of the discipline, to put it more crudely), a lot of ‘translating’ between different idioms has to be carried out before we attain a true convergence in this multifarious tradition².

Notwithstanding the more fundamental and broader definitions of the discipline’s object, sociocultural anthropology has come to be identified with the study of the ‘Other’, of tribal illiterate (or taken as such) societies, faraway and exotic peoples and cultures (peoples generally under Western colonial rule or subordination). This distinctive feature contributed to its appeal and prestige in the peak of its academic trajectory; at the same time, it inevitably put it under ideological and deontological suspicion. Be it as it were, in describing, comparing, interpreting and theorizing all these peripheral, ‘off the track’ societies and cultures, anthropology has indeed amassed impressive scholarly assets, with many remarkable contributions to theory and methodology, namely within the broad denominations of the humanities and the social sciences.

Yet, some ambiguities and liabilities in this scholarly legacy might exist as well. I am thinking for instance in the still debatable status of sociocultural anthropology as a science, whose proposals and theories are subject to the general rules of the scientific method (certainly, as it applies to the humanities and to the social sciences). Or let us take the concept of culture, at the heart of the discipline, which might be rendered useless when defined in too general, abstract or simplistic terms. And as much could be said and debated in regard to other key concepts in anthropology such as: fieldwork, understood as an individual-isolated undertaking, a highly idiosyncratic loose strategy basically lacking any effective and reliable methodological checks; participant observation, with its epistemologically dubious contours; community studies, which are to be carried out by applying unattainable holistic approaches to unlikely bounded

¹ Anthropology is taken here in its more general and open sense (in etymological meaning of the word). Yet, I will be referring more specifically to the areas of this broad discipline which are alternatively labeled: Cultural Anthropology, Social Anthropology, Ethnology or Ethnography.
² An interesting discussion in this respect is outlined in Bendix (2003). Obviously, the discussion could be extended to account for the plurality within other areas and fields of Anthropology besides European Ethnology.
social entities; or ethnography when taken as a substitute of historical or archaeological records in studying a-historical societies (that is, theorized as such) 3.

Another important issue for debate and re-appraisal, although of a very different character, is the issue of anthropology’s associations with the colonial enterprise. There is no doubt that colonialism is a significant factor and a relevant context to account for the establishment of anthropology as an academic discipline, and its changing needs and development over the 19th and 20th centuries; to a greater extent in what applies to schools or ‘traditions’ in countries with vast colonial possessions. Yet, this is not to mean that anthropology as a whole or individual anthropologists indiscriminately are accomplices to colonialism!4. In any case, it is a disturbing (and in some specific cases dark) side of anthropology’s ‘heritage’, which nonetheless has to be faced, and its implications of all kinds (political, ethical or deontological, epistemological and theoretical) sorted out and openly and honestly discussed. To sum up, in appraising anthropology’s academic and intellectual legacy, we ought to proceed further in the critical assessment of the discipline’s development and practice, in rigorous historical context. An exacting and critical re-writing of the history of anthropology needs to be carried out. And more importantly, we should not avoid drawing the fundamental consequences that derive from this process of critical assessment for anthropology’s theory, method, or its very object, for that matter! 5.

The arguments given above are indirectly proven significant if we look at the evolution of anthropology during the second half of the 20th century, when colonial empires one by one crumbled, the old colonies becoming fiercely independent countries in Africa, in Asia and elsewhere. The process of de-colonization brought about uncertainties about what anthropology’s aim and object was. Moreover, its interest for government and the administration became unclear, thus endangering the flow of resources for research in the long run, and putting a threat to the discipline’s academic standing. More immediately, because of the dubious reputation of anthropology among the new political and administrative elites in the independent countries emerging from

3 It is not my intention here and now to tackle any of these issues in a comprehensive way, for they are vast and well debated issues all of them (see, for example, the references to the introductory essay by Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) later in this paper). I am only trying to identify the fundamental themes on which a thorough critical appraisal of Anthropology’s academic legacy should be based. Moreover, these themes are already on the floor, they are part of a continuous debate going on in professional circles, more noticeably on its fringes. For instance, see the essays by Gerald Mars and Keith Hart in Anthropology Today for February 2004. In what concerns the evaluation of the scholarly legacy of other traditions within ‘general Anthropology’, see the remarkable book by Regina Bendix (1997).

4 Some meaningful parallelisms might be drawn in regard to the development of national schools or ‘traditions’ of Ethnology or Ethnography, and the processes of nation and state building, that in some cases implied the intellectual legitimation of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, in Central and Eastern Europe or elsewhere. This makes me recall Ernest Renan’s (1882) quite perceptive reflections -in his widely known essay Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?- warning against the implication or manipulation of Ethnography (“a science of rare interest, which I greatly appreciate… (And) since I want it free, I would like it without political applications…” in ideological or partisan struggles –namely, the conflict between France and Germany over Alsace and Lorraine. In what concerns the Volkskunde tradition, the ethnologist and historian Hermann Bausinger has carried out such a thorough critical assessment, all along his extensive and innovative work; see, as reference, his rightly acclaimed book (here in its 1993 translation into French): Volkskunde ou l’ethnologie allemande.

