

**Special SIEF issue of the *Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)*  
Introduction and abstracts**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 13TH SIEF CONGRESS IN GÖTTINGEN IN 2017

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**Ways of Dwelling: Crisis – Craft – Creativity**

Introduction

This special issue has been created as a collaboration between the *Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)* and the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore – SIEF). The Society’s mission is to stimulate scholarly work and to build platforms for critical debate, cooperation and exchange in the disciplines it represents. One of the ways in which SIEF achieves those goals is by promoting publication in its twin fields by not only supporting its journals *Ethnologia Europaea* and *Cultural Analysis*, but also entering into a partnership with editors of other international journals, especially when preparing issues that stem from its biennial congresses or conferences of its working groups.

Through this special *JEECA* issue, we want to revisit the experience of the 13th SIEF Congress hosted by the Department of Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology at the University of Göttingen, Germany, in 2017. The volume offers a selection of nine articles developed from the congress theme concept, keynote lectures, roundtable discussions and panel presentations, which all focus on the topic of dwelling. How are ways of dwelling imagined, conceptualized, narrated, crafted, materialized, put into practice, represented in artwork, transformed and challenged? What is the role of mobility and migration, memory and creativity, hopes and fears when individuals and groups make their homes? What epistemological and methodological grounds do ethnologists, folklorists and specialists from neighboring disciplines use to grasp the concept of dwelling? These were the core questions raised at the SIEF congress in Göttingen and in the articles presented in this issue, which apply novel and up-to-date approaches to deal with one of the long-established subjects of ethnological and folklorist research.

This volume is introduced by Regina Bendix, who asks how classical cultural science approaches on building and living can be linked with forms of communication and atmospheres. Her contribution serves to develop an analytical basis for the concept of atmosphere to show how different narrative genres express our experiences of living. Maja Povrzanović Frykman traces migrants’ personal objects in transnational living contexts. She is particularly interested in everyday objects which are transported across national borders and embedded into familial material practices to let migrants feel at home in different locations. She delivers a contribution to the critical studies of migration with a differentiated observation of mundane objects, which does not imagine migrants in terms of difference.

Trevor H.J. Marchand in his essay delivers a very thick description of the working method of the artist Andrew Omoding, who creates relationships between disparate objects by embedding them into new constellations of meaning. Birgitte Romme Larsen focuses on an asylum seeker center located in the middle of a small Danish city for 25 years. Precisely for this

reason, a highly specific dynamic of encounters between local residents and asylum seekers arises which she studies from an anthropological perspective.

Saša Poljak Istenič focuses on the oldest socialist quarter in Ljubljana, built after 1945, and shows the changes in the post-socialist era. She particularly addresses the ways of operation of participatory processes in which the imaginations of the residents collide with specific power relations that both facilitate and hinder processes of empowerment. Lorenzo D'Orsi is the 2017 winner of the SIEF Young Scholar Prize. His contribution deals with experiences during the military dictatorship in Uruguay. He aims for an engagement with the concept of trauma which goes beyond psychology and, therefore, pursues a multifaceted approach to the traumatic experiences of the victims and their relatives, as well as the social context. In his opinion, the concept of trauma focuses too much on the individual and does not give enough consideration to the historical and political circumstances. His approach is to create possibilities for analyzing victim memories in larger collective contexts.

Hermann Bausinger starts off the series of keynote addresses printed here which concluded the conference. He devotes his contribution to the role of age and links it to questions of dwelling and dwindling. Starting from fundamental considerations on aging and aging research, Bausinger arrives at the connection between housing and concepts of home as well as the significance of habits in living and in life overall. Walter Leimgruber focused his concluding address on the construction of concepts of home. In a historical overview, he shows the romanticizing of the term 'home,' on the one hand, and the significance of inclusion and belonging regarding the possibilities of making oneself at home, on the other hand. The latter is increasingly questioned because of migration and other transformations which characterize current societies and let many people long for a kind of home that has never existed as such. In her concluding contribution to this volume, Beate Binder links the overarching aspects of this conference with fundamental anthropological considerations. She drafts dwelling as a concept or a perspective with which very different subjects can be researched. In doing so, she links the aspect of dwelling with central anthropological concepts and key terms which were also discussed at this conference. To name but a few, Binder describes assemblage or care as important approaches in describing lifeworlds. The terms crisis, craft and creativity, which appear in the conference title, are reflected and, just like questions about temporalities, futurity and imaginaries, put into a broader anthropological context.

