

## **SIEF Board – short biographies and statements**

### **Marie Sandberg (President – second term)**

Marie Sandberg is an associate professor at the Section for Ethnology, Saxo Institute, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen (UCPH). Since 2019 she is the Director of the Centre for Advanced Migration Studies (AMIS), an interdisciplinary research centre for migration research in the humanities, which offers an international Master of Arts in advanced migration studies. During 2013–2020 Marie Sandberg served as joint editor-in-chief of *Ethnologia Europaea – Journal of European Ethnology*, first with co-editor Regina Bendix, University of Göttingen, and later with co-editor Monique Scheer, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen. During Marie's period of editorship, *Ethnologia Europaea* entered an agreement of cooperation with SIEF from 2014 onwards, which secured the journal's status as one of SIEF's flagship journals. Further, the editors enabled a smooth transition of the journal into gold open access (from 2019 onwards) with the new publisher Open Library of Humanities.

Marie received her PhD from the University of Copenhagen in 2009 with the thesis: *The Present-absent border. Everyday Europeanisation processes in a twin-town on the German-Polish border*. She was a visiting fellow at the Center for Migration Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada, 2021, and a visiting fellow in 2012 at Nijmegen Centre for Border Studies, Radboud University. In 2020 Marie was a Senior Fellow (online) at the ISEK-Labor Populäre Kulturen, University of Zürich.

In 2017–2020 she evaluated and assessed research applications for The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond), Sweden. As a vice-chair of the Nordic Migration Research network (2013–2014), co-organiser of the Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conference in Copenhagen and Lund in 2015, current member of the IMISCOE board of directors, and SIEF board member since 2018, she is actively engaged in Nordic and international research fields of ethnology and migration studies.

Marie has authored and co-authored several research publications in international renowned peer-reviewed journals (such as *Identities*, *Nordic Journal for Migration Research*, *Ethnologia Europaea*), co-edited volumes, special issues and book series, and is frequently invited for international keynote speeches and guest lectures. She has an extensive experience as principal investigator and project manager of research projects funded by research foundations such as the Danish Research Council for Independent Research and the VELUX Foundations.

A general theme in Marie's work is the study of Europe as a historically burdened and paradoxical ground for creating unity along with diversity. This point of tension is scrutinized through the lens of Europe's interchangeable borders, from the EU's free mobility regime to ongoing rebordering processes. Her main research themes are everyday Europeanisation, border and migration practices, and the European border regime. Whether it concerns her research on everyday border crossing practices at the German-Polish border (Sandberg 2009, 2012, 2016), Polish construction workers commuting to Denmark (Sandberg 2012, 2015, 2016),

civil society mobilisations and refugee relief networks in Northern European locales (Sandberg 2020), or refugees' digital practices when navigating the European border regime (Sandberg and Mollerup forthcoming), they all serve as ethnographic entrances into studying the ongoing reconfigurations of the European border regime. Her research on everyday Europeanisation 'from below' is deeply entangled with structural and political framings 'from above'. As a result, research on such everyday Europeanisation practices in ethnographic detail can contribute with new understandings of the continuous reconfigurations of Europe and what 'European' can mean.

Since 2003 Marie has taught courses in European ethnology programmes, from BA to Masters and PhD levels, as well as the international Master of Arts in applied cultural analysis and advanced migration studies, UCPH. Together with Tine Damsholt, UCPH, Marie conducted a research-based project 2016–2018 on the many ways to integrate research in university teaching (Damsholt and Sandberg 2018). During the past 10 years Marie has led fieldwork-based courses on Cultural Processes in Europe, resulting in several field excursions and cooperations between ethnology colleagues from Warsaw, Hamburg, Murcia, Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, and Zagreb, to name a few. As the Erasmus coordinator for ethnology at UCPH, she is committed to the internationalisation of higher education.

