

2014, Vol. 12, No. 1 - 2

EAROS

časopis pro kulturní / sociální antropologii





CARGO – Journal for Cultural and Social Anthropology

ISSN 1212-4923 (print)

ISSN 2336-1956 (online)

Publication Frequency: biannually

Critical Anthropologies in / of Central Europe

Guest Editors

Hana Červinková

(University of Lower Silesia, Poland and Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i)

Jessica C. Robbins-Ruszkowski

(Institute of Gerontology & Department of Anthropology, Wayne State University, USA)

Zdeněk Uherek

(Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i)

Cargo is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA).

Cargo focuses on theory-and-practice of ethnographic research, critical discussion of anthropological theory, and on ethical issues of producing anthropological knowledge. The journal publishes academic articles, interviews with key scholars in anthropology, and texts debating methods of teaching anthropology.

Cargo seeks to present materials that are innovative, challenging, and sometimes experimental. As a journal publishing texts in Czech, Slovak, and English, Cargo aims to reach scholars whose fieldwork and topics are close to geographical area of Central and East Europe.

Cargo is listed in the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH), category NAT.



This publication is supported by the International Visegrad Fund as a part of the International Visegrad Fund Standard Grant Project (21320085) entitled Social and Cultural Change in Contemporary Central Europe.



Contact Editorial Office

Cargo

Na Florenci 3

110 01 Praha 1

editors@cargojournal.org

<http://cargojournal.org>

www.casaonline.cz

Issue 1, 2 / 2014 appears in 30. 1. 2015.

Number of copies: 300 / Náklad: 300 ks.

Critical Anthropologies in / of Central Europe

Hana Červinková, Jessica C. Robbins-Ruszkowski,
Zdeněk Uherek

The year 2014 marks the 25th anniversary since the end of state-socialisms in Central Europe and a quarter-of-a-century of anthropological research on changes in the region. In this thematic issue of *Cargo*, we are bringing you papers and discussions on themes that have dominated anthropological production on and in Central Europe. Although the authors are thinking through concepts in relation to the past, they are also making efforts to move beyond the logic of Cold-War binaries to frameworks that bring the anthropology in/of Central Europe explicitly into conversation with conceptual developments based on ethnographic research carried out in other parts of the globe.

In the opening article, Michał Buchowski challenges stereotypes of anthropology in Central Europe by tracing key theoretical trends in the history of Polish anthropology. In his article, Polish anthropology emerges as both part of—and related to—theoretical movements in the field worldwide. Through the concept of a “twilight zone,” Buchowski encourages us to think of Central European anthropology as a productive site of critical knowledge that can simultaneously resist “hegemonic ideas and... marginal fundamentalisms.” This perspective, which values diverse forms of knowledge and investigations of the relations of power among these forms, offers a hopeful way forward for the field.

Monika Baer shares Buchowski’s concerns for how power relations inhere in models of difference. In her article, Baer explicitly challenges the Cold-War binary that has long underpinned the anthropologies of the region by exposing the limits of anthropological debates on this topic. By looking to other contemporary theoretical perspectives—namely, the work of Paul Rabinow, George Marcus, and Kim Fortun—Baer is able to suggest ways out of the ongoing debate that she identifies as being at a “heated stage.” Rabinow’s “anthropology of the contemporary,” Marcus’s “para-ethnography,” and Fortun’s “ethnography in late industrialism” make explicit the contestations, contingencies, and multiplicities that constitute human experience—and should therefore be part of anthropological analysis. In such models of and for the world, binary structures are impossible to uphold.

Like Baer, Jessica Robbins-Ruszkowski discusses the dominance of Cold-War binaries in thinking about the anthropology of Central Europe. Rather than directly intervening with the “heated” debates identified by Buchowski and Baer, Robbins-Ruszkowski instead suggests an analysis that emerges from local categories of practice. Drawing on her own research on experiences and ideals of aging in Poland, she reflects on the role of such binaries in the lives of older Poles and finds that they figure in the construction, maintenance, or dissolution of personhood and relatedness. By closing her article with personal reflections on her motivations for studying Central Europe, Robbins-Ruszkowski encourages us to question the role of our own histories in motivating our research.

Agnieszka Pasieka likewise takes up the question of personal experience in relation to the anthropology of Central Europe. By relating the experiences of scholars (including Pasieka herself) from Central-Eastern Europe who become discursively required to be “local experts,” Pasieka shows well the often implicit inequality of global structures of knowledge. As she puts it so well, “In short, a local scholar is often more a ‘local’ than a ‘scholar.’” Yet Pasieka does not end here; instead, she asks, “Why are Eastern European anthropologists absent from mainstream scholarly discourse? Is this absence necessarily detrimental? What are the conditions of translating local concerns into global ones and what is the cost of this process? And finally, in which ways is Western scholarship present in the works of local anthropologists and what are the problems that local anthropology is facing?” In her answers to these questions, Pasieka draws our attention to different publishing practices and ideals, norms of what counts as ethnographic data, “native” anthropology, and the strained economic conditions of contemporary academia. Refusing easy solutions to these problems, Pasieka leaves us with an appreciation for the complexity of the issues involved.

Also concerned with the contemporary state of academia, Nikola Balaš offers personal reflections on experiences of studying anthropology in the Czech Republic and England. By situating his critical reflections on the pedagogy of anthropology within broader disciplinary concerns about generalization versus specialization and the value of fieldwork, Balaš shows that historical explanations only take us so far; critiques of the contemporary on its own terms are also necessary. Balaš’s essay encourages anthropologists to think about how we teach the various elements of anthropology (especially writing) and how we imagine, enact, and reproduce the boundaries of our discipline.

In the interview section of this thematic issue of *Cargo*, Jakub Grygar talks to Zdenek Uherek and Juraj Podoba - the Chairmen of CASA (Czech Association of Social Anthropologists) and SASA (Slovak Association of Social Anthropologists) about the convergence and divergence of interests between national anthropological organisations such as CASA and SASA and transnational professional associations such as EASA. In their answers, the leaders of the Czech and Slovak national

organisations offer valuable reflections on the disciplinary developments in Czech and Slovak anthropological communities in the last decade. In the last section of the interview, Uherek and Podoba answer questions concerning the current ethics of anthropological research and practice.

Taken together, the articles, essay, and interview that comprise this thematic issue help us to understand the anthropology in and of Central Europe from a new light. Although this issue is animated by discussions of East and West, and of past and present, the authors demonstrate through personal, ethnographic, and theoretical arguments that these categories are not so easily drawn. Rather, complex, self-reflexive, and critical analysis reveals the anthropology in and of Central Europe to be a vibrant, diverse, and energetic field of inquiry that has much to offer both the interdisciplinary study of the region and the discipline of anthropology itself.

Stati / Articles

Michał Buchowski: *Twilight Zone Anthropologies: The Case of Central Europe* 7

Monika Baer: *Think Globally, Act Locally? Anthropological Strategies in/of East-Central Europe* 19

Jessica C. Robbins-Ruszkowski: *Thinking with “Postsocialism” in an Ethnographic Study of Old Age in Poland* 35

Agnieszka Pasięka: *Local Scholars, Global Experts: from a Native’s Point of View* 51

Rozhovor / Interview

What is “National” in National Anthropological Associations? An Interview with Zdeněk Uherek and Juraj Podoba (Jakub Grygar) 63

Výuka antropologie / Teaching Anthropology

Nikola Balaš: *Anthropology Limited: Studying Anthropology in the Czech Republic (and England)* 75

Zprávy z konferencí / Conference Report

Hana Červinková, Zdeněk Uherek: *Rethinking Anthropologies in Central Europe for Global Imaginaries* 89

Twilight Zone Anthropologies: The Case of Central Europe

Michał Buchowski

Abstract: This article aims at contributing to the discussion on the global hierarchies of knowledge and flows of anthropological ideas. Anthropologists perceive themselves as advocates of an egalitarian ethos. Nevertheless, for various interrelated reasons, the discipline of anthropology is divided into privileged and underprivileged regions. Cross-cutting disparities find expression in such notions as center and periphery, Global South and North and, last but not least, East and West. Central and Eastern European anthropology, which was already diversified under communist regimes, has become even more varied in the postsocialist period. Despite this it is often perceived by metropolitan anthropologies as a provincial enterprise burdened by paradigms from the past. These intricate power relations are described and the pecking order of different systems of knowledge questioned. By referring to selected achievements of anthropologists in Central Europe, the intellectual and innovative potential of twilight zone anthropologies is promoted.

