Narrative fault lines and discursive mirroring – the Middle East in Europe

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The „orient" as the "occidents'" other is not limited to the idea of a faraway and alien place but likewise discursively produced in the encounter with those emerging as others in the same discourse and happening to live in the "occident " or "the West". Historical narratives and current discourses surrounding relevant conflicts, such as the Mideast conflict and the ongoing wars in the Middle East at large, as well as regarding refugees from Arab or (majority) Muslim countries and Arabs and Muslims already living in Europe, testify to the power and impact of the "oriental" framework.

While the "orient" is represented in narratives and commemorative cultures of European societies it is mirrored in alternative or counter constructs and narratives of "Arabs" and (those perceived as) "Muslims" living in these societies as its designated others. The respective narratives and discursivizations can be attributed to various motivations: They function as means of exclusion, demarcation and inclusion or to negotiate belonging, but also to unburden the own group while replying to past, present and sometimes even imagined future addressings and exigencies.

This panel seeks to address narrative overlaps and discursive mirrorings, inward and outward demarcations and their effects, im-/possible syntheses and synergies as well as trends and transformative potentials. Particular attention is paid to the moment when narratives "tip over": Moments in which exceptions or irritations are discursively and performatively produced, so that allegedly universal ethical standards and norms are or seem to become invalid for the designated others.

Within which discursive figurations and strategies are these narrative fault lines produced and how are they legitimized? Which historical (dis-)continuities can be reconstructed and what effects do they have on society as a whole, on a collective and individual level for the respective addressees? How are narrative and discursive inconsistencies perceived and how do they affect the credibility and integrity of the different protagonists and their relationships with the designated and imagined "other"?

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