*Serving the SIEF board since 2018, I feel humble by the prospect of continuing SIEF's proud mission of furthering the best possible platform for our vibrant scholarly society. I had my very first SIEF experience as a PhD student in 2008 at the congress in Londonderry, and since then I have participated at SIEF congresses as a regular attendee, as well as a panel organizer and conference mentor, impressed by the still growing number of conference participants.*

*The work of SIEF is continuously challenged by the global situation and the still ongoing, devastating war in Ukraine. Like the pandemic the war has forced us to rethink the formats for our international cooperation, exchange, and networking. In a war-torn Europe that seems to be on a non-stop upward curve of renationalising, rebordering and a more ethnocentric Europe, I believe it is increasingly more important to cooperate, exchange ideas and conduct research across borders.*

*In my view, SIEF is the perfect hub to stimulate an international society of ethnologists and folklore scholars and encourage international scholarly exchange, not least among our early career colleagues. If the general assembly chooses to elect me for the second period as president, I will continue being active in making SIEF a still more visible, creative, transparent, diverse and inclusive environment for scholars to engage and thrive.*

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### **Sophie Elpers (Executive Vice President - fifth term)**

Sophie Elpers is a researcher at the Meertens Institute (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) in Amsterdam and professor "Intangible Cultural Heritage and Ethnology" at the

University of Antwerp, Belgium. She also teaches critical heritage and museum studies at the University of Bonn, Germany.

Trained as a European Ethnologist in Bonn and Amsterdam, she received her PhD at the University of Amsterdam in 2014 with a thesis on the reconstruction of farmhouses in the Netherlands after the Second World War. Sophie worked as a research fellow at the Netherlands Open Air Museum/Institute for Historical Farms Research in Arnhem (NL), before she became a staff member of the Meertens Institute in 2007. The institute has hosted SIEF's secretariat for more than two decennia.

Sophie's current research focuses on intangible cultural heritage politics and dynamics, contemporary everyday life in rural areas, with an emphasis on negotiations about ruralities and urbanities, and vernacular architecture.

Between 2016 and 2022 Sophie also belonged to the scientific staff of the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage/Dutch Open Air Museum, where she conducted research about the relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Due to her expertise in cultural heritage, she is a member of the Expert Committee of the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Germany and a member of the Administrative Board of the 'Germanisches Nationalmuseum'. She is senior editor of SIEF's open access journal Cultural Analysis and one of the editors of Volkskunde, the Dutch/Flemish journal on ethnology and folklore research. She has authored and co-authored books and articles and co-edited volumes and special issues on vernacular architecture, national symbols, intangible cultural heritage and museums.

Since 2015 Sophie acts as Executive Vice President of SIEF.

*Ever since my first SIEF congress in Derry (2008) I have felt greatly inspired by SIEF's activities in building bridges between international colleagues, exchanging ideas and knowledge, and motivating close collaboration. SIEF is a vibrant organization. It has recently developed quite a few initiatives to move collaboration, education and publications forward, and to promote academic freedom as well as the critical role of scholarship in society.*

*Together with the other Board members, I want to carry on this successful process. As Executive Vice President, I like to act as an intermediary between the Board and the members of SIEF and to engage in lively communication under the umbrella of SIEF. The newsletter and the website are important instruments for this communication. Both provide the members with information about the society, its disciplines and members. The website also presents SIEF's beautiful video material, such as the films 'What is European Ethnology?' and 'What do Ethnologists do?', and the 'Ethnological Sensations' and 'Ethnological Mattering's' series. I support the working groups as well as the scientific and local committees of the congresses in their work to keep SIEF as vital as it is. SIEF's secretariat has an overview of the financial affairs and of other administrative issues – supported by NomadIT.*

## **Thomas A. McKean, UK (Vice-President – second term)**

Thomas McKean is director of the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, a centre dedicated to integrating research with social and community engagement. He holds a PhD in Ethnology and Celtic Studies from the University of Edinburgh and an AB from Dartmouth College in the US. He joined the Elphinstone in 1996, first as Research Fellow, then Lecturer, and now Director, having previously founded the North East Folklore Archive in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

My work focuses on the individual at the intersection of creativity, knowledge, and practice, focusing on how these elements contribute to cultural confidence, and help create social resilience in troubled economic and political times. By studying, celebrating, and promoting the local, we at the Institute aim to help strengthen community in a region of Scotland often undermined, or overlooked, historically.