The authors who have contributed to this publication come from diverse institutional contexts and scholarly traditions, from various parts of Europe and different stages of their careers. Their texts are not representative of all the myriad ways of dwelling and around 800 congress presentations that discussed them. However, they view the theme from a multitude of perspectives and, thus, provide us with an insight into the potential of our disciplines to understand, discuss and become involved with people's manifold ways of being and belonging, and cultural and societal mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from the aspect of dwelling.

Regina F. Bendix

**My Home is My Castle – My Coat is My Refuge**

Dwelling, Atmospheres, and Communicative Arts

Abstract: Seeking new approaches to the huge complex from house to hovel, shack to skyscraper, or castle to condominium, the SIEF Congress entitled Dwelling. Crisis – Craft – Creativity sought new avenues to old and well-established areas of research. The present article complements the long history of research on vernacular housing in cultural research with a query on how narration and other communicative arts endow dwellings with atmosphere. Drawing from vernacular and popular sources, the approach seeks an analytic grounding for the concept of atmosphere, in this case, showing how different narrative genres express and/or guide the experience of dwellings and capture sensory perceptions in communicable forms.

Keywords: narrative, atmosphere, sensory perception, space, emotion

Maja Povrzanović Frykman

**Transnational Dwelling and Objects of Connection**

An Ethnological Contribution to Critical Studies of Migration

Abstract: The article argues that empirical attention should be given to migrants' personal engagements with the materiality of transnational dwelling, notably to objects of everyday use. Such objects carried, sent and received across national borders facilitate familiar material practices that, in their turn, help the migrants to feel at home in different locations. At the same time, they lend a sense of connection between migrants, those who stayed behind and homes located in different countries. Positioned at the intersection between ethnology, migration research and studies of material culture, the article draws on Levitt and Glick Schiller's analytical distinction between the ways of being and the ways of belonging, Bourdieu's notion of habitus, and Hage's discussion of hexis. It suggests that ethnographic research on mundane objects in the context of transnational dwelling can destabilize the ways migrants are thought of in terms of difference and, thereby, contribute to critical studies of migration.

Keywords: migration, transnational dwelling, being and belonging, habitus, hexis

Trevor H.J. Marchand

**Dwelling in Craftwork: The Art of Andrew Omoding**

Abstract: The essay explores the ways in which artist Andrew Omoding creates relations between otherwise disparate things, drawing them together into new constellations of meaning that are forever becoming, without fixed starting points or conclusions. Findings suggest the ways in which we come to dwell in practices that afford safety and the possibility for the total immersion of self.

Keywords: art, craftwork, dwelling, practice, immersion of self

Birgitte Romme Larsen

### **The Asylum Center as “Just Another Local Institution”**

Co-residency and the Everyday Practice of Neighborliness among Asylum Seekers and Locals in the Danish Town of Jelling

**Abstract:** This article investigates everyday practices of co-residency and ‘institutional neighborliness’ amongst asylum seekers and local inhabitants in the small Danish town of Jelling. Where asylum centers in Denmark are sometimes faced with local opposition and are often isolated from nearby settlements, the center in Jelling provides a different local migratory scenario. Denmark’s oldest asylum center has been located for 25 years in the middle of town, where asylum seekers and local inhabitants share residential and institutional public space. This unique local circumstance invites an ethnographic exploration of how over time and outside of an urban, cosmopolitan setting processes of multiethnic co-residency are shaped, interacted and narrated through everyday physical meetings in public space. The article shows how local cultural history proves paramount for understanding the present-day migratory encounter and outcome in Jelling in its complexity, including the mundane neighborly routines and pragmatic workings through which the institutions of ‘the local community’ and ‘the asylum center’ have merged spatially and socially. Today, the asylum center has become “just another local institution.” The article, thus, argues that it is necessary to understand the ways in which situated migratory encounters tie in with pre-existing local self-understandings and modes of pragmatism, outside of dominant national discursive positions such as humanitarianism or xenophobia.

**Keywords:** asylum centers, danish rural communities, institutional neighborliness, everyday pragmatism, local cultural history

Saša Poljak Istenič

### **Dwelling Participatory Style**

Power and Empowerment in a Neighborhood. Renovation and Revitalization

**Abstract:** The article explores dwelling in a post-Second World War neighborhood in Slovenia and focuses on contemporary practices which require or desire the participation of residents. It presents the results from a qualitative case study of *Savsko naselje*, the oldest socialist neighborhood in Ljubljana, which had the first formally established housing community in socialist Yugoslavia and organized the first self-contributed action to improve the neighborhood. It was also the subject of the first city-funded community-led urban renewal in post-socialist Slovenia. The concept of participation, especially in relation to dwelling, is explored through accounts on democracy, development and participatory urbanism. Renovation of two skyscrapers and neighborhood’s public spaces then serve as examples of contemporary participatory dwelling practices. The aim is to disclose how participation is imagined by residents and in what way it is realized, revealing the power relations which dominate the process, while simultaneously hindering and encouraging the empowerment of the people involved. Participation brings positive tangible results, but remains mostly passive,

especially when it is defined by law and includes obligatory financial contribution and consent to decisions made by others. Due to the practical goals of participative actions, transformative participation, which would empower people to actively engage in such actions, remains an unfulfilled ideal.