5 See what Keith Hart (2004) has to say straightforwardly about this: “The anti-colonial revolution pulled the rug out from under our feet… How then can we cling to a method of ‘fieldwork-based ethnography’ as if it were unrelated to the end of empire and to the nationalist century that made the whole approach plausible?… In pretending to retain the founder’s methods while abandoning their traditional object of enquiry and keeping quiet about where theoretical ideas come from, contemporary anthropologists cannot hope to renew their discipline on a sound basis.”
the ex-colonies, de-colonization put an end to the ‘ethnographic preserves’ where anthropologists had traditionally carried out their fieldwork raids in a reasonably safe and favorable environment. Thus began the search for alternative ‘ethnographic Edens’ in the peripheries of the old metropolises where most of the professional anthropologists were educated and came from. A new bundle of exotic worlds and cultures upon which a basically unmodified arsenal of concepts, theories, methods and research tools developed in the study of tribal or ‘primitive’ societies could be applied; so that the production of ethnography and of theorizing anthropology could go on.

The ‘Mediterranean’ was one of those rather exotic worlds ‘discovered’ and ‘imagined’ by a number of British and American anthropologists, where fieldwork in the ‘classical’ (Malinowskian) manner could pleasantly be carried out. At the same time or before other anthropologists had turned their gaze closer to home, taking an interest in the study of their ‘natives’ or of their rural/ folk societies. Thus, in the United States autochthonous Indian populations were an object of interest for anthropology since its establishment as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century. There are also the diverse national schools of ethnology or ethnography, which were paying predominant attention to the study of their own folk societies at home. A less ‘exoticizing’ interest in European societies and cultures, more broadly sociological in outlook, is demonstrated by some American anthropologists, like Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball (1940) from Harvard. Consequently, new rich veins of ethnography became available for anthropology to tape on. To what extent these turns (somewhat forced, at least in some cases) in the practice of anthropology contributed to enrich the discipline’s empirical and theoretical patrimony and its range of interests; or whether it is judged as knowledge second in rank to ‘true’ anthropology (arbitrarily defined by the study of the far Other!) is a matter for debate and evaluation.

In what concerns specifically the Anthropology of the Mediterranean school or area of ethnographic practice sharp criticism has been voiced against its implicit and explicit mystifications, its many methodological and epistemological faux pas and failures. Yet, we cannot go here into any detail regarding the critical evaluation of the successes and failures of either ethnologists or Mediterraneanists in transferring the theories and methods of anthropology to the study of societies and cultures in rural areas or otherwise in continental Europe or the circum-Mediterranean area. This is an imposing task that would require coordinating the efforts of many scholars with knowledge on the ethnography of these broad regions.

**Precedents for an Anthropology of Europe**

From 1930 to 1935 a team of ‘young social scientists’ –“most of them students in social anthropology at Harvard University”-- under the supervision of W. Lloyd Warner, carried out fieldwork on a New England urban community “following three years’ study of the aborigines of North Australia” (Warner 1963: preface; cf. Warner 1937). This research project, which was continued for about twenty years (if we count the time until the last volume in the series was published in 1959), yielded as its most celebrated

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6 One of the sharpest criticisms on the ‘Mediterraneanists’ is in Josep R. Llobera (1990). The book includes essays where other important issues for Anthropology are put under radical critical scrutiny. The debate about the contributions and failures of ‘Mediterraneanist’ Anthropology goes on to this day, with professional anthropologists ‘native’ to the region joining the debate on the value of the label ‘Mediterranean culture’; see, for instance, the volume edited by D. Albera; A. Blok; Ch. Bromberger (2001). Criticism of the ahistorical character of one of the pioneer contributions to the ethnography of ‘Mediterranean’ societies (that by J. Pitt-Rivers, 1954) is already in Serrán-Pagán (1980).
results the five volumes of the *Yankee City* series, a model and paradigm for social science research in the United States and elsewhere.

“The research on Yankee City… studied a contemporary American community to learn about the nature of its social system… and to identify and interpret the collective symbolic life of the city… (The main purpose was) to use the community (a New England’s city) as a convenient microcosm for field study, thus to gain new knowledge about the larger American social life, and with similar studies of other societies, to use the results comparatively. The end achieved, it was hoped, might be a more detached view of our own culture”. Aims which recall, except that this is not a tribal or ‘primitive’ society, those of anthropology at large. This is not by mere chance, for the people involved in the project had graduated in social anthropology and had previously carried out fieldwork research on a perfectly canonical anthropological subject: the ‘primitive’ peoples of Australia. Moreover: “The same general approach to the gathering of evidence and its analysis was used as for the earlier field study of the Australian aborigines.” However, a quick look at the contents of the five volumes in the series “quickly reveals that the theories, points of view, and technique of sociology and social psychology were very much a part of the study”. And the author-editor goes on to name some of the ‘social scientists’ who have influenced their work the most: A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, R.E. Lowie, B. Malinowski, G. Mead, E. Durkheim, G. Simmel, J. Piaget. (Warner 1963: introduction).

