

Lisa Borgiani Marta Ottaviani

What is

EUROPE

to you



Germany
2019

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What is Europe to you?

Germany 2019

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What is
EUROPE to you ?

Germany
2019

Berlin ist mehr ein Weltteil als eine Stadt
Berlin is more a part of the world than a city

Jean Paul_Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763 - 1825)

Lisa Borgiani, Marta Ottaviani

What is Europe to you?

Berlin, Germany, 2019

Texts and interviews by Marta Ottaviani

Photographs by Lisa Borgiani

Graphic design by Alessandro Colombo

What is Europe to you?

We are used to seeing politicians answer this question. In the last European elections and in the months leading up to them, the debate on the European Union was more heated than ever. We can say that different, often incompatible, models of Europe have clashed.

This contrast has been exacerbated by the difficulties associated with the eurozone's economic crisis, by the management of mass migration and, lastly, by the affirmation of nationalist and populist movements. With their demands and often incendiary messages, they have contributed deeply to exacerbate the debate around the meaning of Europe today.

The two of us are part of a generation that, during our youth, has experienced some of the most exciting moments since the birth of the European Union: the advent of the euro, the fall of borders and a general climate of optimism about the future, despite the political difficulties and differences.

It's been a little over 20 years, and feelings have radically changed. We felt compelled, as Europeans, to depict the situation, albeit in our own way. And the only approach that felt really useful to us was to go and talk to people. We took a map of our beloved Europe and began to outline the stages of our journey.

Our long reportage into the European soul started with two trips, to Athens and Berlin, because of the Greek general elections and the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall. But then we continued with a more thematic thread.

We decided to go to Brussels, the political heart of Europe; to London, the Europe that no longer wants to be Europe; to Paris, the Europe

Lisa Borgiani
Marta Ottaviani

devastated by terrorist attacks; to Warsaw and Budapest, the Europe of the Visegrad Pact; to Vienna, the Europe threatening to close its border with Italy; and to the Baltics, the Europe where you can still smell the Cold War.

We've talked to hundreds of people of different ethnicities, social backgrounds, cultures and religions. It was important for us to look for women, men, entrepreneurs, refugees, and volunteers to use different approaches and to ask everyone the same question: What is Europe to you?

For everyone, there is a portrait, their idea of Europe and a key word, because it is through key words that concepts are synthesized.

The result is a mosaic of feelings. The tiles all have a different nuance and make up Europe as it is today.

N.B.

We chose to report the interviewees' words as they were pronounced in English even though they were not English native speakers. This is not to change the tone and spontaneity of the answers in any way.

Berlin, where the pulse of Europe beats.

Berlin is a city whose wounds do not flow blood; it has an energy that infects everything that touches it. The most tormented capital in Europe, the one that most represents the drama of the 20th Century, until 30 years ago was a symbol of division. Today it is a place of encounter, sharing, where you can breathe the most sincere and enthusiastic European spirit.

Because for Berliners, Europe is the main player in the reunification of Germany and the guarantee of freedom; it is that one part of the city that the country has watched from the other side of the Iron Curtain for decades. A Europe to protect and thank deeply.

We decided to visit this pulsating city on the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Wall. What we found is a capital that is proudly, serenely European, at times concerned about the influence that nationalist and populist movements have in some countries and alarmed about growing anti-Semitism.

Berlin has a solidity and an awareness that is felt everywhere, from the elegant windows of Kurfürstendamm to the popular palaces of Marzahn. In former East Germany from the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Neukölln to the glam contrasts of Kreuzberg. Basically, Berlin is a city that cannot afford to be afraid. It goes on, with all the wounds it carries. Disciplined, constant in duty, intriguing, shameless in pleasure.

Berlin is a capital full of light, and knows very well where its shadows are and how dangerous they can be. One can sense it from the words of intellectuals, who conceive of their being European almost as a shield to oppose a past made up of divisions and borders. There is also the Berlin of ordinary people, the capital that fears the economic crisis that is hitting Germany. A situation that is

Marta Ottaviani

perceived as a danger by many people, because it risks bringing back a past that Berlin has struggled to forget and that has been a source of decades of pain.

The city is so tormented that it represents a country still today victim to clichés and a worsening narrative. It is in fact an extraordinary example of where to start to build an even stronger European identity and a compass to figure out where Europe is going.



Elisabeth

Director of the *Museum*
of European Culture



Europe is
Sharing

Name

Elisabeth

Place

Museum of European Culture
Dahlem, Berlin

Profession

Director of the Museum

Europe is, for me, unity in all our diversities. It is important that we have shared a common culture. Europe for me has two sides; a dark side and a bright side. The bright side is freedom, liberty, equality, democracy and no borders. The dark side is our colonial past, which affects society today and we as an institution must cope with that. The other dark side is this idea of the 'fortress of Europe', that we put on our borders. I understood really what Europe was when I was living in Africa. Europe was a whole. In that moment I understood our shared heritage.





Alessandro

Journalist



Europe is
Normality

Name

Alessandro

Place

Stasi Museum

Lichtenberg, former East Berlin

Profession

Journalist

Europe to me is a mobile identity, something that always changes. If I think of my personal story, I am an Italian citizen who now has German citizenship too. I went to Brussels to study, I came back to Italy and then I left Italy to come here to Berlin. For me, Europe is not an external concept, it is something that I live, which is within me and is my normality. I work in a newsroom where there are people who come from 13 European countries; Europe is an integral part of my work. It's something so natural and everyday that I can't perceive it as something external.