Keywords: hierarchies of knowledge, world anthropologies, twilight zone anthropologies, Central and Eastern European anthropologies

The “anthropological East” was perceived in the West in much the same way as communism: unattractive, non-innovative and outdated. Johannes Fabian’s (1983) concept of allochronism fully applies here: Eastern European ethnographers were coeval, but resembled living skeletons of the past.¹ Many scholars from the region have shown that this was not really the case. Slavko Kremenšek wrote that Slovenian ethnology had already moved away from traditional folklore studies in the mid-1960s (cf. Godina 2002). In countries like Slovakia and Bulgaria meanwhile, theoretically sophisticated structuralist and socio-historical interpretations of folklore materials were developed (cf. Kilianova 2005; Elchinova 2002). In the 1960s, in the period of the Prague Spring, the ethnological scholarly tradition in Czechoslovakia was so conspicuous that it earned a distinct designation – the “Czech School” (Koffer 2011). In Poland, phenomenological, semiotic and various forms of structuralism were practiced. In the 1970s, members of the movement representing these theoretical orientations published

1 I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers whose critical remarks have helped me to improve and expand my argument.

a manifesto in which they described themselves as the “new Polish ethnology” (Barański 2008). It was not only in the aforementioned country that the theoretical and research landscape was very diversified long before 1989 (Buchowski 2002).

* * *

Much has been written about the decolonization of knowledge from the perspective of postcolonial studies, South-Asian and Latin American Subaltern Studies, and going beyond both of them, the so-called “Decolonializing perspective” represented, for instance, by Anibal Quijan, Walter D. Mignolo and Ramon Grosfoguel (2008). All these intellectual formations use various strategies in order to undermine the existing power relations reproduced in an unequal world in the domains of social relations, economics, politics and culture. Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies have been criticized by even more radical “Decolonializers” for reproducing the western episteme based on the Cartesian duality of mind and body, and resulting in the acceptance of the view that there exists a “god’s-eye” view, in other words objective knowledge detached from the “body-politics of knowledge” (ibid.). For instance, this attitude is deemed to be replicated by scholars working in critical postmodern, Foucauldian and Wallerstein’s world-systems’ traditions. An effective decolonization of knowledge should undermine epistemological Eurocentrism and allow for an emergence of heteroglossic knowledge that will be cosmopolitan and local at the same time.

I would like to present some thoughts about the hierarchical relations that have emerged as a result of the power held by the Western centers and the critique of them by the Southern Rebels from Asia and Latin America. Anthropology took part in these struggles, for which the World Anthropologies Network, a book on *World Anthropologies* (Lins Ribeiro and Escobar 2008) and the World Council of Anthropological Associations figure as icons. Situated in a certain global and historical context, I have to make clear what is my own anthropological genealogy. I was educated as an ethnologist in Poland, one of the Central European countries, at the time when it was situated on the mental map of the world simply in the East. After completing my PhD and being employed at the University in Poznań as an assistant professor, I pursued further studies in the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany. Later, I lectured also as a visiting professor at Rutgers University and Columbia University, and I spent a considerable time at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Budapest. I served as a President of the European Association of Social Anthropologists and later as chair of the World Council of Anthropological Associations. I still serve as president of the Polish Ethnological Society. It is not egocentrism or navel-gazing that lies behind this short account of my anthropological career. I just want to say that as in the case of many other colleagues, my life trajectory coaxes me to make some insights pertinent to the multivocality

of world anthropologies in a globalizing world, especially with respect to the situation of Central and Eastern European anthropology.

The notion of “episteme” raised by Decolonizers seems important. By dint of this term serious arguments were launched that virtually all knowledge produced in the domain of science has Eurocentric roots. At the same time, equally strong counterarguments claim that science, although it is a mode of knowledge production born in Europe, can be at least partly independent from social and cultural constraints. As such, science allows for a diversity of ideas which are selected by way of rationality, and thus modern scientific practice can be implanted in various non-European contexts. Long ago this point was made by rationalists in their discussions with relativists, most prominently by Ernest Gellner (1992).

While one does not have to agree with Gellner’s philosophical reasoning, there is empirical evidence that within this “Western episteme” a variety of epistemological traditions exist. In anthropology, there are differences between and within Northern American, Scandinavian, German, French, and last but not least Central European anthropologies. Divisions between ethnologists (*Volkskundists*) and “real” anthropologists became as fake as they were legendary. Within Anglo-Saxon, Francophone, etc. anthropologies there is a long history of paradigmatic fights and political conflicts between empiricists and interpretivists, politically minded scholars and postmodernists, symbolists and those focused on material relations of power. Moreover, within this essentialised Western epistemological tradition, visible hierarchies between national and regional traditions persist. As a result, Europeans tend to complain about North-American hegemony, and various Anglophone peripheral anthropologists feel marginalized in relation to those located in metropolises. Within the confines of the Francophone universe, similar phenomena can be observed. On a European level, Southerners whine about Northerners’ domination. Central and Eastern Europeans, meanwhile, often feel ignored in the whole continental system of knowledge production.

Moreover, these hierarchies are refracted at the national level. Within given states individuals or academic institutions protest against the self-appointed and self-congratulatory authority of the central power-holders and established gatekeepers located at the richest universities. In many places, the symbolic power of the label “sociocultural anthropology” is used against supposedly backward “ethnology” and “folklore.” Thus, while presented as unified, Western/Northern anthropology itself is internally divided both with regard to epistemic traditions and the political economy of science. From the inside, the discipline looks like an eternal battlefield of various factions and fractions. Even in the philosophically refined critique of Western epistemological dominance, such as that represented by the Decolonizers, the specter of essentialism is present. In other words, the subaltern school, postcolonial theory and the decolonial school relapse into the same essentializing modes of thought that they attempt to criticize.

A division into Center and Periphery, as well as global North and South, reappears in all these debates about entangled economic, social, cultural and epistemological domination and hierarchies. However, this duality not only reifies the map of anthropological traditions by making it white and black, but also leaves various anthropological regions out in grey areas, placing legions of anthropologists worldwide in a cognitive and scientific-political limbo. Several of these, “twilight zone anthropologies” for instance, Japanese or Mediterranean, in one way or another have already managed to mark their presence on the intellectual map. However, several others have not been able to do so, while many do not really want to engage in this global battle for recognition, for instance (at least partly) Russian anthropologies and those coming from mainland China.² Several scholars in the latter both see themselves as self-contained and self-sufficient scholarly entities or sustainable interpretive communities. In any case, several diverse anthropologies located betwixt-and-between do not quite fit the dualistic division into North and South, or even Center and Periphery. Chinese anthropologists appear marginal and provincial to Westerners, but from their own perspective the reverse may be the case.

We definitely should not think in terms of lines and clear-cut boundaries, especially where intellectual traditions are considered. To do so would strengthen reified divisions and reproduce a part of the essentializing strategy anthropologists tirelessly attempt to deconstruct. However, one may wonder why in all this discussion about world divisions the North/South axis has become so conspicuous, while the East/West axis, so prominent during the Cold War, has disappeared. The reintroduction of this forgotten, conceptually constructed dividing line into ongoing debates about hierarchies of knowledge should help us to see with more clarity the position of Central and Eastern Europe in the global chart of anthropological ideas. I hope that at this point the reasons for my above-mentioned personal testimony become more understandable.