How come that scholars such as W. Lloyd Warner and his associates in the *Yankee City* series (and there are others who could be named) have been completely left out from the annals of anthropology and are not even cited in the history of anthropology textbooks? This is a mystery to me, although I suspect that this part of anthropology’s legitimate patrimony has been erased from the ‘official’ and ‘authorized’ histories of anthropological thought just by the arbitrary (implicit, yet strongly pervading) application of an amputated concept of anthropology as the study of the (tribal, primitive) *Other*, primarily based on ‘fieldwork ethnography’! Below we will hear a bit more on this in the straightforward words of W. Lloyd Warner himself.

At about the same time that the *Yankee City* project was launched, two other social anthropologists from Harvard University, who had just graduated from the Department of Anthropology, were sent to Ireland as part of a multidisciplinary team (that included physical anthropologists and archaeologists as well) to carry out ‘a study of Ireland’ under the general supervision of E. A. Hooton. W. Lloyd Warner was in charge of the social anthropology part of the team, and thus became director and supervisor of Arensberg’s and Kimball’s fieldwork. In his role as director W. Lloyd Warner carried out a preliminary survey of Irish counties and chose County Clare as the area where to carry out ethnographic fieldwork. He returned a year later with Conrad M. Arensberg and helped him settle there as fieldworker, later on joined by his colleague Solon T. Kimball. The work of the two social anthropologists yielded one of the pioneer anthropological monographs on a European case, *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940).

Well, I cannot resist citing Lloyd Warner in some detail once more, in explaining the ends and means regarding this project in rural Ireland:

Until very recently the study of modern social life has been neglected by social anthropologists… Their failure to study our own society has not been mere oversight, and not entirely because the subject attracted young men who found in it an excuse for faraway adventure among exotic peoples… Anthropology has been defined by many ethnologists as ‘the science of man and his works’. Yet
they themselves have stubbornly refused to accept the validity of this
definition… Ethnologists have separated modern and primitive society and
declared our own social life to be outside the ‘science of man’. This limitation is
the result… in part, of academic conservatism and timidity. But probably the
most important influence is the uselessness of the methods and theories of the
older ethnologists… for the investigation of modern life.

And further on he argues:

Once a comparative sociology seems possible, the next step is to include modern
society in the scheme of classification… Obviously, if we are to study properly
variations in human behavior and arrive at adequate generalizations, it is
necessary to examine the most complex groups along with the simplest ones.
Inevitably, we must bring our own society into such a study… It is plain that, if
we are to develop a full-grown comparative social science of man, the
communities of modern life must be included among those studied by
anthropologists. If this means that the subject matter of ethnology is the same as
that of sociology, so much the better. Anthropologists may then make effective
use of sociological methods, sociologists of anthropological ones.” (Warner
1940: preface).

W. Lloyd Warner readily identified the issues and sorts out the apparent paradoxes in
the imperative for anthropology to deal with ‘modern’ societies and cultures (Europe’s
and America’s) as well; and frankly points to its inescapable rapprochement to other
social sciences (namely, to sociology) in such a pursuit. This saves me the effort to
work out a starting argument in favour of an Anthropology of Europe. That we have to
replicate arguments already outlined sixty years ago is worrying, though. It is clear
indication that proposals such as those by Lloyd Warner did not have a substantive and
permanent effect in the development of mainstream, dominant, anthropology’s
academic circles. For reasons not yet sufficiently clarified and explained, anthropology
continued to be identified by its most salient and differentiating trait or hallmark: that of
studying the simplest, most ‘primitive’ and far away peoples and cultures, applying
methodologies and research strategies that are implicitly or explicitly judged to be
specific and unique to the discipline. Thus in practice ignoring or side-tracking the
many anthropologists who were dedicating their careers to studying societies and
cultures that for whatever (arbitrary and unspoken) reason did not fit in the
aforementioned category. Moreover, they were open to dialogue and mutual borrowing
with neighbouring disciplines, less keen in upholding certain well established dogmas
or marks of authenticity in their theoretical and methodological choices.

Consequently, in turning our gaze to Europe, there are some challenges to face
and a few battles to fight. Some of these challenges come from the ranks of ‘hegemonic’
sociocultural anthropology. Others from neighbouring disciplines compete for
legitimacy and privilege in the study of Europe’s ‘socio-cultural entities’ and themes.
In what regards the ‘inner’ battles, we should frankly and forthrightly affirm the
legitimacy of placing European societies right in the centre of anthropology’s pursuits.
And this just by returning to the original and etymological depiction of the discipline as
‘the study of man’, in all its diverse manifestations, restricted neither in time nor in
space. Moreover, by following Lloyd Warner and others in defining anthropology as
‘the science of man’ and/or of society, we vindicate its scientific character and
ambition. This is an assertion that will bring anthropology back to the centre stage and
public view, to an arena of competition with other social sciences for its status as a scientific pursuit. That is, a discipline that subjects its theories and findings to prove and falsification, by applying the general and basic rules of the scientific method; a discipline that aims at explanation and not just description or interpretation. We should not elude these challenges, out of ‘academic conservatism and timidity’ maybe, or by retreating to safer and more comfortable ‘postmodernist’ grounds.