Ulrich

doctor



Europe is
Freedom

Name

Ulrich

Place

East Side Gallery

Berlin

Profession

Doctor

Europe to me is freedom and peace. Unfortunately, now I see a lot of threats that could harm Europe, but I also truly see that common sense will prevail. We have already seen where nationalism took us in the past.





Birgit

payroll clerk



Europe is

Opportunity

Name

Birgit

Place

East Side Gallery

Berlin

Profession

Payroll clerk

I think that Europe is a great opportunity for all of us. We can travel wherever we want without restrictions and to state our opinion on different facts. I think that our politicians should take more care about what people think and less to money. The goal must be to consolidate the European identity.





Volkar

engineer



Europe is
Family

Name

Volkar

Place

East Side Gallery

Berlin

Profession

Engineer

I think that Europe is what allows us to live better than 40 years ago. It is a family, a community built on common values and I think that we have to keep on widening this community looking to the East, because in the East there has always been closure. I do not think for example that Russians are our enemies.





Odiseos

student



Europe is
Continent

Name

Odisseos

Place

Berlin Ostbahnhof

Profession

Student

Europe to me is a continent with a shared history and culture. My mother is Greek, my father is German so I feel this complex identity so much. The reunification is the best thing that ever occurred to Germany. I am strongly against every kind of dictatorship and nationalism and I am quite confident that Europe will handle this threat in the best way. I also think that Brexit is a big mistake. Brits will regret it.





Michael

ein berliner



Europe is
In danger

Name

Michael

Place

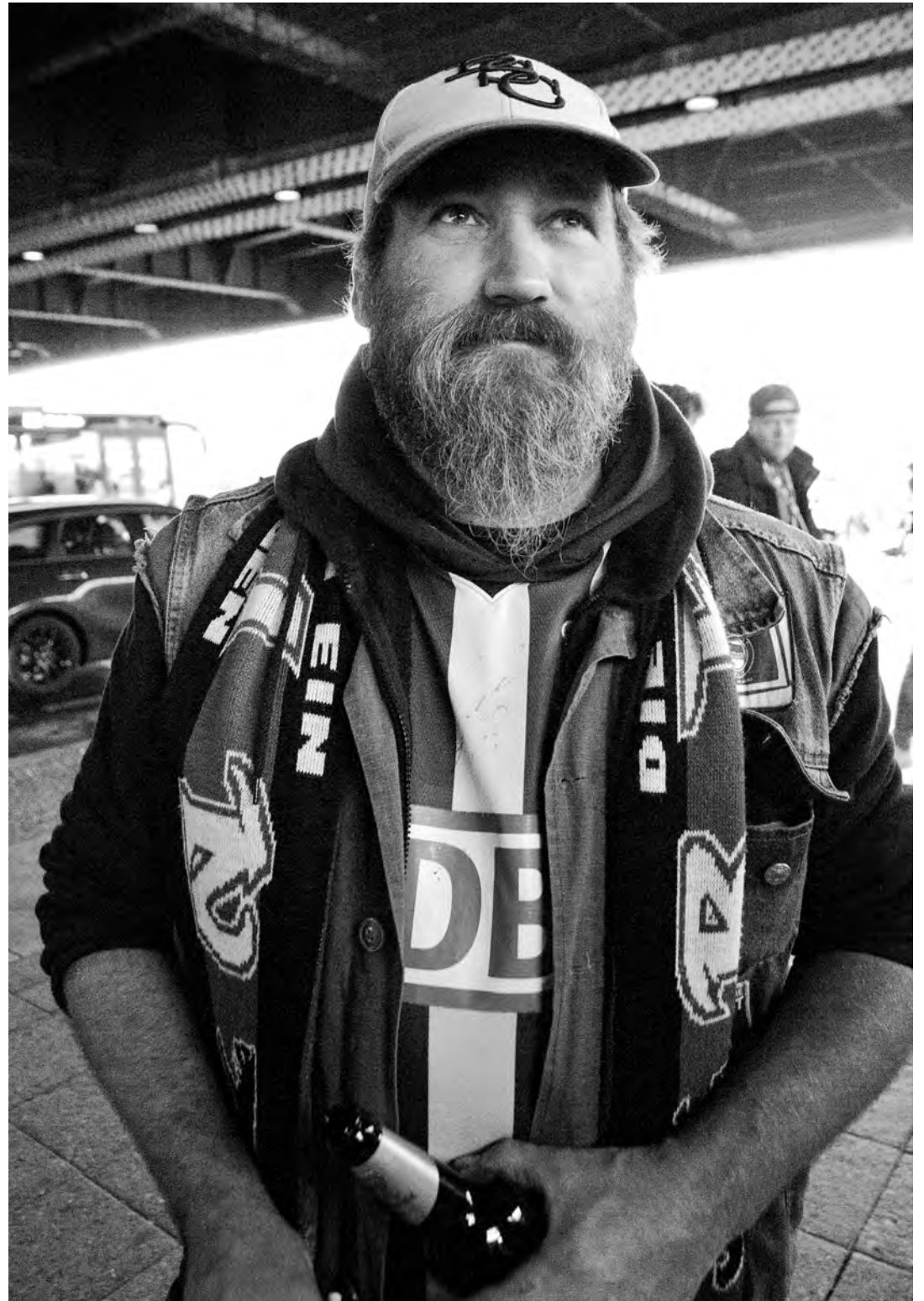
Hardenbergstraße

Charlottenburg

Profession

Ein berliner

I think that Europe is a really great thing. But unfortunately, in this historical moment Europe is also in danger. I see too many people drifting apart instead of getting closer. Countries are thinking too much about themselves.