* * *

But let me start this short discussion in an indirect manner. In the 1980s and 1990s several intellectuals from what was then commonly known as Eastern Europe claimed that this region, which should actually have been called Central Europe, was kidnapped from the West by the barbaric East, i.e. the Soviets. Accord-

2 “At least partly” has to be emphasized. In the contemporary world, total isolation is in practice impossible. In the case of Chinese anthropology, attempts at internationalization are undertaken. Furthermore, at Western universities many Chinese students and post-docs acquire Western style-education. [I owe this remark to one of the anonymous reviewers.] It should be added that Chinese scholars are also engaged in the work of global organizations, such as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, and the World Council of Anthropological Associations.

ing to Milan Kundera (1984), the historical shaping of Central Europe meant that it actually belonged to the West but, left behind the Iron Curtain, it was orphaned and placed unjustly on the mental map of Westerners in the East. All the arguments used by Kundera in this call for emancipation were reified, and this was not merely a strategic, but also a spontaneous essentialism; he, along with many other scholars, thought that cultures, even civilizations, exist in a billiard-ball-like formation. Nevertheless, via this seemingly strange route of a novelist's argument, I want to shed light on the status of post-socialist anthropologies that are in fact left out of world anthropologies discussions.

Kundera argued that Central Europe has always belonged to the West, since it participated in all the major Western European cultural trends, such as Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment and Modernism. By analogy, we may say that, in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century, it also participated in the major anthropological scientific traditions. Bronisław Malinowski and Franz Steiner figure as tokens illustrating this phenomenon. Although, to a large extent Central European anthropology belonged to a "nation building" (Stocking 1982), German-style tradition, it is, I think, as legitimate as any other tradition practiced anywhere. However, in the post-war period it fell off the global anthropological radar being mistakenly classified as vulgar-, or at best orthodox-Marxist (cf. Buchowski 2011). As mentioned at the very beginning, anthropologists east of the river Elbe dividing Germany participated in their own ways in several anthropological orientations; they also managed to develop their own original ideas that emerged in the twilight zones considered by western anthropologists as simply grey and gloomy.

Let me illustrate the point with the case of Polish ethnology/anthropology. First came the development of the so-called new Polish ethnology. In the mid 1970s several authors interpreted ethnographic materials, both historical ones and those they collected themselves, in a new way (see Stomma 1976, 1976a). They opposed a positivistic paradigm predominant since World War II that I call "ethnographism" (Buchowski 2011). They announced their ideas in a tripartite manifesto (Benedyktowicz et al. 1980, 1980a, 1981). Although it consisted mainly of succinct characteristics of the ideas of scholars representing theories considered important for the group, which ranged from the "Tartu school in semiotics" (mainly Jurij Lotman, Boris Uspienskii, and Eleazar Mieletynskii) via the phenomenology of religion (e.g. Mircea Eliade) to French and British structuralism (e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, Edmund Leach and Mary Douglas), it also contained a concise declaration of interpretive ideas written by Ludwik Stomma, himself strongly influenced by the French intellectual tradition. In these ideas, man is perceived as a "producer of signs." New Polish ethnology stood out from sociology (in the French context à la Issac Chiva) and neo-Marxist economic anthropology (à la Maurice Godelier). The "New Ethnologists" wanted to follow the structural-

ists' concepts of deep structures of thought based on binary coding, and reject orientations considered positivist – for instance functionalism; to practice anthropology by using the ideas of history, semiology, studies of mythology and literature, linguistics, and art history; to emphasize a symbolic aspect of culture; and to discard arbitrary classifications and favor instead interpretations uncovering structures of long duration.

Within the new Polish ethnology, three major theoretical trends can be identified: a phenomenological trend (represented mainly by Zbigniew Benedyktowicz); studies of contemporary myths in popular culture (Czesław Robotycki); and a structuralist one. Within the latter, at least three caucuses should be distinguished: first, structuralism that is deeply concerned with the mythical nature of any cultural creation (Stomma); second, that inspired by the British version of structuralism (Jerzy S. Wasilewski); and third, a strain strongly influenced by Russian semiotics and Eliade's morphology of the sacred (Ryszard Tomicki).

Some scholars declared that the "new Polish ethnology" could not succeed, since its ideas did not match the hegemonic paradigm (Jasiewicz and Slattery 1995: 195). In reality it exerted a lasting influence in Polish anthropological studies. The next generations of scholars, e.g. Zbigniew Libera, Marcin Brocki, and Piotr Kowalski, followed in these footsteps and went beyond them. In this way, the school left its imprint on the way research was conducted and materials interpreted. Brocki claims that this orientation "to this day is (...) the most original and inspiring phenomenon in Polish ethnology" (2008: 202). This is an exaggeration, especially in view of the fact that rival orientations existed (for more details, see Buchowski 2002, 2011). Now, new cohorts of scholars are much more interested in critical, engaged and political anthropology. Nevertheless, the "new Polish ethnology" was an original interpretive paradigm (even if it may appear methodologically incoherent) that emerged as a result of a unique mixture of western anthropological ideas, Tartu-Moscow semiotic school insights and local Polish interpretive traditions. One may only regret that only very few of the works of these scholars were published in English.

The new Polish ethnology was formulated against an important anthropological perspective of research inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (see Ortner 1984). A novel approach taking into consideration social practice close to, on the one hand, Maurice Godelier and Marshall Sahlin's ideas of the hierarchical and dialectical relations between "the mental and the material" and, on the other, Bourdieu's theory of practice, have been developed independently of these anthropological contributions by a philosopher, Jerzy Kmita (cf. 1982, 1985). Kmita outlined the so-called socio-regulative theory of practice and culture that at the turn of 1970s and 1980s attracted several anthropologists working mainly at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. It uniquely combined elements of Karl Marx and Max Weber, strengthened by Florian Znaniecki's concept of a "humanis-

tic coefficient,” which assumes that subjects’ perception of the phenomena studied should be taken into account in the social sciences’ rendition of culture.

As mentioned, social practice constitutes the core concept of this indigenous theory. It is treated as a functional structure that represents a realization of historically transformed social reality. The latter is constantly produced and reproduced by conscious subjects participating in it. Acting people motivated by values and goals they want to achieve and knowledge instructing them in how to realize these goals, decide about the shape of a given practice, but they can do this only within a certain structural context. This is a classical attempt at interpreting the relation between “structure” and “agent” that at the same time Sahlins, for instance, also wanted to solve. Culture itself is understood as a form of social consciousness, which consists of normative convictions (about values which are worth achieving) and directive ones (how to achieve these values), both of them particular for any social group. Understood as “ideational” reality (à la Ward Goodenough), culture functions as a subjective and functional regulator of social practice and is conditioned by the same practice. In contradistinction to the “new Polish ethnology,” agency is ascribed to social actors. Practice and culture comprise a field of constant negotiation between individuals and groups located differently in a social structure and invested with differential power in shaping social practice and the cultural representations of it.

In the 1980s, the school focused on the reevaluation of existing anthropological theories. Its representatives embraced the view that science is a domain of culture and practice similar to, for instance, linguistic, artistic and religious cultures and practices. Anthropological theories were not seen merely in terms of their logical connections, but in a broader sociocultural context. In this view, scientific images do not reflect reality, as positivists believed, but are a part of the “cultural dimension of the human objective world” (Pałubicka 1990). Anthropological descriptions themselves present changing constructs regarding cultural phenomena that, in fact, are permeated with our own culturally determined views of them. An ethnocentric character to anthropological concepts, their process of evolution and the cognitive implications for our current view of cultures, in particular of “Other’s” cultures, were emphasized. Driven by these assumptions, the “socio-pragmatists” from Poznań tried to relativize commonly shared and universally applied anthropological categories such as language, magic, religion and ritual. Thus, their reinterpretations addressed various spheres of culture: linguistic (Wojciech Burszta), customs and morality (Jan Grad), and magical, religious and ritualistic (Michał Buchowski), while relativism, rationalism and cross-cultural translations (Zbigniew Gierszewski, Buchowski, Wojciech Burszta) were also discussed.³

3 I discuss these issues in more detail in Buchowski 2011.

In the 1990s, some representatives of the “Poznań School” continued a tradition of critically scrutinizing anthropological theories (Wojciech Dohnal and Piotr Fabiś), while others researched mutual relations between anthropology and literature and philosophy (Burszta and Waldemar Kuligowski). Others followed in the footsteps of the cultural critique inherent in Kmita’s theory of social practice and addressed issues of relations of power and cultural hegemony (Buchowski and Monika Baer). These works became a point of reference for further research on gender relations, inequalities emerging from the process of neo-liberal transformations after 1989 and some studies comparing post-colonialism to post-socialism.