Keywords: neighborhood, dwelling, participation, empowerment, housing renovation, urban renewal, Slovenia

Lorenzo D'Orsi

### **Reframing a Painful Past**

The Memories of the Uruguayan Military Dictatorship

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to analyze past and present experiences of former political prisoners who have been affected by the violence of the Uruguayan military dictatorship (1973–1985). It adopts a multifaceted approach to the study of traumatic memories and argues for a de-psychologization of the concept of trauma, too centered on traumatized individuals rather than the historical and political circumstances that are at the root of their suffering and sustain it in the present time. Other themes explored are the gender and political fractures within the mnemonic community of victims, how collective frames shape personal memories, and the transmission of painful experiences through generations. The construction of a scenario in which traumatic memories are recognized as collective wounds to be publicly dealt with is not considered a 'triumph of truth,' but rather a complex moral and political reframing of the past. In this respect, this contribution analyzes the symbolic grammars that have facilitated new social solidarities and emotional identifications through which the victims' memories can reach a wider audience. Finally, it sheds light on the author's intellectual journey through the topics of research and shows how his doctoral fieldwork in Turkey has urged him to rethink the data collected in Uruguay. The aim is to show how anthropological 'facts' are not 'found' but 'made.'

Keywords: Uruguay, traumatic memory, social trauma, violence, comparativism

Hermann Bausinger

### **Dwellings and Dwindlings**

**Abstract:** The paper, following a plenary lecture at the SIEF congress 2017, recommends a revision of a few current conceptions of old age – concerning emotional care for old people in past and present, the more narrow comprehension of home, the defense of habitual forms of living, and the structural importance of habit. Old age is not a uniform destination but a frame for various ways and styles of living.

Keywords: old age, (emotional) care, housing, mobility, resistance against change, habit

Walter Leimgruber

### **Constructing a Home**

*Heimat* as an Expression of Privilege, Belonging, Exclusion and Identity

Abstract: The German term *Heimat* originally meant tangible things, such as a house, property and related rights. Those who did not have them, often had to leave their place of origin and earn their livelihood in an itinerant way. A romanticized image of home originated with the arrival of the Romantic period and industrialization, which brought more and more people to places far from their areas of origin. The nation states offered a new form of home (*Heimat*) to people who possessed the necessary emblematic qualities, such as a common language and history: Belonging to a national community.

The workers, often portrayed as “rootless fellows,” sought their homeland in their solidarity and achieved better protection and social integration with the development of the welfare state. After the Second World War, society was, therefore, more inclusive than ever, and many could fulfill their dream of belonging. At the same time, an increasing number of people were migrating to other countries to make a living. They often suffered from homesickness or experienced feelings of fragmentation between their new center of life and their place of origin. Today, large parts of society are ‘migrantized,’ in the sense of alienation from their original feelings of belonging, feel challenged by social developments with their changing images of role, generation, gender and family, their demographic turmoil, and their challenges concerning mobilities, identities, environment and labor market. After a period of increasing prosperity and the expansion of the welfare state, they see their social position as endangered. They seek a *Heimat* that has never existed like this in reality and see it as something past and not a goal to strive for.

Keywords: *Heimat*, home, homeland, exclusion, migration, house, construction, belonging

Beate Binder

### **“Ways of Dwelling”: Some Concluding Remarks**

Abstract: The paper discusses the SIEF congress’s aim to utilize dwelling as a lens to investigate practices and discourses related to the various open-ended processes of building a home and to uncover the rich opportunities in looking at central areas of present-day research through the lens of dwelling. The paper takes dwelling as a starting point to discuss the challenges ethnographical work faces currently. Following the schedule of the congress, with its keynotes and panel discussions, the paper addresses various aspects of carrying out contemporary ethnography, reflects methodological and epistemological challenges, and opens the view on possibilities of critique and intervention regarding dealing with futurity and imaginaries in order to transgress the current state of the art.

Keywords: Dwelling, methodologies, assemblage, temporalities, care, critique, potentialities