Benjamin

web designer



Europe is
Community

Name

Benjamin

Place

**Kurfürstendamm
Charlottenburg**

Profession

Web designer

*Europe is a huge community,
where all belong together
and all are good to others.
As with any community,
I believe that Europe should
improve and strengthen
itself.*





Hunault

musician



Europe is
Civilization

Name

Hunault

Place

**Café Einstein Stammhaus
Charlottenburg**

Profession

Musician

I think Europe to me is one of the most important things. It is civilization and music, and culture. Perhaps music and culture will save us as Europeans. I am worried because our European culture is not improving enough.

Composers, writers and intellectuals in the XIX century were more European than us. They were curious and willing to understand other cultures. Today, we underestimate the importance of Europe. We should look at Europe from the outside. We would realise that it is a whole thing.





Matthias

taxi driver



Europe is
Chance

Name

Matthias

Place

Lützowplatz

Charlottenburg

Profession

Taxi driver

*Europe is a great thing.
Today, nobody has the
strength enough to go on
their own. I am sad because
some politicians do not
believe in Europe at all.
Being patriotic does not
mean being nationalist.
And the world is changing
rapidly, that is why I think
that Europe is the only
chance we have.*





Gizela

street vendor



Europe is
Companionship

Name

Gizela

Place

Stresemannstraße

Mitte

Profession

Street vendor

*Europe
is a beautiful
companionship.*





Filippa

exhibition project manager



Europe is
Necessity

Name

Filippa

Place

Martin Gropious-Bau

Museum

Profession

Exhibition project manager

*I think that Europe is
a necessity and a great
chance.*

*We must make an effort and
believe in this project.*

*Europe is the only solution
we have for a future of
peace. It is like a marriage.
There is a lot of love, but it
also needs a lot of work and
good will.*





Alexander

photographer



Europe is
Freedom

Name

Alexander

Place

Lerhterstraße

Moabit

Profession

Photographer

With Europe we have the opportunity to travel free and learn from other people. Whoever is against Europe means that he doesn't want to learn from others and upgrade himself.