Much of our work is done through community partnerships with local, regional, and national stakeholders, including schools, societies, community organizers, which inevitably leads us along new and interesting pathways, disclosing connections previously unseen, illuminating our complex multiform culture in approachable, grounded ways. By working collaboratively, from the bottom up, we look at how culture works around here, from experiences of immigrants in Aberdeen to stories from people who have had supernatural encounters, from those who safeguard minority languages and skills to those with complex emerging religious practices.

I am interested in how this intangible cultural heritage can be re-used and re-purposed to support social and economic regeneration, an idea I have explored through young people's community boatbuilding projects. Our task is to show how successful initiatives engage with young people and invigorate cultural assets, both tangible and intangible, for contemporary needs. Objects are thus injected back into the development cycle, becoming relevant, living culture once again.

How traditions – ways of making sense of the world around us – are made, modified, and communicated tell us a great deal about what it means to be human. One of the great privileges of working in these fields is that we get to meet the most extraordinary ordinary people, from farmers to oil workers, from cleaners to peers, from musicians to fishermen, from oil wives to singers. We are fortunate, then, to be in the business of stories, verbal and visual, and our disciplines provide insights needed now more than ever as we seek to understand the social and political changes sweeping across the world, broad movements that derive, of course, from individual experience.

As Director of the Institute, I always have an eye on integrating our triple remit of research, teaching, and Public Engagement, and I would hope to bring a similar balance to SIEF, using my time on the board to promote the perspective and support that our disciplines can give to communities, activists, and policy makers. In addition, as an organizer of international conferences, I would contribute to the continued development of the SIEF congress as the key academic showcase for Ethnology and Folklore.

In addition to my post at the Elphinstone, I am a former president of the Kommission für Volksdichtung, a member of the SIEF Ritual Year WG, and serve as Convener of the American Folklore Society British Folk Studies Section, as well as on the advisory boards of *Studia Ethnologica Pragensia* and Lexington Books' 'Studies in Folklore and Ethnology'.

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### **Hande Birkalan-Gedik (first term)**

Hande Birkalan-Gedik is a professor of Folklore, Anthropology, and Gender Studies since 2010. Besides SIEF, she is a member of EASA, SIEF- HACA Liaison to EASA's HOAN, where she is also a co-convener; Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and the former president of the Anthropology Association, Turkey (2010-2014). She is a member of the international scientific committee of the Border Crossing Network (Greece).

A native of Istanbul, Hande Birkalan-Gedik graduated from Bosphorus University. Later, she studied at Indiana University–Bloomington and graduated with a Ph.D. from the Folklore Institute, also specializing in Anthropology and Gender Studies in 1999. She holds a dual MA from the Department of Central Eurasian Studies/Turkish Studies Program and the Folklore Institute. She remembers being identified by one of her colleagues, humorously and appreciatively as a “rare breed,” in fact, because of her training and expertise in both folklore and anthropology.

After her studies in the US, Hande Birkalan-Gedik returned to Turkey, and taught at the Anthropology Department at Yeditepe University-Istanbul, where she served as a faculty member in anthropology and a founding member of the graduate studies there. She was a member of the UNESCO Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Turkey (2014-2016).

She was a visiting professor at Indiana University-Bloomington (2001-2002), a visiting fellow at Cornelia Goethe Zentrum (Frankfurt am Main, 2014-2015) with her project on masculinity and fatherhood among men from Turkey. She was appointed as the Aigner Roller Professor for Gender Studies at Karl-Franzens-Universität (Graz, 2016), and became a Fellow at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (Münster, 2018), and held a visiting position at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Jagiellonian University (Krakow, 2019). In the past few years, she has developed an interest in digitally mediated cultural artifacts and digital narration as well as in the Anthropocene-and more-than-human-worlds—a field, which she connects to folktales in particular and narrative in general.