As in the case of the “new Polish ethnology,” the school from Poznań was quite well acquainted with some western ideas, especially in the philosophy of science, but it worked out an original theory of culture of its own, as well as a methodology that enabled an unprecedented reinterpretation of anthropological theories and prompted more critical and “materialist” readings of post-communist transition.

* * *

Nevertheless, in the vein of Kundera’s cultural resistance to Soviet domination, ethnologists also longed for the West and Western ideas. For many, western-style social and cultural anthropology was fetishized and constituted an iconic model to be followed. These politically conditioned relations with Western scholarship led, especially after 1989, to a self-imposed colonization similar to the processes that have taken place in the fields of economy and politics. Western models have often been uncritically embraced. In this sense, Central European anthropology has become a part-and-parcel of the West, but in the Westerners’ anthropological perception it still figures as a poor kin and is situated in a grey zone. In Wallerstein’s terms, it is semi-periphery on the map of the global flow of anthropological knowledge. In any case, it is neither the East nor the West, and is mistakenly placed by Southern Rebels simply in the hegemonic North.

There is one more insight pertinent in this context. A more general picture of the post-socialist intellectual panorama has to be outlined. To understand the dynamics of post-colonialism and post-socialism,⁴ it is essential to see that postcolonialists speak in the name of the intellectual contents of anti-colonial revolutions against, and struggles with, the West and its global colonial and neocolonial dominance. Is there a contemporary voice in Central Europe that does this? I do not think so, because 1989 was not an anti-colonial struggle against the West: quite to the contrary, its capitalism is seen as the most attractive version of modernity. As indicated above, the West was seen as a liberator, protector and future ideal. Post-communist political intellectuals often called for outright self-colonization by the

4 For more details about these relationships see Červinková 2009.

West in order to become liberated from the Eastern model and from the Soviet embrace. Transition theories appealed for a direct, often extremely neoliberal emulation of the West. Michael Herzfeld (2002) labels this kind of dependency crypto-colonialism. In such settings of intellectual and material dependency, no Frantz Fanon can be born in the region.⁵ The social location of Central European scholars as underdogs in the anthropological community of scholars does not equate to a different epistemic location. If their perspective really differs, then it is rather in its reactionary stance in relation to other critically minded anthropologists both in the South and West. Whether anthropology in Central Europe can become a tool for finding a post-crypto-colonial voice, as powerful and influential as that in the Global South, depends probably upon its capacity to work out a self-conscious program for an alternative modernity in Central Europe, which will be highly skeptical towards hegemonic neoliberal as well as populist, or even nationalist, ideologies. Actually, in rising to this challenge, anthropologists seem to be in a privileged position due to the discipline's critical approach to all forms of cultural domination that arise out of social hierarchies and injustice.

One has to add that, in the beginning of this new century, a number of anthropologists have tried to engage in mainstream Western anthropological debates. Quite a few among them have been trained at various western European and northern American universities or profited from scholarly exchange. All of them import new ideas back home which they apply in research and teaching. In a productive dialogue with local traditions, they try hard to overcome existing global hierarchies of knowledge and contribute to the emergence of critical anthropology. There is a hope that as a result, in ways similar to the described above with regard to the socialist past, new original ideas are developing. In these attempts, an overcoming of an intellectual crypto-colonialism seems to be axiomatic.⁶

* * *

By referring to the example of Central Europe, I have just wanted to emphasize that (1) we should always be aware of the existence of such twilight zones that constantly emerge and re-emerge on the global anthropological map, and (2) that thinking in terms of blocks and lines is not only essentializing, but often intellectually futile. World anthropologies should rather be conceptualized as rhizomes, strings, flows and osmotic relations, as the product of continuous space, time and social relations “traversed by economic and political relations of inequality” and “part and parcel of a global system of domination” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 45, 47), but also as intricate and ever-changing contact zones.

5 It was Katherine Verdery who asked a question about who would become the Frantz Fanon of the new corpus of knowledge in and about Central and Eastern Europe (2002: 20).

6 There is no room to render them in detail. I have tried to indicate some, although without really analyzing them, in Buchowski 2012 (chapter IV: “Supplement: Emerging Currents”).

Meanwhile, twilight zones can potentially be very productive also in the domain of anthropological knowledge. At contact zones, “border thinking” can thrive. It can be seen as a critical response both to hegemonic ideas and to marginal fundamentalisms like conservatives’ and nationalists’ reactions to modernity. Border thinking creates a friendly milieu for avoiding fundamentalism and methodological nationalism, as well as isolated, parochial particularism. The latter, a version of which is described by Lins Ribeiro and Escobar as “metropolitan provincialism” (2005: 13), can be easily exercised in the centers of anthropological power. Border thinking in twilight zones also promotes a horizontal dialogue as opposed to any form of vertical monologue. Its slogan goes something like this: “we are all equal because we are all different.” Mutual interaction and dialogue opens spaces for transmodern, universal, transversal and pluriversal anthropology, which still needs a common conceptual language, despite this very diversity of intellectual traditions.

REFERENCES

- Barański, Janusz. 2008. “New Polish Ethnology.” *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 20: 211-222.
- Benedyktowicz, Zbigniew, Czesław Robotycki, Ludwik Stomma, Ryszard Tomicki, and Jerzy Wasilewski. 1980, 1980a, 1981. “Antropologia kultury w Polsce – dziedzictwo, pojęcia, inspiracje. Materiały do słownika.” *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*: part 1 – 34(1), 1980: 47-60; part 2 – 34(2), 1980a: 117-125; part III – 35(1), 1981: 58-60.
- Buchowski, Michał. 2002. “Main Currents in Polish Anthropology: Continuity in Change Before and After 1989.” In *Die Wende als Wende? Orientierungen Europäischer Ethnologien nach 1989*, edited by Konrad Köstlin, Peter Niedermüller, and Hans Nikitsch, 63-82. Wien: Institut für Europäische Ethnologie.
- . 2011. “Polish Ethnology in the Periods of ‘Early’ and ‘Late’ Socialism: from Non-Marxist Orthodoxy to Post-Ethnographical Pluralism.” In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central Europe and South-East Europe: Scientific Self-Description in State Socialist Countries*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft, and Martin Schulze, 147-172. München: OldenbourgVerlag.
- . 2012. *Etnologia polska: historie i powinowactwa*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje.
- Červinková, Hana. 2009. “Postcolonialism, Postsocialism and the Anthropology of East-Central Europe.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2): 155-163.
- Elchinova, Magdalena. 2002. “In Statu Nascendi: Anthropology in Bulgaria.” In *The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Peter Skalnik, 23-41. Prague: Set Out.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Gellner, Ernest. 1992. *Reason and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Godina, Vesna. 2002. "From Ethnology to Anthropology and Back Again: Negotiating the Boundaries of Ethnology and Anthropology in Post-socialist European Countries." In *The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Peter Skalník, 1-22. Prague: Set Out.
- Grosfoguel, Ramon. 2008. "Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality: Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies." *Eurozine*. <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.html>.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. 1997. *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2002. "The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(4): 899-926.
- Jasiewicz, Zbigniew, and David Slattery. 1995. "Ethnography and Anthropology: The Case of Polish Ethnology." In *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology*, edited by Han F. Vermeulen and Arturo A. Roldan, 184-201. London: Routledge.
- Kiliánova, Gabriela. 2005. "Continuity and Discontinuity in an Intellectual Tradition Under Socialism: The 'Folkloristic School' in Bratislava." In *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in East-Central Europe*, edited by Chris Hann, Mihály Sárkány, and Peter Skalník, 257-271. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Kundera, Milan. 1984. "The tragedy of Central Europe." *New York Review of Books*, April 26.
- Lins Ribeiro, Gustavo, and Arturo Escobar, eds. 2006. *World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations in Systems of Power*. New York: Berg.
- . 2006. "World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations within Systems of Power." In *World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations in Systems of Power*, edited by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, and Arturo Escobar, 1-25. New York: Berg.
- Ortner, Sherry. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology in the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26: 126-166.
- Koffer, Blanka. 2011. "Ethnography in the ČS(S)R: Scientification through Sovietization?" In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central Europe and South-East Europe: Scientific Self-Description in State Socialist Countries*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft, and Martin Schulze Wessel, 173-184. München: Oldebourg Verlag.
- Pałubicka, Anna. 1990. *Kulturowy wymiar ludzkiego świata obiektywnego*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza.
- Stocking, George W., Jr. 1982. "Afterword: A View from the Center." *Ethnos* 47: 172-186.
- Stomma, Ludwik. 1976. "Rytuál pokładzin w Polsce – analiza strukturalna." *Etnografia Polska* 19 (1): 51-64.
- . 1976a. "Mit Alkmeny." *Etnografia Polska* 20 (1): 99-110.
- Verdey, Katherine. 2002. "Wither Postsocialism?" [part of: Chris Hann, Caroline Humphrey and Katherine Verdery, Introduction: Postsocialism as a Topic of Anthropological Investigation, 1-28]. In *Postsocialism: Ideas, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, edited by Chris Hann, 15-21. London: Routledge.