Conrad Arensberg’s early proposals

In accordance with his professors and supervisors theoretical and methodological stand, Conrad Arensberg had set out to study European societies and cultures by primarily applying the methods and tools of social anthropology. In telling contrast with European colleagues themselves, it was self evident to him that Europe was a well defined historical and cultural entity; and that it deserved and demanded to be studied by social anthropology. He is obviously espousing his supervisor’s conviction that ‘modern’ Euro-American society is a fully legitimate object of study for what was otherwise conceived as ‘the science of man/society’. Moreover, he takes anthropology, ethnology, ethnography as interchangeable labels for a unified discipline that ultimately has the whole World as its arena for intellectual pursuits. C.M. Arensberg is also in favour of interdisciplinary approaches (they are particularly needed when it comes to the study of ‘Old World cultures’). Consequently, he underlines the need to bring together the different traditions and schools in anthropology. Next step is to further anthropology’s collaboration with other disciplines within the broad divisions of the humanities and the Social Sciences.

In setting out to promote an anthropology of Europe Arensberg considers that the whole legacy of anthropology is relevant and has to be taken into account. In the same way his professor W. Lloyd Warner had affirmed the relevance of previous research experience among the Australian aborigines for the project they were about to start in an urban New England community. Therefore, the studies of tribal and more ‘simple’ societies in Africa, village and ‘community’ studies in China, India or Mesoamerica, are equally useful and relevant when embarking in the anthropological study of European societies. However, there are specificities to the European context that have to be taken into account. There is, for instance, the need to take account of the contrasting ‘high’ and ‘folk’ cultures; a theme already observed and theorized in anthropological work carried out in Mesoamerica or Asia. And there is a whole set of other issues and topics specific to Europe’s ‘history and civilization’.

In what regards the methodology to be applied in the study of Europe’s cultures, Arensberg turns to the classical stands in anthropology. Hence, he reclaims comparison and generalization as fundamental strategies in anthropological practice. A fully fledged European ethnography is seen as just one step in the pursuit of a ‘truly comparative world ethnography’, built as ‘a worldwide spectrum of comparisons and taxonomies’. We might be tempted to judge these proposals as just another show of American ingenuity. Well yes, it is a paragon of intellectual ingenuity and ambition, at its best.

Arensberg also points out to the need to reconsider the old concept of ‘culture area’. As he sees it, it refers to a mixed combination of ‘culture traits’ which have to be taken at different levels of abstraction, and that are ‘hierarchically’ ordered. Congruently with this revision of the concept, he proposes a trial formulation of

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7 See Arensberg (1963).
European regions and ‘culture areas’. Incidentally, this brings about a novelty of taking whole regions as the object or framework of enquiry (it builds on the strategy of regional surveys, well cherished in the beginnings of academic anthropology). Already in his ‘study of Ireland’ project, fieldwork was not restricted to a village, but it encompassed the whole of County Clare. This constitutes a noticeable departure from the gradually generalized practice of circumscribing fieldwork to a village, quarter, hamlet or small local community.

Last but not least, what is the ‘object’ of ethnographic pursuit that Arensberg puts forward in this 1963 essay? Who are his ‘subjects’ for study, the Europeans? Well, they are a part of ‘the Old World Cultures’, ‘Peoples of the Book’, of the ‘Plow and Mixed Agriculture’, consumers of bread, meat and milk (as against consumers of corn, of rice, of fish and vegetables). The influence of ecological and evolutionary anthropology’s notions on Arensberg’s proposals is obvious. Material and ecological factors are important in explaining the diversity of culture, taken in its more comprehensive sense. Moreover, in his overall theoretical approach ethnography converges with geography (although he does not state this explicitly), history and archaeology in aiming at a comprehensive explanation of human and culture diversity. Here we get anthropology at its most ambitious outlook!

Goddard, Llobera and Shore’s (1994) late proposals

In the long introductory essay to their edited volume The Anthropology of Europe. Identities and Boundaries in Conflict, V. Goddard, C.Shore and J. Llobera make an appraisal of anthropological studies carried out in Europe along the second half of the 20th century. These are, by their own admission, works mostly published in English and written by British, Dutch-Scandinavian and North American social and cultural anthropologists. In reviewing this literature the authors proceed to a critical appraisal of fundamental themes in anthropological theory and method, like for instance the concepts and practice of ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, community studies, etc. In their critique the authors build on a previous sharply critical account by one of them (Llobera 1990) of the so called Anthropology of the Mediterranean school or line of practice. Llobera’s criticism of the work of this loosely defined category of anthropologists is based on what is judged as ahistorical approaches, the lack of justification of the concept Mediterranean itself, the exoticization and ruralization of ‘Mediterranean culture’, an anachronic view of the region and its peoples, the yielding of unwarranted generalizations sustained by a sociology based on clichés and stereotypes. Such epistemological, theoretical and methodological shortcomings should be avoided in heading towards an Anthropology of Europe.