She focuses on transnational disciplinary histories of folklore and anthropology, biographies of entangled scholars and emigree scholars, and women folklorists. She recently completed a DFG-Project entitled “Traveling Theories: Die Geschichte der Anthropologie in der Türkei (1850-1950)” at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Kulturanthropologie und Europäische Ethnologie. She is a seasoned fieldworker and interested in people's everyday lives. Her field “locations” are multi-cited and deals with the Islamic cultures in migratory contexts in Turkey and Germany. She has conducted research with Kurdish-Alevi female migrants in Istanbul, Alevi female minstrels in southeastern Turkey, and Alevi women looking at their leadership in Alevi organizations in Germany. In 2020 and 2022, she established working groups on Islam and Alevism at the European Academy of Religion (EUARE). Narrative, place, and gender, emotions and affect (with a focus on women's expressive culture and feminist ethnography) form

another strand of her research. She has worked at several archives in France, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, and the USA.

Her published works include books, edited books, journal special issues, book chapters, articles, reviews, and obituaries of folklorists and ethnologists. As referee, she was invited to assess for TUBITAK, ERC, and DFG and has contributed to various international journals. She serves as an advisory board member and field editor of *folklor/edebiyat*. Her on the editorial board duties include *Cultural Analysis*, *Suomen antropologi: The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Association*, *Lares. Quadrimestrale di studi demoetnoantropologici*.

*“If elected, I will build on my position as a SIEF Board member and as liaison for SIEF – HACA. I would like to explore new terrains. I am very keen on increasing SIEF’s visibility among our sister networks such as EASA and the American Folklore Society. I should also stress that I am very much interested in developing a SIEF series on Folklore and Ethnology in Europe with prestigious Anglophone publishers.”*

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### **Čarna Brković (second term)**

Čarna Brković (born in 1985): As a political anthropologist, I have been trained in different disciplinary and national academic traditions. I graduated from the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the University of Belgrade, Serbia; I obtained my PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Manchester, UK; today I am Professor for Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology at the University of Mainz, Germany. I won the SIEF Young Scholar Prize in 2015, founded and co-convoked EASA’s Anthropology of Humanitarianism Network (2018-2020), and served as the Secretary of the AAA’s Society for the Anthropology of Europe.

That I crossed the boundaries of both disciplinary and national academic traditions more than once has given me an opportunity to become familiar with the breadth and diversity of anthropological approaches to Europe. As a Board Member, I see SIEF as a platform to approach European ethnologies from a comparative and transnational perspective, and to cultivate connections and intellectual exchanges across linguistic boundaries and academic hierarchies, including the East/West divide. I aim to support SIEF’s work on making our disciplines more diverse and open for scholars with various backgrounds and career trajectories, paying special attention to revisiting the implicit identitarian expectations of our disciplines, as well as improving the position of precarious academic labour in Europe today.

## **Evangelos Karamanes (second term)**

Born in 1967, Evangelos Karamanes studied Archaeology at the University of Thessaloniki, before undertaking postgraduate studies in Folklore and Social Anthropology at the same institution (Post-graduate Diploma, 1994) (and at Paul Valéry University, Montpellier, France as an Erasmus student) and in Ethnology and Social Anthropology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (D.E.A. 1994, thèse de Doctorat 1999).