Michał Buchowski

mbuch@amu.edu.pl

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

<http://etnologia.amu.edu.pl>

European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)

<http://www.kuwi.europa-uni.de/en/index.html>

Think Globally, Act Locally? Anthropological Strategies in/of East-Central Europe

Monika Baer

Abstract: The paper aims to analyze the main arguments and dynamics of the debate on anthropological traditions in/of East-Central Europe through the prism of the “anthropology of postsocialism,” which has significantly conditioned intellectual exchange over the last decade. The internal logic of strategies employed by participants in the discussion has recently shifted from the need to “catch up with the West” towards a “think globally, act locally” rhetoric, but it has not managed to break entirely with an unproblematicized concept of difference. Consequently, such binaries as East – West or local – global more or less explicitly still provide the organizing principles of the discourses in question. In the light of this predicament, the author turns to a toolbox that includes some elements of the “anthropology of the contemporary” of Paul Rabinow, the “para-ethnography” of George Marcus and the “ethnography in late industrialism” of Kim Fortun. The purpose of the suggested analytical devices is to destabilize the categories utilized in the discussed debate on the one hand, and to show its embeddedness in the wider context of the contemporary world on the other. This enables moving beyond dichotomous thinking and toward a more all-encompassing approach.

Keywords: postsocialism, difference, othering, hierarchies of knowledge, anthropological contemporary

In one of his recent publications Chris Hann (2014: 37, 46) notes that due to outspoken “allegations of ‘orientalizing’ and ‘hierarchies of knowledge,’ we might speak lately of a new academic Cold War” between disciplinary traditions East and West. Although this “war” assumes “very different forms, according to local, regional and national contexts,” in his view “anthropology/ethnography throughout Eastern Europe nowadays is a field of internecine skirmishing, whingeing and *ressentiments*.” Contrarily, Kacper Poblócki (2009) locates this agonistic debate within the “global knowledge market” and equates the disagreements with “the practice of manufacturing straw men that are utilized in waging academic battles.” Because the post-Fordist academic environment fetishizes theory and rewards winners, anthropologists need to argue that “their theoretical output is not only superior,” but also fundamentally different to the work of others. The same

“latent ‘rules of the game’” apply to anthropologies in/of East-Central Europe.¹ The previous “peaceful coexistence in reciprocal ignorance” manifested both by “outsiders” and “insiders” was broken only recently, and that only because the establishment of “Anglo-American anthropology of (post)socialism” in Western academic institutions could no longer be ignored by “the locals” (Pobłocki 2009: 227, 231, 233).

Actually, over the last decade the frequency and range of opinions expressed on the complicated relationships between anthropologies East and West have both increased. Hann’s choice of vocabulary in the aforementioned passage itself reveals that the debate has reached a rather heated stage. In this paper, I investigate the main arguments brought forward in the discussion, as well as its dynamics, through the prism of the “anthropology of postsocialism,” which seems to have conditioned the intellectual exchange under consideration to a significant extent. The purpose is not to analyze the strategies employed by anthropologists in/of East-Central Europe in any comprehensive way, but to identify and, subsequently, to destabilize their internal logic, which has recently shifted from the need to “catch up with the West” toward a “think globally, act locally” rhetoric. This in turn aims to contribute to the ongoing debate by suggesting analytical tools that enable moving beyond the East – West or local – global binaries as the organizing principles of the discourses in question.

* * *

Since the early 1990s, East-Central Europe has been basically approached in terms of “transition.” Hana Červinková (2006: 52) remarks that “an essential source of [this term’s] high market value (...) is the simplicity and clarity of the movement it implies – a passage from one point to another – from totalitarianism to democracy, from communism to capitalism, from Warsaw Pact to NATO, from East to West, from evil to good.” The scholarly perspective called, at times seriously and at times tongue-in-cheek, “transitology” has been established in order to theorize the “transitional” process. But its large-scale frameworks, based on various unproblematic presumptions, could not and did not gain approval in the discipline of anthropology.

Discussing the “orientalizing” premises of Polish “transitological” literature, Michał Buchowski (2006: 469-472) indicates its “black and white logic” aimed at dividing the world into the “winners and losers;” its anti-sociological character, which enables descriptions of people as “passive recipients of the reality that comes;” its teleological conviction that the “transition” is a “a period of ‘cultural ambivalence’ between communism and the democratic and free market culture;” its idealistic dimension revealed in the hope for generational change to resolve all

1 I understand “anthropology” as an umbrella term that covers various disciplinary traditions focused on human beings in their social/cultural environment.

contemporary problems; and last but not least, its ideological praise of the new system. On the whole, the author demonstrates that “transitological” analyses are pervaded with cultural determinism, because they show that people “caught in their modes of thought” are unable to “modify their reactions.”

Anthropologists working in East-Central Europe usually stress that their scholarship productively complicates the “transitological” approach. The specificity and value of the proposed perspective is claimed to lie in ethnographic insights exposing intricacies of everyday life. By revealing how structures of day-to-day existence under socialism have influenced the contemporary social process, anthropological analyses question the teleological and linear vision of “transition” and prove that its meanings should not be taken for granted, but rather studied afresh in every specific context (e.g. Baer 2003; Buchowski 2001; Hann 2002; Pine 1998).

However, even though anthropology undoubtedly provides a refreshing alternative to the “transitological” tendency, at least some authors have not managed to avoid reproducing its criticized premises. As a result, they too at times fall into the same trap of a generalized, essentialized and dichotomous thinking permeated with teleological, idealistic and ideological assumptions. For instance, some of them evoke a sort of “big bang theory” (Verdery 1996: 205) and write about “a historical transformation that touches virtually every aspect of social, political, and economic life” (Rivkin-Fish 1999: 802) or about people who are “paralyzed by a kind of shocked trauma” due to the enormity of the change they have undergone (Pine 2002: 95). Others invent “postsocialism” as a homogeneous entity. Considered to form a more or less coherent “region,” “postsocialist” societies are described through the prism of the path dependency concept (cf. Thelen 2011) as stricken with “economic disintegration” (Hann 2005a: 548), “pervasive anomie” (Wolfe 2000: 198) or “moral breakdown” (Skalník 2014: 220).

Although usually disapproving of “knights of Western know-how rushing to rescue the distressed Eastern Europe” (Verdery 1996: 204), some anthropologists also assume the role of the pedagogue, as in the case of Michele Rivkin-Fish’s (1999: 802) criticism of sexual educators in St. Petersburg who, while striving to distance themselves from “Soviet messages,” still rely on “discourses of danger, pollution, and fear.”² To emphasize the ambivalent nature of social life under “postsocialism,” others stress its “uncertainty and institutional instability” (Hann 2002: 7) or declare that “situations in that part of the world evolve so rapidly, complications arise so often, and the valence to be placed on actions shifts so unpredictably that one’s moral compass is in a constant spin” (Verdery 1998: 14). On the presumption that “culture is (...) a process operating at a deeper level than the public spheres of political and economic change” (Wolfe 2000: 200), some anthropologists are prone

2 In this case, the critique which targets the continuities of the past is obviously valid in the light of a particular political/ethical stance, that is, particular values. The problem is that the author takes their validity for granted.

to think in terms of “cultural survivals” (cf. Kalb 2007).³ Unsurprisingly then, they share Caroline Humphrey’s (2002: 13) conviction that “as the generations brought up under socialist regimes disappear from the political scene, the category of post-socialism is likely to break apart and disappear” (see also Pine 2002: 109; Dunn, Verdery 2011: 254).