The authors claim that European anthropology until quite recently remained marginal to the mainstream and in relation to the dominant circles in the discipline. Because doing fieldwork in Europe, studying the anthropologists’ own societies of

8 Just as a matter for inventory, here they are: The Atlantic Fringe, Peoples of the Plain (the plains of central Europe), The Mediterranean lands, The Alpine climax (circum-alpine regions). A taxonomy of regions that manifestly leaves out history. In contrast, Christian Giordano works out and discusses a regionalization of Europe based precisely in history (and changing social dynamics and economic flows), which leads to characterizing Europe as a ‘system of historical regions’, rather than an homogeneous or closed entity in any substantive sense (in the paper presented at the ESF workshop held in Litomyšl, 1-5 September 2004). Regional Systems Theory, as geographers have developed it, might be another firm anchor for the analysis of socio-cultural processes in space (nodal regions), to work out and implement a more rigorous concept to substitute that of ‘culture area’, and to explain what an entity such as Europe is in fact.
origin, was judged somehow not ‘real anthropology’. True anthropology should deal (implicitly or explicitly stated) with the study of remote Third World peoples in Africa or elsewhere (Goddard, Llobera and Shore 1990). This goes counter to developments in the field of Ethnology, where already in the 1960s there was a strong move towards the unification of the diverse ‘ethnologies’ and national traditions, precisely under the new label and concept of European Ethnology. This endeavour was “meant to close this gap (between the disciplines of Folklore or Ethnography as dealing with ‘one’s own people’; and Ethnology as the study of ‘non-European ‘primitive’ cultures) and to make Europe as a whole the object of ethnological research” (Roth 1996).

Let us return to Goddard, Llobera and Shore’s whom I am rather closely paraphrasing. An increasing number of anthropological studies were done in Europe in the 1970’s (by the social and cultural anthropologists whose work is being evaluated). Yet, they are almost exclusively of the ‘community studies’ type, carried out in small and remote villages in the peripheries of Europe, villages treated as if they were self-contained societies. The outcome of these studies was monographs of an ‘holistic’ character, pervaded by structural-functionalist overtones. But there were of course a few exceptions from this predominant trend (Wolf’s, Boissevain’s work, for instance). In any case, the scope of European anthropology was gradually broadened and became more sophisticated. Yet, it was still all part of an Anthropology in Europe, rather than an Anthropology of Europe. Europe itself was a largely uncharted and undefined territory in what anthropology was concerned.

The 1980’s bring about a sharp fragmentation of sociocultural anthropology. This fragmentation shows in theory, in methodology, and in many other respects: areas of study, topics of interest, general approaches, fashions in writing and intellectual discourse. It is a matter for serious intellectual and professional concern that has to be honestly and thoroughly addressed. In the meantime, anthropology is definitively brought home, to the countries of origin of professional anthropologists. And here it cannot ignore the presence of other disciplines, themes, sources of evidence. This unavoidably leads its practitioners to seek dialogue and collaboration with disciplines like historiography, sociology, social psychology, political science, historical demography.

Moreover, the EEC grows into the European Union, and progressively becomes a strong political and institutional presence. These developments lead to the rediscovery of Europe as a socially relevant and scholarly legitimate object of study, namely for social and cultural anthropology (Boissevain and Friedl 1975; Grillo 1980). Also, as J. Boissevain argues in the introductory essay to the book just cited, these circumstances compel us to pay attention to “national and supra-national processes”, and to realize “that anthropology is the study of all mankind, not just of primitives” (Boissevain 1975). But it is not just Europe as a historical entity, or a philosophical or literary concept, that should draw the attention of anthropologists. We have got to take account of the new realities and processes occurring in the European and World scene. These include the sui generis emerging entity we have come to name the EU, and the full range of institutions and political developments linked to it. A field of study and range of themes convincingly explored since then by anthropologists such as Marc Abélès (1992, 1996) and Cris Shore (2000); readily echoed by others, either from the field of sociocultural anthropology (Bellier and Wilson 2000), or the quarters of European Ethnology (Niedermüller and Stoklund 2001).

To conclude this section of the paper, let us sum up Goddard, Llobera and Shore’s view. An Anthropology of Europe requires as a firm anchor: a) to state what defines and characterizes the entity ‘Europe’; b) to justify ‘Europe’ as a meaningful
object of study. Moreover, the authors stand for an Anthropology of Europe that relies on the open collaboration with kin disciplines (mostly other Social Sciences). In other words they champion an anthropology that tackles all socially relevant issues in the context of contemporary Europe. An anthropology that acknowledges the plurality and diversity of this sui generis entity (Europe) and its constituent parts, and pays attention to analyzing the facts of its interdependence with the global world.

The ESF project  Towards an Anthropology of Europe

What does the project Towards an Anthropology of Europe add to the precedents recalled above? We take on the challenges identified by Boissevain (1975), by Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994), and the other anthropologists who have called for an Anthropology of Europe. Calls that implicitly or explicitly point out to the need of a renewed discipline: in its theory, its methods, in the themes that it chooses to broach, its intellectual discourse. Effectively, we propose not just to bring anthropology to apply its conventional array of methods and research tools to the study of a number of specific cultures and peoples in Europe; but to aim towards an Anthropology of Europe. That is, an anthropology that takes Europe as its object of enquiry, that displays a more open outlook, that engages without reserve with the world around. It will have to be a theoretically challenging and methodologically innovative anthropology that has ambition to contribute to the understanding and explanation of socially relevant issues. An anthropology that does not shy to come down to the agora, and remain in full public view, competing and collaborating with other disciplines in trying to account for whatever issues and problems are at hand.