Sherif

construction worker



Europe is

Beauty

Name

Sherif

Place

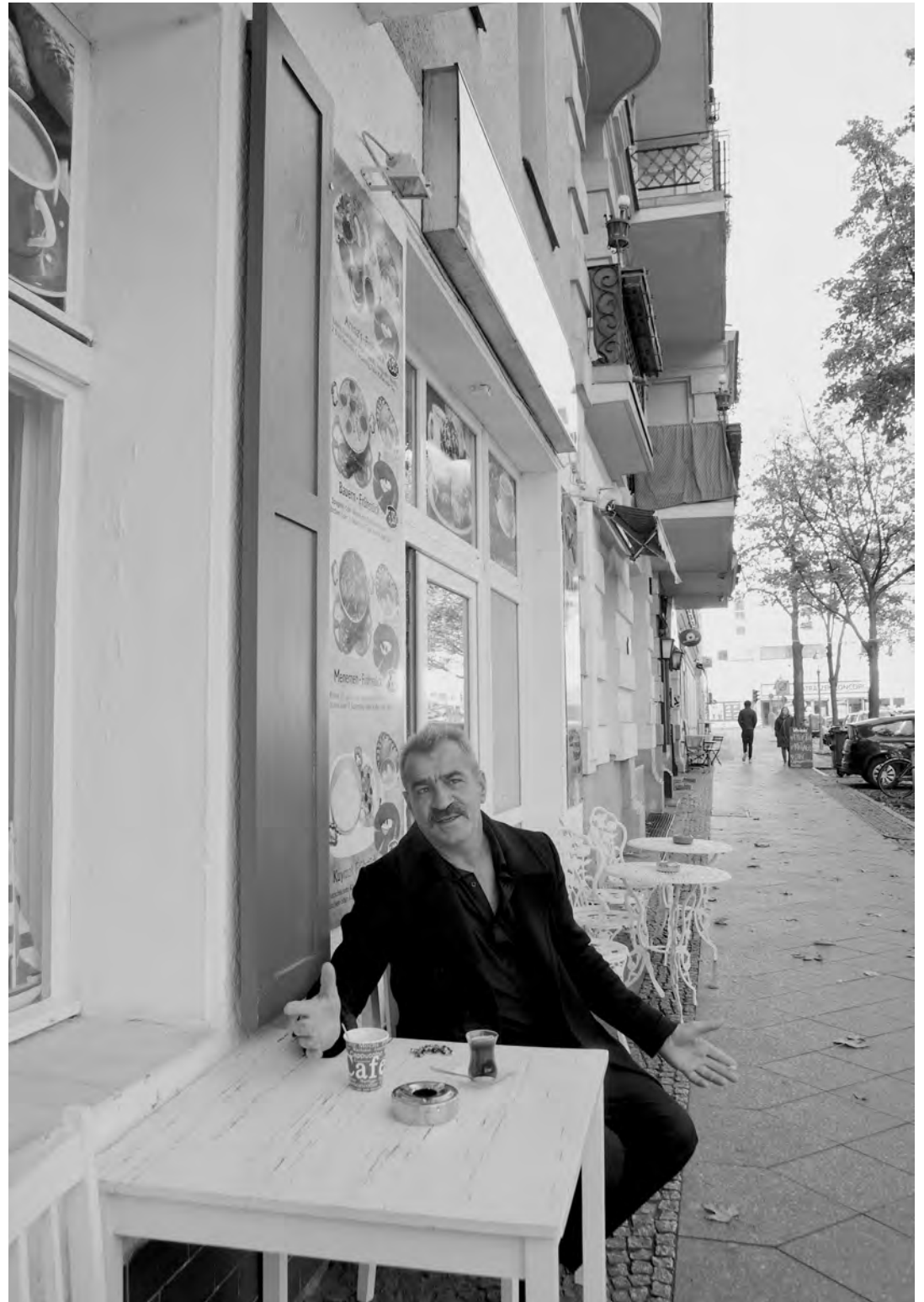
Lerhterstraße

Moabit

Profession

Construction worker

I think that Europe is such an amazing thing. Here I can see my rights guaranteed, nobody has ever harmed me. And it so incredible that something like this is born after a war. With me I dig into the foundations. Sometimes I happened to find World War II bombs or mass graves. And now on this same land there is peace.





Uwe
Steven

public servant
nurse



Europe is
Equality

Name

Uwe

Steven

Place

Tiergarten

Mitte

Profession

Public servant

Nurse

I think that the European Union has made all of us equal. We have the same rights and the same duties, and we are talking about millions of people. I really consider this something amazing. Now I am afraid that someone could harm this process. I think that some member countries still need to understand the fundamentals that constitute the EU.





Torsten

souvenir vendor



Europe is
Together

Name

Torsten

Place

Tiergarten

Profession

**Souvenir vendor
at Checkpoint Charlie**

The European Union is our best choice to stand together for a better future. It is something born after a terrible war. Of course there are difficulties among us, but I think it is always better to look back and try to learn from our mistakes.





Annelie
Debbie

teacher
author



Europe is

Hope

Name

Annelie

Debbie *

Place

Straßer der Pariser Komune
Friedrichshain, former East Berlin

Profession

Teacher

Author

The European Union is the result of a big hope for a better future.

It makes possible to meet new people and share cultures and experiences. Nowadays there is a big danger, but it is something unique and it must survive.

* They met in the East Germany in 1988, as they were roommate in a university dormitory. In 1989, Debbe left and went back to the United States. They met after 30 years, in Berlin, for the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Wall.





Blanche

librarian



Europe is

Idea

Name

Blanche

*

Place

Marzahn

former East Berlin

Profession

Librarian

*Europe is a great idea.
We have the chance to stay
united and to travel.
But above all we have the
opportunity to choose, to
determine a political
change and to oppose
negative change.*



* Born in the former East Germany



Rita

retired



Europe is
Refugees

Name

Rita

Place

Marzahn

former East Berlin

Profession

Retired

A lot of refugees came to Germany through Europe. I'm not happy with the refugees, they exploit us. Especially since there is a lack of regulations.





Detlef

engine driver



Europe is
Improvement

Name

Detlef

Place

Marzahn

former East Berlin

Profession

Engine driver

*Europe is standardised.
We have unified expenses,
salaries and social
conditions. Apart from that
the system is deficient. A lot
of improvement is possible.*





Marco

social worker



Europe is
Structure

Name

Marco

Place

Kreuzberg

Profession

Social worker

*Europe is something that
brings us together and gives
us a structure.*

*I think that with Europe we
have created a safe
environment around us.*





Father Ulrich

diocesan shepherd



Europe is
Community

Name

Father Ulrich

Place

Kreuzberg

Profession

Diocesan shepherd

Europe for me is a very important institution, because we Germans tried to destroy it two times. And so this is our chance to bring peace to many people. I do not think it is good to say 'this is mine and this is yours'. With Europe we can learn not to separate but to share our heritage, our life and our future.





Blanche

employee



Europe is
Multitude

Name

Blanche

Place

Heidestraße

Mitte

Profession

Employee

*Europe to me is a multitude
of people and cultures,
where we have the
opportunity to travel freely
and know others better.*





David

metal worker



Europe is
Community

Name

David

Place

Berlin Hauptbahnhof

Mitte

Profession

Metal worker

*Community, friendships,
unity yet the refugee crisis
is improvable.
Especially the Brexit
situation.*





Margot

chemical engineer



Europe is

Home

Name

Margot

*

Place

Berlin Hauptbahnhof

Mitte

Profession

Chemical Engineer

Europe is my new home. My children and grandchildren have the freedom to study and go wherever they want. I didn't have this choice. And I also think that it is a space where we can learn something from the others.