Evangelos is research director at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre (HFRC), Academy of Athens, where he serves as a researcher since 2002. Since 2014 he is also acting director of the HFRC. His fieldwork at the pastoral communities of Northern and Central Pindus mountains focused on pastoral techniques, local dairy production strategies, and the formation of local identities. Later, as a researcher of the HFRC, he worked mainly in Lefkada island and Thessaly, conducting fieldwork and documenting museum and ethnographic collections. Joining the HFRC team in 2002, he participated in the effort undertaken by the former director Aikaterini Kamilaki to modernize its function by upgrading its infrastructures and digitizing its archives and collections. His regular work at the HFRC included the recording of ethnographic material registered in the Archive, organizing conferences, and editing publications, among which the Annual of the HFRC. As researcher or scientific responsible he also focused on the documentation and digitization of the Folklore Archive and folklore museum collection, as well as the creation of digital applications, website, and digital repositories within the framework of European and national projects.

Evangelos published papers on the history of Greek folkloristics and especially the Folklore Archive/HFRC. As director he encouraged a reflective and critical analysis on archival practices of folklore material and propositions for the diffusion of ethnographic content in the framework of the digital environment, always bearing in mind the social utility of archiving methods. In 2018, on the occasion of its centenary, the HFRC organized, in collaboration with the Réseau FER-EURETHNO du Conseil de l'Europe / Groupe de Travail Francophone de la SIEF, a conference under the title « Du terrain à l'archive: les archives de folklore et d'ethnologie en tant que pôles de recherche, d'éducation et de culture » (proceedings published in 2019 by the HFRC in French and English).

Evangelos has delivered lectures on food production techniques in traditional Greek contexts and on the cultural dimensions of agricultural production within the modern processes of “patrimonialisation”, safeguarding and promoting agricultural heritage (Harokopion University, Nutrition and Dietetics Department, Athens, 2004-2007, National Centre for Public Administration and Self-Government, 2015-present, and various Open Universities). He is supervising systematically internship of university students at the HFRC and a limited number of Ph.D. students as a member of thesis committees.

He encouraged collaboration of HFRC with Self-Government bodies, associations and citizens, continuing a long-time tradition in Greek Folkloristics, and publishes texts in widely circulated journals/newspapers/websites and participates in television and radio broadcasts on folklore-related subjects. Evangelos is a member of the National Scientific Committee for the

implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2020), the Committee for the promotion and strengthening of Greek Handicrafts (2020) and the Scientific Council of the Academy of Athens Research Centre's (2019-2021, 2nd term).

*Ever since my first SIEF congress, as a student, in Amsterdam (1998) I felt much inspired by SIEF's history and activities in exchanging ideas and knowledge between international colleagues in a friendly and welcoming environment. Since 2018 I have been active in the "Francophone Working Group", trying to contribute to SIEF's mission, to promote its spirit of international collaboration and its effort to raise awareness of the importance of cultural diversities but also to strengthen the disciplinary identity and presence in our challenging times.*

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### **Daniela Salvucci (first term)**

Daniela Salvucci is a researcher and a lecturer at the Faculty of Education, Free University Bozen/Bolzano (unibz), South Tyrol, Italy. She obtained a PhD in *Anthropology, Ethnology, Cultural Studies* at Siena University and was recently a Fulbright research scholar at Yale University.

Daniela is currently working on mountain studies, exploring comparative perspectives and connections among anthropology, ethnology, and folklore in the history of the Alpine sociocultural scholarship (Boos, Salvucci eds., 2022). Within this framework, she is carrying out both archival and ethnographic research on the history of the Malinowski family in South Tyrol and the local family stories and memories. At unibz, she collaborates with the MFEA-Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology and the Platform Cultural Heritage Cultural Production. On behalf of the latter, she organized the international conference *Playing and displaying: Practices of cultural heritage as cultural production* in 2019. Daniela is also involved in the interdisciplinary *deep map lab* project, based on community participative research. Daniela has carried out ethnographic fieldwork in Italy and Argentina, especially in the Andean region, studying kinship, family, and gender issues, focusing on everyday practices, narratives, rituals, and festivals in both rural and urban settings. Since 2017, she is the co-convenor of the permanent panel *Festivals in Latin America: customs, cultural heritage, models of space management* at the annual international congress of Americanistic in Perugia.

