

Once Upon a Time in Europe

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When I think about Europe, the first thing that crosses my mind is freedom of movement. My family and I travelled often abroad since, especially my dad, enjoyed crossing borders without long procedures. He's originally from Romania and grew up in a very restrictive system where international travels were not possible. I guess I have quite many memories connected to Europe and, honestly, I can't remember when I started to "feel" European. Anyway, one memory stuck. My family and I were on holidays near Aachen which is in Western Germany next to the Dutch and Belgian border. I can't remember the name of the village where we were staying, but I know that a border was going through it. During a short evening walk, we crossed the border several times but did not even know whether we were abroad now or not. Basically, what I am trying to say is that it did not matter whether we were still in Germany or another country. It was a village, and we simply were walking through it without thinking much about it.

Nowadays, I can cherish this freedom even more. When I moved to Sweden for my studies, I was confronted with my European privileges on another level. Simply because I was born in Europe entitles me to move countries easily and to study for free but also something as simple like free roaming. Most of my classmates don't have that... When I was outside of Europe

for the first time, I realised even more how privileged I am and how valuable the initial European idea is. Living within Europe is a luxury. However, people tend to forget how much progress we already made in Europe. Europe feels increasingly like a fortress that tries its best to shut down its borders. Strict border controls are introduced again on all European borders and people are literally drowning in front of its walls.

Now, I live in Malmoe, right next to the Danish border. Strict border controls are an everyday practice now, and it makes me sad to see how little people try to maintain European values. I've the feeling we're rather doing steps backwards instead of bringing the European idea forward. Recent crises are being used to endanger freedom of movement with the simple excuse of maintaining national security. What is actually the risk? That people enter the country who might have lost everything without a valid passport? We need to talk to each other again instead of letting nationalism rise again!

The people in that village lived peacefully together regardless of what their passport said... Europe should be like this village, where borders simply don't matter!