* Born in the former East Germany



Martina
Jeannette

tax advisor
student



Europe is

History

Name

Martina

Jeannette

Place

Alexanderplatz
former East Berlin

Profession

Tax advisor

Student

*Europe is the freedom
of travel and a big economic
union.
There are many countries
with many differences, but
cultural fundamentals are the
same and also our history.*





Oliver
Zamira

employee
employee



Europe is
Freedom

Name

Oliver*

Zamira

Place

Alexanderplatz
former East Berlin

Profession

Employees

Europe is freedom. We are different countries with a sole identity. We can travel where we want and state our opinion on everything. I think that this is the most important thing.



* Born in the former East Germany



Dirk
Franca

businessman
assistant



Europe is
Unity

Name

Dirk

Franca

Place

Brandenburg Tor

Mitte

Profession

Businessman

Assistant

Europe to me is the possibility to travel without borders and to be a part of something much bigger. Of course the relations between countries sometimes can be problematic. But in the end I truly trust in the individuals. People are not stupid I am sure that they understand that they can get more advantages than disadvantages from the EU.





Birgit

secretary



Europe is
Freedom

Name

Birgit

Place

Invalidenstraße

Mitte

Profession

Secretary

We live in freedom and not war and that is the way. We are international as well, which is nice. Here in Germany there is a lot of restlessness. The politics are very chaotic and unsettling.





Irina

shop assistant



Europe is

Travel

Name

Irina

Place

Kurfürstendamm

Charlottenburg

Profession

Shop Assistant

*Europe is the liberty to go
wherever you want.
But I am quite concerned
about the economic
situation which could bring
more problems.*





Heiner

Professor emeritus



Europe is

Culture

Name

Heiner

Place

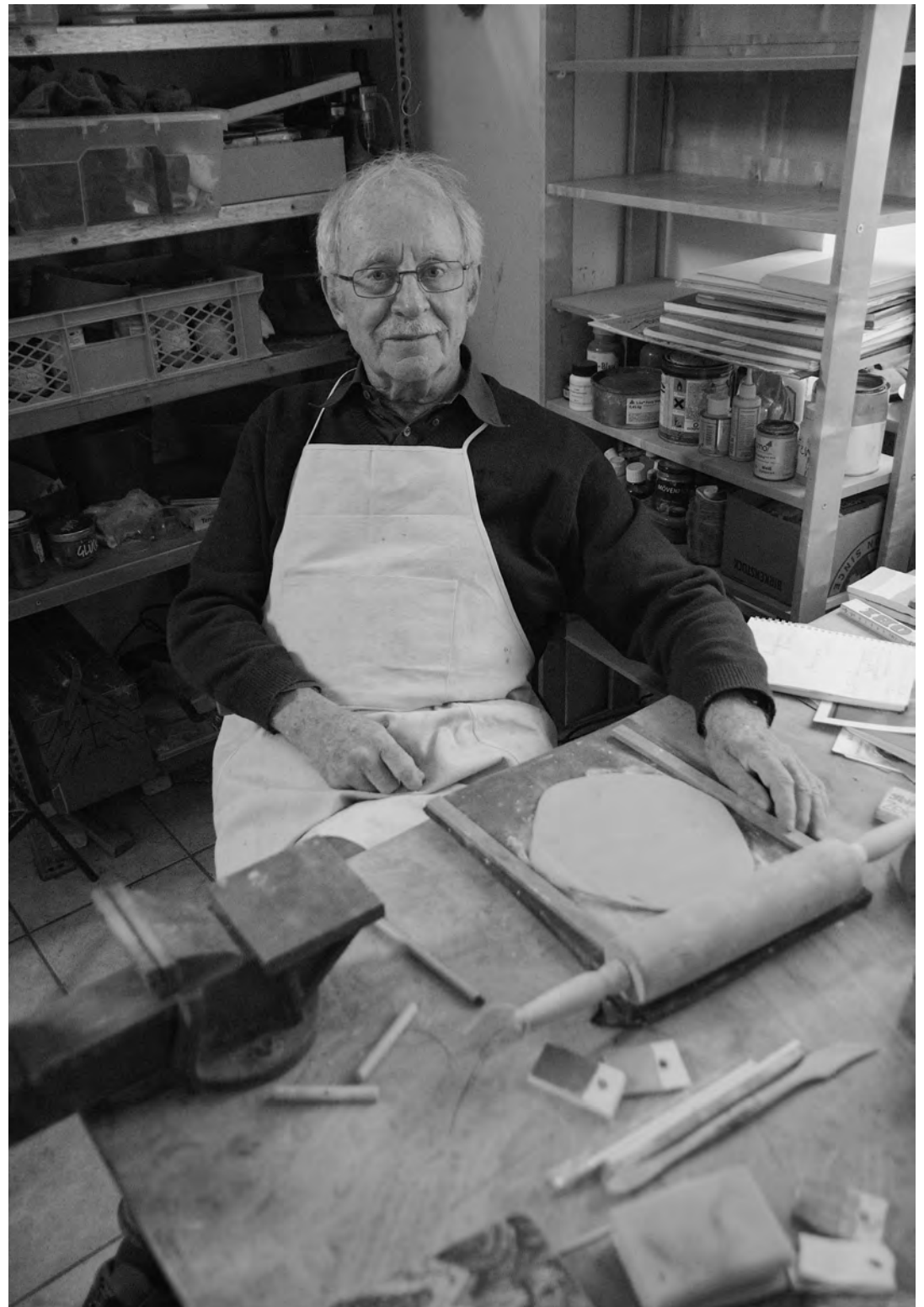
WorkStadt Berlin

Mitte

Profession

**Professor emeritus of Clinical
Psychology. Artist and curator**

I think that being European for me is even more important than being German. Many Germans have problems sometimes with their own identity because of our past. I think that Europe helped us a lot to develop our identity immediately after the war. Nowadays Europe is very much in danger and I think that one of the reasons is the lack of democracy and the predominance of economics instead of solidarity in the European Union. I really hope that the new European Commission will implement different policies.