*Having been trained within the Italian frame of demo-ethno-anthropological studies, I highly appreciate the diversity of approaches, the complexity, and the fruitful convergences that SIEF has been promoting as an open space for discussion and encounter. Participating in the last editions of the SIEF congress in Göttingen, Santiago de Compostela, and Helsinki online, and taking part in the activities of SIEF Ritual Year Working Group has given me the opportunity to consolidate academic relations and meet new colleagues, sharing ideas and experiences, and starting collaborations, therefore becoming part of a wide and inspiring network of research practices and dialogue. If elected, I would be honored to collaborate with the colleagues of the SIEF Board contributing to SIEF collective endeavor toward knowledge co-production, scientific cooperation, communication, and public engagement. Based at Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, in a region historically marked by cultural conflicts, but also by stimulating*



*interchanges and entanglements, I value environments where both differences and convergencies can emerge. I think of SIEF as one of them: a junction among anthropology, ethnology, and folklore studies, a meeting point between East and West, South and North, also extending beyond Europe.*

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### **Dani Schrire (second term)**

Dani Schrire (born 1974, Cape Town) is a senior lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with a joint appointment in two graduate programs: Folklore and Folk-Culture Studies and Cultural Studies. Schrire earned his PhD in Folklore and Folk-Culture Studies in 2012 at the Hebrew University (with a year spent at the Institute for European Ethnology at Humboldt Berlin), and carried out postdoctoral research as a fellow at the Institute for Cultural Anthropology / European Ethnology at Göttingen University as well as at the University of Pennsylvania.

I joined SIEF before the Derry conference in 2008. As someone operating in what some regard a "small field", the Derry conference empowered me; it made me realize that there is a bunch of us out-there – a feeling that grew with every SIEF conference since. I discovered the power of intense international cooperation in these meetings and in the many friendships that developed in between. Since many of us investigate vernacular cultural expressions set within local political conflicts and particular social situations, internationalism holds the promise of making sense of a broader picture. To my mind, this is crucial given current global threats, namely, climate change, neo-liberal instrumentalizing of knowledge, and the spread of populist politics – all of which operate as part of powerful national and international networks. Against the feeling of powerlessness in confronting these (evil) forces, I find that sustaining strong international contacts is essential. After all, I view scholarly knowledge as something collective (much like folklore, in fact), and in the current situation I see it as a common duty to sustain a strong organization such as SIEF, which helps amplifying voices that are often sidelined.

Realizing that SIEF is centered in Europe, I believe it is essential to extend our conversation and ways of thinking further from the Global North to different parts of the globe. This is carried out to some extent in the working groups and in our conferences that draw people from different continents as well as scholars who carry out fieldwork in different places. However, I think it is also crucial to reflect on how our disciplines are practiced beyond Euro-America and how cultural knowledge is constructed on faraway "beaches" – to paraphrase Greg Dening (the late Australian scholar who often inspires me).

As a folklorist, I follow a commitment to particular scholarly traditions as to how to engage with what human beings care for and cherish, while searching for a conceptual repertoire relevant to our current challenges. In my research I have been particularly engaged with the international dimension of folklore-studies, and the inter-cultural dialogue that shapes this discipline, focusing on the instability that arises when traditions of thinking differ from one another. Which is why SIEF is for me a very important arena for these ongoing scholarly dialogues.

Much inspired by ANT, archives are the places in which I carry out my fieldwork. I am fascinated by collectors, collecting, and the rituals that take place in the presence of archival boxes. Nowadays, I am particularly busy studying postcards and the European imagination of the Holy Land, finding postcarding culture intriguing in the way it reified cultures – often in regrettable ways and rarely also in subversive manners.