The aforementioned examples show clearly that a qualitatively oriented ethnographic approach does not necessarily provide a sufficient tool to avoid the deficiencies of “transitology” and results in an “othering” of East-Central Europe and the people inhabiting that geographical area. One possible explanation of these anthropological flaws leads to the cornerstone of the discipline, namely to the concept of (naturalized) difference.⁴ Just as in the “allochronic” projects discussed by Johannes Fabian (2002), the “anthropology of (post)socialism” has been frequently founded on the unproblematic distinction between the (western) self and the (non-western) other who “occupy ‘naturally’ discontinuous spaces” (Gupta, Ferguson 1992: 6). Consequently, the fieldwork undertaken as the archetypal “journey into otherness” (Owczarzak 2009: 4) brings descriptions of “postsocialism” as a stage or a synchronic system located “out of time” in an almost Malinowskian manner.⁵ This in turn raises a kind of nostalgia demonstrated, amongst others, by Chris Hann (2002: 11) who states that “for some of us, who knew these places when they were more isolated but safe, cheap and somehow unspoiled, the new inequalities make painful viewing. The influx of multinational businesses, property developers and advertising agencies is painful to behold.”⁶

The above conditioning has resulted in propensities to construct coherent wholes not only as “cultures” pertaining to specific ethnographic groups (e.g. Pine 2000), but also on country (e.g. Pine 2002) and regional (e.g. Verdery 1996: 61-82) levels. Elizabeth Dunn and Katherine Verdery (2011) defend such a stance in terms of ideal types aimed at explaining the workings of socialism and capitalism

3 In this context Don Kalb (2007) mentions primarily Chris Hann’s work on Tázlár, but the same strategy can be found in Elizabeth Dunn’s (2004) work on Poland, even though she stresses the emancipatory potential of such socialism-based characteristics as “embedded personhood.”

4 Other authors blame a neo-institutional approach (Thelen 2011) or the analytical toolbox of “postsocialism” in general (Kideckel 2014).

5 Hann (2007) also indicates the deficiencies of a “presentist” perspective” common in postsocialist studies. But, in line with the “cultural survivals” approach, he limits his own apprehension of significant temporalities to the question of how the (socialist) past has been shaping the (postsocialist) present and future.

6 Dominic Boyer, who analyzes how the figure of the “nostalgic Eastern European” is being played out by Western (and Eastern) Europe as a part of the contemporary politics of the future, notes that “postsocialist” nostalgia is not usually interpreted as “a desire to return to state socialism *per se*” but “to recapture what life was at that time” (Boyer 2010: 18). The figure of the “nostalgic anthropologist” (most often coming from outside Central-Eastern Europe) can be approached in similar terms.

on the one hand, and at their mutual critique on the other. But “ideal types” evolve quite easily into “the realities under study” with the ambiguities and complexities of different people’s lives simply erased, and the political/ethnic agenda that underpins the critique is never self-justifying (cf. Valentine 2007).⁷

* * *

The same premises that underlie the studies on “postsocialist” societies of East-Central Europe, at least to some point, have organized certain threads of discussions on the local versions of anthropology. Buchowski (2012b: 25-26) notes the widespread stereotypes on East-Central European ethnologies under socialism which consist of their ideological character, isolation from western theoretical developments and the lack of research carried out outside the researchers’ home countries due to prevailing nationalism. Accordingly, Hann (2003) draws a clear distinction between “Eastern” ethnographers/ethnologists and “Western” anthropologists. In his opinion, the former type is in a sense “static,” parochial, nationalistic, empirically oriented and focused on folklore and material culture. In contrast, the latter figure embodies a flexible cosmopolitan who is committed to “the investigation of human diversity, untrammelled by [his/her] own national affiliations” (Hann 2003: 4), theoretically sophisticated and devoted to analyses of social and cultural structures and processes (see also Hann 2005b).⁸

The above presumptions have been shared by various anthropologists regardless of their particular academic and/or national affiliations. Actually, a homogenized and distorted image of East-Central European disciplines in the socialist era, epitomized by the “legendary *Volkskundists*,” is not only evoked as a “black sheep” by “Western” anthropologists (Buchowski 2012b: 27, 31), but also is one frequently used in symbolic struggles both within and between fields of local anthropologies in the region (cf. Buchowski 2004, 2012b; Verdery 2007, 2012; see also Skalník 2002). Occasionally, it also finds its way into personal experience. Juraj Podoba (2007: 28-29) recalls his first encounter with western-style anthropology at the 1990 EASA conference as “a kind of cultural shock,” when an “archaic, pre-scientific, descriptive field of ethnography” had to confront “an advanced, modern,” “theoretically and methodologically elaborated social science.”

Assuming that anthropologies East and West have constituted two coherent and antithetical traditions, some anthropologists apply a form of “big bang theo-

7 For a more detailed analysis of the discussed issues see Baer 2009.

8 The differences between ethnologies/anthropologies East and West (but also within the respective traditions) certainly existed and are still discernible today. The point is that in this particular case the proponents of the assumed bifurcation seem to forget that just as in the wider context of “postsocialist studies”, not only “the hardware of systemic circumstances,” but also “the software of human beings acting within them” should form an important part of every anthropological inquiry (Buchowski 2001: 18).

ry,” which includes “the knight of Western know-how” figure, to describe the situation under “transition.” Verdery (2007: 48-50) declares that because “there was no equivalent to social anthropology before or during the socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe,” only after 1989 “various scholars acted to bring in a new discipline that, they hoped, would displace the older ethnographic tradition.” Consequently, they asked their “Franglus” colleagues for assistance. In her opinion, this process should be understood in terms of upward mobility aspirations, where “western-style anthropology” has constituted a symbol of “democratization.”

In fact, not all East-Central European anthropologists entirely share the aforementioned views with regard to the character of local disciplines before 1989. For instance, Grażyna Kubica (2002: xiii-xiv) states that “at least in Poland proper anthropological reflection was always cultivated.” Unsurprisingly though, the “proper” version involved knowledge of British and American literature which was to transform the “backward” and “ideological” disciplines of the region into “the new and promising discipline of social (and cultural) anthropology of Eastern and Central Europe.” Although their personal trajectories differ, at that time not only Kubica, but also Buchowski (2001), Červinková (2005) or Peter Skalník (1998) employed a version of the need to “catch up with the West” rhetoric. Subsequently, they all came to agree that “the unique combination of cultural and social theory with empirical research practice, which lies at the basis of modern anthropological method, presents a radical alternative to traditional ethnology.” Local scholarship should therefore emphasize its distinctiveness, not its connections with regard to “socialist” and “postsocialist” disciplines (Červinková 2005: 28-29).

This situation changed when it turned out that although some East-Central European anthropologists learned their lesson, it did not improve their peripheral position in relation to (mostly U.S.- and U.K.-based) anthropological knowledge production centers. Discussing existing hierarchies of knowledge in the “anthropology of postsocialism,” Buchowski (2004: 12-13) insists that “Western” colleagues should involve “postsocialist” scholars and ideas into their projects and discourses.” Hann (2005b), who agrees that hierarchies exist, replies that it is due to the low quality of local work. Similarly to other pedagogists of the ongoing “transition,” he suggests further developments in line with a type of anthropology he has personally pursued: “if ‘local scholars’ wish to be as widely read as some of the outsiders who write about CEE, then they need to put in the field time and write monographs of equivalent depth and sophistication” (Hann 2005b: 195).