Kamilla

trader



Europe is
Change

Name

Kamilla

Place

Mitte

Profession

Trader

I like the fact that there are no borders anymore like in the past. I think that the Fall of the Wall and Europe in the end changed the life of all of us. A friend of mine posted a picture on Instagram with her husband, writing: 'If the Wall didn't fall, I wouldn't marry this guy, probably'.





Gabrielle

funeral clerk



Europe is
Alliance

Name

Gabrielle

Place

Mitte

Profession

Funeral clerk at the cemetery
of St. Elizabeth church

*Europe is an alliance and
we all belong to it.
I don't have the feeling that
the European Union is in
danger. My life has changed
since the fall of the wall.
The opportunities have
improved.*





Hannah

Head of Marketing



Europe is

Responsability

Name

Hannah

Place

Berlin Wall Foundation

Profession

**Head of Marketing, Press
and Public Relations at BWF**

Europe means community and stability, but also liberty and freedom of speech. It is a big chance, that is why every person must do their best to enhance it. Europe is a never ending project, it does not come by itself. Having the freedom means also that the future of Europe is up to us. Everyone must do their part.





Emin
Helvan

businessman



Europe is
Craddle

Name

Emin

Helvan

Place

Neukölln

Profession

Businessman

*To us Europe is the cradle
of civilization, of justice,
of humanity, but above all
a place where everyone is
safe and equal to the other.
I am an optimist. I think that
Europe is becoming more
and more cosmopolitan and
open minded.*





Fatima

refugee



Europe is
Safety

Name

Fatima

Place

Neukölln

Profession

Refugee

*I still do not know what
Europe means to me.
But I can say that here I feel
safe. I am a refugee, coming
from Aleppo. Here I am
building a second life. I am
starting to consider myself
German. Maybe in the near
future I will start to develop
also a European identity.*





Uli

technician



Europe is

Gift

Name

Uli

Place

Kreuzberg

Profession

Technician

Europe is my home and I think that being a European is a big gift. The rise of nationalism is a worldwide problem. But I do not think that Europe must be worried about that. Because in the face of nationalistic movements that raise their heads, on the other hand, European sentiment is reinforced. There is a big consciousness growing about how great it is to be European.





Paul

student



Europe is
The best

Name

Paul

Place

Kreuzberg

Profession

Student

Europe is the best place to live because here one can live how they want, being what they want. In other countries we do not have this freedom of expression and we must not admire them. After the Second World War we built a world of freedom and tolerance we must be ready to fight for it.





Arpad

director



Europe is
Everything

Name

Arpad

Place

Schöneberg

Profession

Director

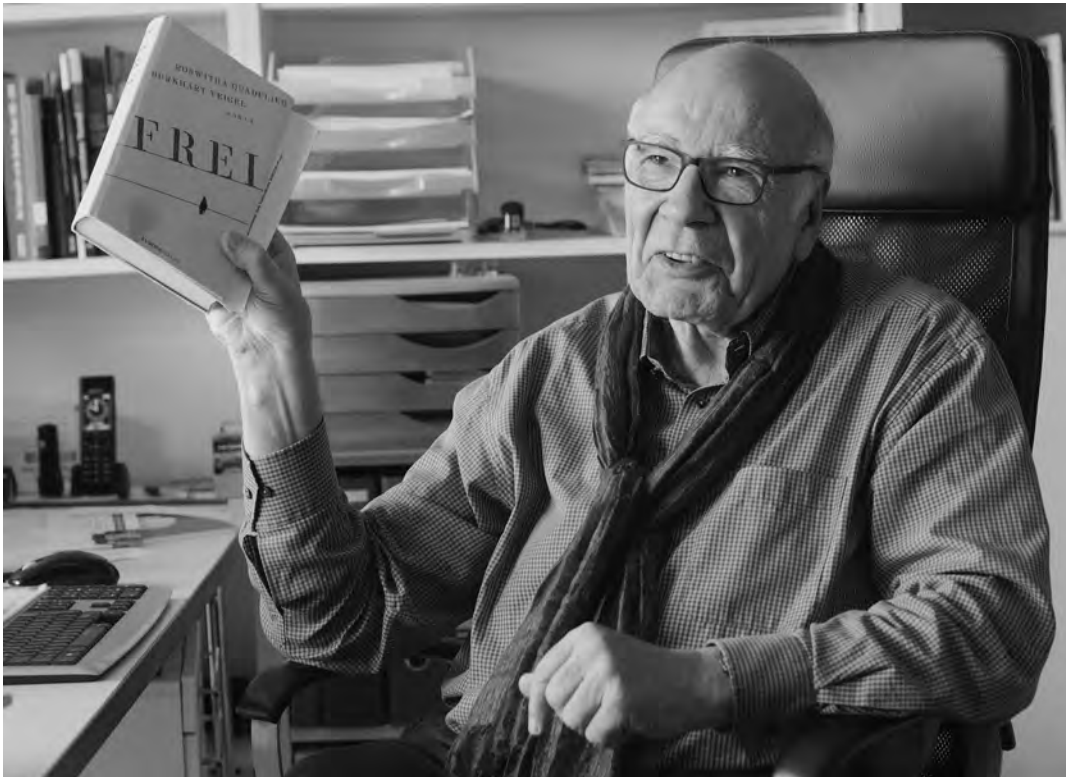
Europe for me is simply everything. I have spent my life fighting for Europe, through my works and against ignorance. There are of course limits and there have been several mistakes, but Europe remains the best place to live. But now all of this is in danger. When I was a kid, my family didn't say me that our family was a Jewish family. They told me that only when I was an adult, asking me to keep the secret. I thought that it was so stupid. But now after so many years, I am starting to think that they were right because there is a big thread and nobody was expecting it. We are getting back to the past, we have to get used to it and I do not like it.