I love walking and find researching walking as a cultural practice to be extremely compelling. I started by studying the Camino de Santiago, walking several of its routes (in France and Spain) – our last meeting in Compostela brought back so many memories of walking... These days, I walk and study political marches among protesters against PM Netanyahu in Jerusalem. Besides the obvious political dimension of walking, studying walking challenges me in how to write and how to do ethnographic research. Specifically, studying walking can take academia beyond the – to my mind – erroneous idea that its goal is limited to writing articles, setting aside the whole process of knowledge making, which is crucial in affective and embodied forms of cultural knowledge.

Although my interests cover diverse cultural practices, in one way or another, they follow different ways in which culture is codified and conceptualized. The folklore project is exemplary in the way it negotiated cultural categories in the production of value: in transcribing orally performed lore into texts, in archiving material, in creating generic taxonomies, in translating texts, in comparing and theorizing them and in (re)presenting them as heritage in museums, in new performances and digital media. I find it captivating that through all of these material and intangible transformations, the value of culture is transformed profoundly. SIEF as an international organization serves as another important amplifier in this network, extending the dialogues that take place in "the field" to new constituencies.

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### **Irina Stahl (second term)**

I am a full-time Senior Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy, in Bucharest, where in 2015, I founded the Religion and Society Laboratory. I also serve as an Associate Lecturer in European Ethnology at the University of Bucharest, since 2021. Previously, I completed graduate studies at the University of Bucharest and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), where I received master degrees in History and Social Sciences. I am also an Alumni of the New Europe College, Institute for Advanced Studies, in Bucharest. Although a sociology graduate, I relate more to traditional Romanian sociology, as envisioned by the interwar Sociological School of Bucharest, than to the quantitatively grounded sociology currently popular. My approach to research is generally interdisciplinary, combining sociological methodology with ethnographic fieldwork, often in a diachronic manner.

Since 2010, I have conducted fieldwork on, and published in religious studies focusing on vernacular religion, with particular attention to Orthodox Christianity and religious practices in the urban environment. Among my research topics are: veneration of saints, relics and icons, sudden death memorials, pilgrimages and processions in public spaces. In 2014, the American Folklore Society awarded me the Don Yoder Prize for the Best Graduate Student Paper in Folk

Belief or Religious Folklife for the article entitled *The Romanian Saints: Between Popular Devotion and Politics*.

My publications include over 60 articles and book chapters in addition to two books. I have served as an Invited Editor for *Revista Română de Sociologie* (1-2/2016) and I am currently the Editor of the forthcoming *Yearbook of The Ritual Year Working Group*, volume 13. I also serve as a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Sociology, on the Editorial Board of the *Yearbook of The Ritual Year Working Group* series (since 2021), the *Yearbook of the Balkan and Baltic Studies* (since 2019), and the *Romanian Journal of Sociological Studies* (since 2017). During the past several years, my work has also included organizing and publishing the Stahl Family Archives, on European sociology, ethnology and literature, including the private papers, notes and works, of Henri Stahl, Henri H. Stahl, Henriette Yvonne Stahl, and Paul Henri Stahl.

In addition to being active in the SIEF, I am a contributing member to several international professional associations, such as the International Sociological Association (ISA), International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InASEA), International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR), and the Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS).

*I was introduced to the SIEF by The Ritual Year Working Group, which I joined in 2012, during the conference in Plovdiv. Later, I joined the Folk Religion Working Group (2014) and the Francophone Working Group (2016). Since attending my first SIEF congress, in 2015, my professional and personal development has advanced remarkably fast, and I am aware that it is greatly due to the mentoring, challenges, learning opportunities and not the least, the recognition and encouragement I received since joining the association. I am particularly grateful to The Ritual Year WG, which elected me as its Secretary, in 2014. Since then, I organized the WG's web page, established and edited the WG's newsletter, organized the 2018 Ritual Year Working Group's international conference and am now coordinating The Ritual Year Seasonal Webinar Series. The Ritual Year WG has nurtured my professional and personal development and provided me with the opportunity to prove myself in the international scientific community. As a result of that support I have, in recent years, been an invited keynote speaker in Estonia, Russia and the Philippines and a presenter at more than 35 international conferences.*