This broad ‘project’ is related to long standing pursuits by a network of universities collaborating in organizing student and teacher exchanges under Erasmus/Socrates, intensive programmes and research seminars, and conference workshops. However, the forwarding of a proposal to the ESF to hold an ‘exploratory workshop’ is more directly linked to efforts by a number of colleagues teaching in Departments of Anthropology around Europe to set up a coordinated course and concurrent research agenda on The Anthropology of Europe. The overall aim of such pursuits being “to open avenues for a more comprehensive and systematic account of the anthropological, ethnological and cognate literature produced about local, regional and national societies in Europe; which would make possible (along the way) to work out a coordinated long-term research programme” as it is stated in the original proposal.

We are aware that the ethnographic/ethnological literature produced about European societies is vast, widely dispersed and very diverse in character. Moreover, much of it is written originally in languages other than the ones which are dominant in the profession (English, French, German), and published in less known journals and by local-regional printing houses. Consequently, it is a literature not readily available, and thus seldom quoted in scholarly publications or taken into account for teaching or research done in and around the profession’s dominant circles. Accounting for this diverse and dispersed literature is a formidable undertaking, a task not within the reach of a small group of researchers and lecturers. Yet, what we aim at in this project is not at filling the whole of the void, but at making a significant contribution in the right direction.

It is clear to us that the great effort and material cost involved in planning and carrying out such a project has to find additional justification in pursuing objectives complementary to those explicitly stated, and in reaching benefits beyond
that of devising a common course and research agenda. A project such as this ought to be seen as one step in the more ambitious pursuit of developing common curricula among European universities. Moreover, the setting up of the proposed common course --based on a comprehensive and thoroughly comparative ethnography-- will bring about substantial benefits at the empirical, methodological and theoretical levels. A collaborative endeavour such as this, involving a good number of universities and professional instances across Europe, will certainly contribute to enrich teaching and research at the local level. It will also be of benefit to the discipline of anthropology as a whole, certainly to its development in Europe. On a more general level, a coordinated course and research program dedicated to the ethnography-ethnology of Europe will contribute significantly to a more rigorous appraisal of what Europe is from a cultural perspective.

Yet, are European societies and cultures proper objects of anthropological enquiry? Should Europe be construed as a ‘culture area’ or just a relevant area/field of study? What has anthropology got to offer specifically, as in contrast to other disciplines within the Social Sciences or the Humanities, in accounting for European issues? Within our own disciplinary quarters, we have got to sort out a number of dilemmas or simply make some choices in this respect. For instance, in the unavoidable return to more domestic grounds, should European Ethnology and European Anthropology be construed and developed as independent disciplines with differing subject matters and methodologies, or should they be viewed as just two different labels that identify a common object? Previous to this, of course, we ought to agree whether ethnology and anthropology are converging or differing academic and intellectual pursuits overall.

My personal inclination is to think that it would make no sense setting newly redrawn borders and frontlines between such evidently germane disciplines, precisely when disciplinary and departmental borders are ostensibly crumbling all around! On the contrary, we should make the greatest efforts to bridge whatever theoretical or methodological differences remain between these disciplines or traditions, in an open and sincere debate that aims to the heart of the matter (hence, that avoids sterile nominalist controversies), and that is free of intellectual arrogance or prejudice. The whole of the ESF project is based on these theoretical, epistemological and deontological assumptions. The choices made set some formidable tasks ahead of us, both in teaching and in research. Consequently, only close cooperation between the greatest possible number of colleagues and universities would place these tasks within reach.

Let’s briefly return to the issue of whether Europe is an adequate object for anthropological enquiry. In my view, there is sufficient ground for Anthropology of Europe, rather than merely going on with the regular business of doing Anthropology in Europe. However, an Anthropology of Europe ought to be an open-ended project.

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9 There are opinions that differ in this respect. Chris Hann (2003, reprinted in this volume) for instance argues that Eurasia, defined as the entire landmass between the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic Oceans, is a more appropriate entity for anthropological analysis than Europe is. In his view, recognition of the unity of Eurasia has been hindered by Eurocentric preoccupations with civilizational differences; and also by the dominant research methods of modern anthropology. This plea to privilege Eurasia as a framework of reference in anthropological pursuits is not an argument - Hann argues - to stop doing anthropology in the space we call Europe; nor is it an argument against widening the comparative framework beyond Eurasia whenever this is warranted by the question at hand. However, he strongly warns that anthropologists have a duty to ensure that their work cannot easily be hijacked by those seeking to instrumentalize ‘civilizational’ boundaries. A danger that he perceives affects the project to build an Anthropology of Europe. Moreover, he thinks the project is misguided because Europe does not
Open to disciplines such as history, sociology or political science. Yet, to take Europe as a framework of reference (a step up the scale of systematic comparison) does not mean we conceive of it as a perfectly bounded or closed entity, a well defined 'culture area’ of sorts. Rather than a unitary entity, we should conceive of Europe as a meaningful context, an arena --recalling Ortega y Gasset (1966) words in this regard. Moreover, as Christian Giordano (2004) puts it, Europe is a Subsystem within the World System --recalling Wallerstein’s notions. As a matter of fact, in defining Europe as a meaningful region or arena for scholarly enquiry, a system or subsystem, we should draw on historical geographical fact; and rely on regional systems theory, rather than on the loose concept of 'culture area’ as it is generally used in anthropology.