Burkhart

escape helper



Europe is

Unity

Name

Burkhart *

Place

Gartenstraße

Mitte

Profession

Escape helper

I think that Europe is a very important thing and we must protect the rights that we have accomplished. But also we must be strong to deal with the challenges that the future will present. I am very worried above all about China and Russia. I think that Europe must strengthen itself in many means. We must not think only about the economy, which is important, but also about a common military and foreign policy. We must absolutely be united.

* Escape helper during the Cold War. He made pass from East Berlin to West Berlin more than 600 people





Uwe

author



Europe is

Peace

Name

Uwe

Place

Café im Literaturhaus

Charlottenburg

Profession

Author

*Europe is on the edge and
the main question is what
will become.*

*There are a lot of challenges
and needs. The main need is
how to become a union.*





Reinhard

professor



Europe is

Future

Name

Reinhard

Place

**Café im Literaturhaus
Charlottenburg**

Profession

Professor of Int'l Relations

Europe for me is the future of my daughter. I think that people like the EU more today than two years ago, because they see how dangerous the nationalist movement can be or decisions like Brexit. Of course we have to take some steps. In foreign policy and the defense policy we could do much more.





Idis

retired



Europe is
Problems

Name

Idis

Place

Kurfürstendamm

Charlottenburg

Profession

Retired

Europe is important especially for our economy and peace. I consider myself a supporter of the European Union, but unfortunately there are many problems today. I really hope that the countries will overcome all of the different opinions and find compromises in order to keep this system working.





Lucas
Julika

videographer
student



Europe is
Wonder

Name

Lucas

Julika

Place

Kurfürstendamm

Charlottenburg

Profession

Videographer

Student

Europe is actually the best way to experience different cultures and different styles to live. You need only a few hours to go everywhere you want in Europe.





Ashwani

waiter



Europe is

Nice

Name

Ashwani

Place

Kurfürstendamm

Charlottenburg

Profession

Waiter

*It is a great place to live.
I am worried about the future
as you can not really know
what may happen.*







Secret moments

We spoke to many people during our trips.

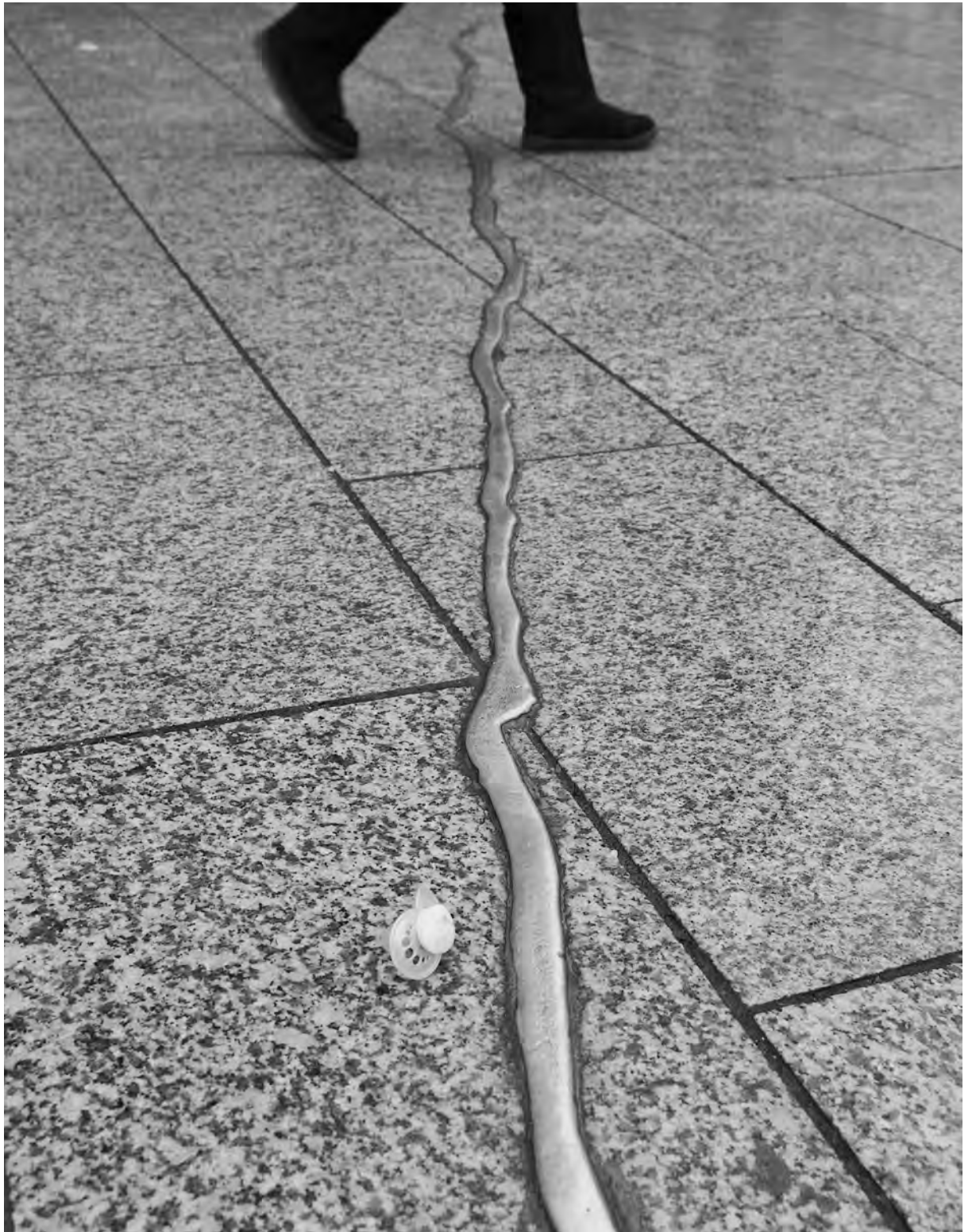
Some of them agreed to be interviewed but they did not want it to be published.