*Serving SIEF as a Board member is a privilege and if re-elected, I would consider it a great honour. It would provide further opportunities to learn from my international colleagues and grow professionally. In this position, I will continue to focus on increasing the SIEF sense of community and collegiality, which I have experienced. After the troubled times of the Covid-19 pandemic and now during the on-going war in our region we have all realized the importance of community spirit. Within the Ritual Year WG we have invested much time and energy keeping in touch with our members, keeping up with our usual, scientific activities, and imposing order on the new rhythm of life. But, it is not only during exceptional times that we need a community. SIEF has always been open to other professionals, beyond the scientific community (artists, professionals from other domains). An increasing number of professionals in our fields have no institutional affiliation for various reasons: either because of layoffs, retirement or relocation. For all of these people, SIEF remains a safe harbour, a place of belonging and dialogue, a community of friends, with shared interests. A forum in which we can all learn and grow.*

*Coming from an Eastern European country, I am very much aware of the difficulties ethnologists, folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and other professionals in the social sciences encounter. Many researchers in our disciplines receive little or no financial*

*assistance or moral support in their work. Intellectuals in the social sciences are frequently undervalued in Eastern Europe, when compared to the physical sciences and economics. I would like to seek ways to improve the situation and increase my Eastern European colleagues' participation in SIEF. Further, I wish to increase SIEF's visibility in other regions of the world, where social sciences are now emerging.*

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### **Jiří Woitsch (second term)**

Jiří Woitsch is director of the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic. He studied ethnology and history at Charles University in Prague, where he first obtained his M.A. and then continued in Ph.D., which he completed in 2009 by defending a thesis on the topic of forest crafts and industries in the 17th to 19th centuries. In the dissertation he tried to connect historical and ethnological approaches with less conventional types of data sources e.g., experimental reconstructions of extinct technologies. While still a student, he started working part-time at the Institute of Ethnology of the CAS in 1999, since 2011 Jiří is a head of the Department of Critical Heritage Studies, in 2017–2018 he was the deputy director and since 2018 he has been serving as the director of the Institute of Ethnology.

Jiří kept in touch with young colleagues in the field in his teaching activities, in the years 2001–2013 at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen; since 2019 he has been lecturing at the Department of European Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno. He considers his work as an editor-in-chief of one of the oldest European ethnological journals (founded in 1891) *Český lid* and multiple cooperation with colleagues from abroad, especially Germany, Austria, Sweden or Slovakia and Hungary, to be an invaluable work and life experience.

His research and teaching specializations covers three main areas: (1) forest and landscape history, (2) transforming heritages of peasant culture in the Early Modern times (agriculture, crafts, built environment) and (3) history of ethnology and anthropology in the Central and Eastern Europe. Recently he is dealing with touristification and heritization of the landscape in the Czech-German borderlands and the relationship between heritage and nature conservation. Hidden „spy“ stories and histories of Czech anthropology in the 1950s to 1970s are also the subject of his research.

*I first came into closer contact with the SIEF as a member of the transforming ethnocartographic WG, which I later took over and since 2015 I have been serving as a co-chair of the WG Space-lore and Place-lore. I believe that in recent years the SIEF has increasingly shown its indispensable role as a bridge and at the same time a creative workshop in which researchers with different identities, preferences and orientations connect and cooperate fruitfully. It seems to me that even compared to other scientific societies of which I have the honour to be a member, a SIEF does not lose its eagerness, can respond to new challenges and at the same time proves that the mission of European ethnology makes sense. With my work, I would like to contribute to the fulfilment of this mission and focus on enriching the activities of*

*SIEFs by promoting transdisciplinary cooperation, as I am well aware that ethnologists can have a great understanding with botanists even chemists and together produce remarkable outputs. Moreover, it seems to me that a SIEF could serve even better as a platform for shaping the ethical standards of our work in quickly transforming research environment.*