The above argument against East-Central European disciplinary praxis reflects the wider issue of its ambivalent character presumed to result from the socialist past. Despite attempts to establish the “proper” version of anthropology in the region, according to Červinková (2005), Hann (2007), Skalník (2014)⁹ or Verdery

9 Although Peter Skalník (2014) is very critical about the process which he perceives as a colonization of Central-Eastern Europe, in the specific context of anthropology he shifts the val-

(2007, 2012), the efforts have not succeeded due to “the realities of the postsocialist environment” (Verdery 2007: 48). Unlike the putative stability and coherence of “Franglus” anthropology, it is unpredictability, multiplicity and differentiation, which constitute the main characteristics of local anthropologies that comprise an “eclectic mix of (...) East European intellectuals” (Verdery 2012: 5).¹⁰ Furthermore, this generalized picture – as an expression of the broader “postsocialist” condition – is occasionally treated as if “out of time.”¹¹ Actually, the “aspiring” (Verdery 2007) or “self-identifying” (Hann 2012, 2014) anthropologists in East-Central Europe, just as the region itself, seem to be apprehended through the prism of neo-institutional theory, which constructs both socialism and postsocialism as, in a sense, deficient. While under socialism it was the institutions that were fundamentally “different” and “inefficient,” after their replacement with Western models, the terms “inefficient” or at least “different” came to be applied to social actors (cf. Thelen 2011).

Subsequently, Hann (2007) suggests that perhaps instead of undergoing the painful process of modernization, local anthropologists should rather comply with their “native” traditions finally recognized in terms of “the other.” Thus, he admits that his aforementioned postulate of “normalizing” fieldwork practice in East-Central Europe was “both arrogant and naïve” (Hann 2007: 9). While Hann still emphasizes the significant differences between ethnologies and anthropologies East and West, he perceives them now as two branches sharing the same origin in Enlightenment thought. He insists therefore on combining both approaches within the same departments of East-Central European academia, a strategy which in his view is “preferable to the increasing bifurcation” (Hann 2012: 46).¹²

* * *

The appreciation of East-Central European anthropological traditions as “the other” is certainly double-edged. According to Skalník (2007: 37), “the grand compromise as proposed by (...) Hann” is as “undesirable as the return from chem-

ance and appears disappointed that “Western-type anthropology” has not entirely managed to drive out “Eastern ethnology.” In this case, “continuity is stronger than discontinuity” and “the schizophrenia of anthropology/ethnology is an integral part of the mosaic of postcommunism” (Skalník 2014: 221-222).

10 The description should obviously be understood solely in discursive terms. While Central-Eastern European anthropologies undoubtedly form a heterogeneous field, the one of western/north anthropologies is very much alike (cf. Buchowski 2012b: 29).

11 For instance, Michał Buchowski (2012b: 22) demonstrates that the same few names of Central Eastern European scholars keep circulating in the Anglophone anthropological literature as if “not much happened in social sciences in the region between 1983 and 2002.”

12 It is worth noting that in his later publications Hann (2007, 2012, 2014) also avoids his earlier propensity toward generalization (cf. Hann 2003, 2005b) and limits the analysis to the Hungarian case with which he is most familiar.

istry to alchemy.” He also doubts that the strategies recommended for East-Central Europe would be as equally eagerly employed by Hann in his own institute or home country. Verdery (2012) points to this difficulty as well. While Hann (2005b: 196) declares, for example, that he does not see a reason why East-Central European scholars should “try harder (...) to compete (...) in the [publishing] market that is dominated by the Anglo-Americans,” Verdery (2012: 5) aptly remarks that “the ‘Bologna’ program of higher education now makes publication in international circles imperative.” This means that in order to be counted in, an adherence to the “Franglus’ style” is required.

Skalnik (2014: 222) believes that the contemporary attempts to envision convergence have resulted solely from an increasing politicization of disciplinary divisions. Interestingly enough, Buchowski – who used to call for a merging of the historically distinct perspectives (cf. Buchowski 2004) – nowadays remains skeptical. He finds it very unlikely that “privileged anthropologies” would willingly scrutinize and undermine the “system from which they benefit” (Buchowski 2012b: 31-32). As Hann’s recognition of “the other” is obviously rooted in the classic cultural relativism doctrine, which grants the difference “an absolute status” and “confers upon it a more enduring quality” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 125), the skepticism seems reasonable. Don Kalb (2007: 26, 28) notes that discourses which “take the appearance of postsocialist transition for its essence” are unable to grasp the studied processes as “a chapter of a much bigger book.” Instead of contributing to theoretical approaches that would “help to lift the region out of its obsession with its putatively singular postsocialist predicament and out of its singular orientation on a putative West,” they keep “othering” both “postsocialist” East-Central Europe and its anthropologies.¹³

Confronted by the above situation, those amongst the East-Central European anthropologists who refuse to be permanently “different,” formulate their objections in slightly divergent terms. In his latest publications on the subject, Buchowski (2007, 2012a, 2012b) turns to highlighting Polish intellectual traditions and the innovative insights they offered, which frequently paralleled or even anticipated theoretical developments in Anglophone anthropology and beyond. By so doing, he aims not only to show that the whole narrative of “archaic” (post)socialist ethnology/anthropology is simply wrong and unfair, but also to emphasize the need to combine different intellectual horizons. Effectively, he hopes for “a choir of cosmopolitan anthropology,” which links the voices of the local and the global, the ethnological and the anthropological, to appear (Buchowski 2012a: 99).

In a similar vein, László Kürti and Skalnik (2009) stress that, because of inequities experienced by East-Central European anthropologists, their projects

13 The status of Central-Eastern Europe’s “otherness” is obviously of a more hybrid nature than that of the classic anthropological “other” figure. As Jill Owczarzak (2009: 6) notes, the former is rather comprehended in terms of the “intermediary other.”

should be read as a contribution to “an ongoing world-wide debate on hierarchies of knowledge” in the discipline. But, unlike Buchowski, they do not question a vision of anthropology based on the western model, but just want “U.S. and British colleagues” to “realize” that the “new styles of anthropology” already exist in the region. Actually, in their view, “native” anthropologists engaged in “anthropology at home” are able to perform the task better because “they are not just visitors” whose “fundamental affiliation or obligations” lie elsewhere (Kürti, Skalník 2009: 12, 16, 18).

Likewise, Červinková seems to still understand anthropology as an ethnographically-based social or cultural critique. Nowadays, however, in view of “western epistemological hegemony in the academic discourse and practice,” she suggests that “native” practitioners of “postsocialist studies” should turn to postcolonial studies and try to “think between the post” in line with Sharad Chari and Verdery’s (2009) proposal. Because “postsocialism” has so far been “a project of epistemological dominance and subjugation,” as “a hegemonic analytical tool,” it “lacks the empowering qualities of postcolonial scholarship.” In the light of an epistemological/political dissimilarity, only when “scholars in East-Central Europe (...) adopt the liberatory aspirations of postcolonial theory,” will they be able “to develop forms of research and writing similarly inspired by a vision of social justice and engaged scholarship” (Červinková 2012: 155, 158-159, 161).

The responses to “othering” which are organized around various forms of the “think globally, act locally” phrase are obviously also embedded in the wider context of the “anthropology of postsocialism,” namely in its tendencies influenced by poststructural thought (cf. Baer 2009). One of the early calls for the liberation of the subdiscipline from the “ghetto of Soviet area studies” and the shift towards a multidimensional inquiry of modernity was Verdery’s (2002) project of post-Cold War studies that aimed at merging postsocialist and postcolonial perspectives. Since then, searching for parallels between various aspects of postsocialist and postcolonial conditions has become popularized in those strands of anthropologies in/of East-Central Europe which stress the need to move toward more globally-oriented approaches (e.g., Buchowski 2012b; Kalb 2007; Kideckel 2014; Owczarzak 2009).

Unsurprisingly, however, the critique of “Western imperialism” in some versions of the postcolonially-inspired analyses has reproduced and reinforced the East – West dichotomy. Subsequently, authors have not been able to break with the “postsocialist predicament” perspective (e.g., Giordano 2014; Skalník 2014). Furthermore, the contemporary positioning of East-Central Europe in anthropology and beyond has not been brought about by historically-conditioned (neo)colonial interactions between the metropolitan “first-” and the peripheral “third world,” but from being the “not-quite-first world” (cf. Chivens 2007). Thus, unlike in the “third world” case, the strategies applied to resist “Western hegemony” are pre-

dominantly rooted not in subversive pride, but in the disappointment of not being counted in.