Some people spoke through their own eyes.



2019





2019



Mein – Dein – Unser Europa // #YOUrope



Anlässlich des
nahenden Brexit
wir: Was bedeutet
Europa für Dich?

On the occasion of
Brexit approaching we
wonder: what does
Europe mean to you?



2011





2019







2005



2019







2014



2014



Lisa Borgiani, Marta Ottaviani

What is Europe to you?

the European project

Interviews and texts by Marta Ottaviani

Photographs by Lisa Borgiani

www.whatseurope.eu

Graphic and cover design by Alessandro Colombo

Lisa Borgiani

Lisa Borgiani (Verona, 1979) is an Italian artist and photographer. Her work ranges from photography, installations and mobile sculptures. She has exhibited in various galleries, museums, international art fairs and public institutions: Embassy of Italy in Washington D.C., European Parliament in Brussels, Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco, London, Singapore and others. For several years she has collaborated with architects, researchers, Italian and American universities, directors and economists.

In October 2017 her permanent installation "Waves of Light" was inaugurated at the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan.

In June 2018 her work "The unexpected meets rationalism" won the tender organized by the Brera Academy with the residence on the Comacina Island (Como), where she created an installation inside the house designed by the architect Pietro Lingeri and built in 1939.

In October 2018 she participated with the installation "enne points of tension" at the Fabbrica del Vapore as a Special Project, Step Art Fair 2018, Milan Sculpture.

In March 2019 she created the installation "The unexpected meets rationalism" at Villa Leoni, Ossuccio (CO) continuing her dialogue with the rationalist architecture.

Since 2003 she has been working on various street photography projects in Bosnia, south America, United States, Italy, Israel and Greece.

Lisa Borgiani lives and works in Milan.

www.lisaborgiani.com



Marta Ottaviani

Marta Ottaviani (Milan, 1976) is an Italian freelance journalist and analyst, focused on Turkey, Greece and Russia. She contributes to high profile Italian daily newspapers such as Avvenire and La Stampa. Her first two books were published in 2008 and 2010.

In 2005, she moved to Istanbul to nurture her interest in Turkish politics and to further develop her expertise. She worked as a correspondent for several media organisations.

She has been a direct witness of the ascent of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his authoritarian revolution. From 2008, she went to Athens regularly, to report on the debt crisis and the political situation in the country.

She decided to capture what she had observed in Turkey in her 2016 book, *Il Reïs. Come Erdoğan ha cambiato la Turchia* (The Reïs. How Erdoğan changed Turkey). In this book, Marta Ottaviani explains how Turkish internal and external policies changed, describing how this affected the local society and increasingly distanced the country from the European Union. The book has been extremely well received in the academic and mainstream environments and has won several awards.

Marta Ottaviani currently lives in Milan with her beloved cat, Erdogat, and she is starting to deal with Russia as well, deepening the knowledge of the country's language and culture.

She likes to describe herself like a diehard optimist, wannabe lindy hopper and proudly European.



@martaottaviani



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*thanks to
the city of Berlin and the Berliner,
Alessandro Alviani, Francesca Amé, Ferdinand Moeck, Francesco De Mori,
Heinrich Legewie, Isabella Menzel, Giancarlo Rovetta, Alessandro Todaro*

*Edited in Italy by Centro Diffusione Arte, Milan
Printed by GECA s.p.a., San Giuliano Milanese, Milan
February 2020*

Special thanks to Alessandro Colombo for his suggestions, passion, support and professionalism

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In Berlin we found a city full of life despite the tragedies and pains of the past.
A capital that can really represent a reference point for the entire European Union.

For the third part of our journey, we chose to go to London, the Europe that
no longer wants to be Europe.