From experience in teaching a course on the Anthropology of Europe - which I will refer to in more detail in the following section - I would state my preference for a thematic, problem-oriented approach, rather than a canonical disciplinary approach narrowly limited to anthropology’s concerns. For we are interested in analysing and learning about specific themes and topics. To this end we freely draw on the relevant literature available, be it anthropological or ethnological, or placed within the bounds of akin disciplines. Last but not least, an Anthropology of Europe -as Arensberg had already noted back in 1963- is to be taken as just one step in the pursuit of a global, world anthropology, that has as its ultimate and legitimizing end to account for human unity and diversity overall.

**Teaching the Anthropology of Europe**

I will now comment on my experience in devising and teaching two courses, one offered to graduate students, the other to doctoral students. Both courses take Europe as reference; and it is from the work done in preparing these courses that many of the ideas behind the project outlined in previous sections spring. This gives me the opportunity to underline that, in my view, teaching and research grow together. I conceive of them as intimately related, not segregated or mutually estranged pursuits. Besides, both should be guided by comparative and interdisciplinary approaches, and preferably be problem or issue oriented.

The doctoral course: *Nationalisms and the Building of Europe (cultures, identities, ideologies)* has been offered to students at Universidad Complutense since 1987. It is based on research work done during the academic year 1993-94 at the European University Institute at Florence--as a member of the European Forum on: “Regional and National Identities in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries” -- in the inspiring and engaging company of historians, sociologists and political scientists. The graduate course *An Anthropology of Europe* has been on offer as an ‘optional subject’ since 2002, and it is open to students from other areas besides social anthropology; as well as to Erasmus-Socrates and other visiting students. This course relates to efforts made in the framework of the Erasmus-Socrates Programme, to set up a teaching scheme in collaboration with a network of Universities in Europe, going back to 1992.

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I possess a sufficient degree of cultural unity. All the important social, demographic, technological, and religious variables which anthropologists can document in Europe are variants of a repertoire found within the broader unity of Eurasia.

I strongly disagree with Chris Hann’s views and (pre-)conceptions of Europe, his not sufficiently grounded dismissal of Europe as a meaningful framework of reference in research and teaching, his unfounded value judgements or judgement of intentions regarding the position of Europeanists.

Moreover, for his arguments to stand on their feet, he should be able to provide a rigorous account of what makes Eurasia a more appropriate and meaningful framework for anthropological enquiry, rather than Europe, or Euro-America, for that matter.
These efforts yielded as a result numerous student and teacher exchanges, and some intensive programmes\textsuperscript{10}.

It was judged as a ‘natural step’ forward from these collaborative endeavours to consider options available to us to consolidate academic exchanges and take them up to the graduate level, thus allowing for cooperation in providing local support for students who wanted to carry out fieldwork overseas: i.e. Italian students in Spain, Spanish students in Italy. These last initiatives were not completely fulfilled because of the lack of financial support (two consecutive applications to the ‘European Modules’ scheme failed); and also, it must be said, due to the lack of commitment at the local/departmental level. Later on we learnt about the European Science Foundation (ESF), and we got support for organising an ‘exploratory workshop’. It allowed us to reclaim the idea to set up a common course on “The Anthropology of Europe”; adding up a research dimension to it.

Why am I providing such a detailed academic ‘genealogy’ to these initiatives? Well, because it gives the academic background and rationale for the setting up of the two courses I am commenting on. But also because it allows me to stress a few issues that lay the ‘foundations’ on which these initiatives stand:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] In all these initiatives Europe is the framework of reference; moreover, in many of them it is the ‘core’ theme.
  \item[b)] Teaching and research are shown to be intimately linked. They are not segregated or alienated from each other; on the contrary, they inspire and support each other.
  \item[c)] Both teaching and research here are problem or issue oriented. A thematic approach is privileged, rather than a narrowly disciplinary one.
  \item[d)] In effect, all these pursuits (either in research or in teaching) have a visible cross-disciplinary character; they are inherently interdisciplinary and comparative.
\end{itemize}

**The Anthropology of Europe: outline for a teaching course**

The course on the theme that I am teaching at Complutense since 2002 somehow incorporates all the features pointed to above. It has, on the other hand, an experimental character. It is an experiment in cross-disciplinarity and a thorough application of a comparative approach. This clearly shows in the syllabus outlined below, that guides the course taught at Complutense; and which also was offered as an issue for debate in the proposal written for the ESF’s exploratory workshop. The syllabus might also be taken as a broad list of topics eventually to be included in an agenda of collaborative research. Potential partners in the project were invited to discuss, in the progress of the Litomyšl workshop and beyond, the design of the proposed inter-university course, the teaching materials to be developed in collaboration, and the coordinated long term research programme that might be carried out in parallel.

\textsuperscript{10} The most remarkable of the intensive programmes have taken place in the framework of ESTER (European Graduate School for Training in Economic and Social Historical Research). A very innovative and engaging initiative, addressed to doctoral students in the process of writing their dissertation, from a pan-European network of Universities. The ESTER set up was launched and supported all through by the N.W. Posthumus Institute in the Netherlands, itself a network of Dutch Universities and their Departments of Social and Economic History; and it eventually got financial support from the Erasmus/Socrates Programme as well.
AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF EUROPE
Proposal for a teaching course and coordinated research agenda

i  The concept of Europe in literary, ethnographic and historical sources.

ii  Natural and human landscapes: geography and culture in the making of Europe.

iii Social and economic structures. Broad demographic patterns.

iv Domestic arrangements and family systems across Europe.

v  Contrasting value systems, customs and mutual stereotypes.

vi National identities as resulting from different historical experience (large or small nations).

vii Variability and unity in political cultures.

viii Religious traditions. Great religions of Europe and their local manifestations.

ix  Regional folklore and popular traditions across cultural boundaries.

x  Ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in Europe.

xi  The new Europe in the making: the cultural dimension.

There exists a full syllabus available to students who take the course, including a long list of bibliographic references. By the outline offered here, though, it should be clear that this is not a ‘canonical’ anthropology or ethnology course (like, for instance, the one I teach on *Etnología Regional* --Spain in the context of the North-Western Mediterranean). It is not based exclusively, not even predominantly, on literature of an anthropological and ethnological character. Rather, it is fully open to authors and literature dealing with Europe drawn from several other disciplines. Also, it is definitively an essay into construing an Anthropology of Europe. That is, an effort to contribute a cultural understanding and interpretation of this historic and emergent entity we name ‘Europe’.

*A sample of teaching materials used in the course “An Anthropology of Europe” taught at Universidad Complutense:*

The course begins with an inroad into the historical and philosophical development of the concept of Europe:
WHAT IS EUROPE?

a) A myth, just a name or metaphor
   -- like in the Greek myth

b) A concept, an idea, an estate of mind, a metaphysical reality
   -- Idealistic and voluntaristic perspectives: E. Renan, J. Benda

c) A geographical reality, the outcome of geological process
   -- A continent or subcontinent, the mere physical condition

d) The outcome of historical and political process
   -- From the Roman Empire, to the Sacro Imperio, to the EU!

e) A commercial-economic arrangement (customs union) or political project
   (institutional union)

f) A cultural reality, an arena for intellectual exchange and interaction
   -- Europe as the creation of intellectuals, artists, a cosmopolitan elite
   (Ortega y Gasset 1966).

g) A projection towards the future, a dream or fantasy of uncertain realization
   (Europe’s ‘founding fathers’)

h) The necessary counterpoint to the USA, or to world Islam

i) A refuge from the uncertainties of globalization
   -- Europe as an identity-refuge, a mere parenthesis in the unstoppable
   process of globalization.

And we end up the course by, again openly-freely (that is, free of any particular
disciplinary straightjacket), discussing about fundamental issues in contemporary
debates in Europe, and the corresponding emergent realities, drawing on a wide range of
literature available, including some very pertinent books written by anthropologists, of
course:

A) The building of Europe:

- The challenges of globalization and world interdependence.

- The challenges of migratory and population movements.

- The challenge of Europe’s great internal diversity: social, cultural, and economic.

- The ballast of the old nation-states, the ‘big shots’ (the ‘great powers’), in the process
  of building the new Europe.
B) What do we aim at?:

- Just the project of an E.E.C. enlarged?
- A club of nation-states
- A supranational state
- A European federation or confederation
- Europe as a *sui generis* entity or polity
  (an open-ended constitutional formula)
  
  - What sense does it make to think of Europe as a unified entity (also in cultural terms)? Does the attainment of a ‘European identity’ really matters?
  - The need to change our way of thinking, based on old fashioned assumptions, and get rid of anachronic notions and *clichés*.

C) An open debate about the future of Europe:

Will Europe survive? (Skalník 2000)

*versus*

Europe as an *idée-force* (Llobera 2001)

*versus*

The undeniable reality of Europe. Europe as a ‘cosmopolitan society’

(Beck 1999, & the daily *El País* 2003)

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Some remarks by way of conclusion

This is an open-ended, experimental project. Therefore it is a project very much in the making. There is still a lot of work to do. Its full development relies critically on the advancement of collaborative work between a wide network of Europeanists, anthropologists and ethnologists more specifically. Moreover, the theoretical, epistemological, and methodological foundations on which the project is to be based are subject to discussion and critical thorough evaluation. The terms of debate and/or agreement are not set at all.

In the course I am teaching at Universidad Complutense de Madrid I have chosen to take a thematic approach (rather than a ‘canonical’ disciplinary approach). We are interested in learning and reflecting about specific themes and topics, and to this end we draw on the relevant literature available, preferably anthropological or ethnological, but not just this. Besides, it is not always available for specific topics. Europe is the object of study. However, it is not taken at all as a bounded entity (how could it be?), neither as a closed well defined ‘culture area’ or anything like that. Moreover, as Conrad Arensberg (1963) and Eric Wolf (1982) noted long ago, an ‘Anthropology of Europe’ should be taken as just one step in the pursuit of a global,
‘World Anthropology’, which has as its ultimate aim to account for human unity and diversity overall, with no spatial or temporal bounds. This last is surely the more fundamental challenge for our discipline to meet, a ‘promise’ yet unfulfilled. In a sense, it still stands as its distinguishing trait, its defining feature in contrast to other social sciences or the humanities.

References:

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