In fact, the discussed reactions of East-Central European anthropologists to the “othering” approach do not usually focus on the literal links between (post)colonialism and (post)socialism, but rather refer to the concept of “world anthropologies.” The project – advocated, amongst others, by Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar (2005) – has been planned as a process aimed at exploring “possibilities of communicating between and across epistemes and regimes of knowledge,” which are “not doomed to reproduce existing or imagined power relations” (Fabian 2012: 62, 64). The authors declare that they do not only wish to destabilize “the taken-for-granted content of ‘dominant anthropologies,’ but also (...) the *terms, conditions* and *places* of worldwide anthropological conversations and exchanges” (Restrepo, Escobar 2005: 118).

Restrepo and Escobar (2005: 119-120) emphasize that their proposal should not be read as “a new attempt on the part of the ‘periphery’ to strike back,” but as an appeal for anthropological horizons to be enlarged. Nevertheless, both academic and political praxes prove that taking the difference solely in terms of its “constitutive function (...) in the political economy of visibilities” (Restrepo, Escobar 2005: 119) does in practice not exclude comprehending “us” and “them” quite literally (cf. Baer 2007). By privileging the “view from below,” even though inscribed into globally-conceived frameworks, the East-Central European responses leave the East – West or local – global dichotomies ultimately untouched and the concept of difference (which underlies the “anthropology of postsocialism” in general) comes to provide an underlying structure to that particular thread of the debate as well.¹⁴ For instance, the “struggle against intellectual discontinuity” (Pobłocki 2009: 239) – meant as a quest for one’s own ancestors as a means to provide an alternative to the theoretical mimicking of Anglophone anthropology – ends up emphasizing a favouring of the past as the prism to apprehend the present and, more importantly, “the West” as the basic category of reference.¹⁵

* * *

Given that the aforementioned strategies of coping with still existing hierarchies of knowledge are, in a sense, doomed to incessantly reproduce the binaries which form the very bases of the hierarchies themselves, it seems to me that mov-

14 This does not mean that I find “difference” entirely irrelevant for contemporary anthropology. Although it is definitely not the only model for disciplinary praxis, I agree with Johannes Fabian (2012: 65) that the concept of alterity is decisive to any theoretical approach which deals with the issue of inter-subjectivity. Thus, I basically intend to question its specific uses (and abuses) in the anthropological strategies in/of East-Central Europe.

15 (Re)presenting “native” incarnations of Pierre Bourdieu, Sherry Ortner or Sidney Mintz (e.g. Buchowski 2012a, 2012b; Pobłocki 2009) sets the example.

ing out of the vicious circle requires shifts in analytical/political attitudes. To proceed with this task we certainly need to apply “the radical potential of an anthropology of anthropology” – as Restrepo and Escobar (2005: 119) suggest – but one put in motion by the use of devices other than those circumscribing the hitherto discussions. One possible option in this respect emerges from a toolbox that includes some elements of the “anthropology of the contemporary” by Paul Rabinow (2003), “para-ethnography” by George Marcus (2007) and “ethnography in late industrialism” by Kim Fortun (2012).¹⁶ On the one hand, the proposed perspective aims at comprehending how disciplinary praxes and the exchange in question are embedded in the wider dynamics of the contemporary world understood as inter-related technical, biophysical, cultural and economic nested systems that are permanently reconfigured through the interactions of numerous scales, variables and forces (cf. Fortun 2012). On the other one, it points to the situated, fragmented and unstable nature of all categories which various actors play off against each other in various contexts of the discussed debate.¹⁷

In this context, I find particularly important Rabinow’s (2003: 18-19, 47-48) concept of “problematization” which pertains to “the specific work of thought.” It brings “a modal change” that allows for grasping every “situation not only as ‘a given’ but also as ‘a question.’” Subsequently, the studied phenomena are approached as “emergent assemblages.” The task of the “anthropology of anthropology” would be then not only to identify all the assumed certainties within the analyzed discussions, but also to set them in “an environment that is partially composed of apparatuses and partially of a variety of other elements (such as institutions, symbols, and the like).” This reveals “conjunctures between and among these diverse objects, and between and among their temporalities and their functionalities” (Rabinow 2003: 56).

Furthermore, Marcus’ (2007) idea of the self and the other as epistemic partners sharing experience of global imaginaries demonstrates that because people’s “lifeworlds” extend in multiple directions, it is simply impossible to envisage a contemporary world as structured by classical anthropological dichotomies: “a motivated interest in a ‘third’ elsewhere – an object of curiosity, fear, anxiety, a speculation about agency that is elsewhere” is “present in important ways in the scene of fieldwork,” which in turn requires a multi-sited approach (Marcus 2007: 7-9). While Marcus’ notion of global imaginaries is of a more mental character,

16 The present paper is considered as a first step which provides a general background that constitutes the point of departure for the project outlined below. The next step would comprise analyses performed with the tools that the project offers.

17 Thomas Chivens (2007), who analyzes the category of gender in the context of the transnational circulation of police intervention techniques, strives toward similar ends by the use of different tools. Broadening the scope of Foucauldian ideas of “governmentality” and “biopolitics,” he proposes an everyday ethnography of the state, which shows that both transformation and governmentality are complex and contestable.

Rabinow's interpretation of his concept of contraption admits vectors of power and force-lines that are beyond actors' control. It refers to disjointed processes in the world that actors seek to connect, but without any strategy or plan. Although there are nodes and rhizomes at some points, making connections to those things cannot be accomplished because the whole to connect to does not exist (Rabinow et al. 2008: 76-77). Even though both authors refer to the particular experience of fieldwork, the same rules apply to social interactions in general, including those of anthropologists in/of East-Central Europe. Such an understanding exposes not only the open-ended nature of all utterances which constitute the debate in question, but also the commonalities that inevitably permeate the assumed diversities. At the same time, it shows that having things in common does not necessarily erase power relations, which are at stake as well.

Last, but not least, Fortun's (2012: 450, 453) notion of ethnography as a sort of experimental system envisions a possibility for mobilizing questions that were previously impossible to formulate. In her project, ethnography provides a creative space of encounters aimed at provoking "new idioms, new ways of thinking, which grasp and attend to current realities," though "not knowing in advance what these idioms will look and sound like." Consequently, it offers a model of communication in which everyone has a chance to speak, but not as a matter of fairness, but as a matter of "being open to intervention and foreigners." A conversation that takes place "in a terrain only uncertainly mapped" (Strathern 2006: 203) is not based on a utopian idea of pluralism, but heads toward critiques and disagreements. Its ultimate goal, however, "is to come together – to literally collaborate, performing the labor of difference" (Fortun 2012: 453). The resultant type of communication appears much more productive than the actual (or potential) "academic Cold War" which entangles anthropologists in/of East-Central Europe in an inescapable deadlock.

The proposed stance definitely fits Buchowski's (2012: 31-32) description of "domesticated emancipation" in line with which adopting "the jargon and epistemological paradigms of the mainstream" makes recognition of "local anthropologists" as "postsocialist" or "Eastern European" rather problematic. The question is whether keeping the labels is really desirable and/or necessary. Considering that the (unproblematized) notion of difference seems to constitute the main reason why the agonistic debate has not been able to abandon an "anthropology of postsocialism" logic, the answer should be "no." Perhaps it would be more instructive to seek for a common anthropological contemporary understood as the "near future and recent past" (Rabinow 2003: 55).¹⁸ Thus, I find convincing Johannes Fabian's (2012: 64 – 65) insistence on the need to shift the debate on "words world anthropologies"

18 In the light of my own experience, this position appears most compelling. When I entered an anthropological path at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of AMU in Poznań in the early 1990s, perhaps naively, I did not perceive myself as a special kind, but just

towards epistemology. Facing similar problems in this respect, “first-,” “second-” or “third world” anthropologists all remain involved, in a sense, in the same discipline, even though their specific positionings, views and practices may differ in a myriad of ways. This in turn offers a strategy to move beyond the need to “catch up with the West,” to “think globally, act locally” and other binary rhetorics.

REFERENCES

- Baer, Monika. 2003. *Women's Spaces: Class, Gender and the Club: An Anthropological Study of the Transitional Process in Poland*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- . 2007. “W poszukiwaniu (nie)tożsamości: Kilka uwag na temat praktyki queer w akademickim dyskursie aktywistycznym.” In *Z odmienniej perspektywy: Studia queer w Polsce*, edited by Monika Baer and Marzena Lizurej, 93–112. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Arboretum”.
- . 2009. “Transformacje transformacji: O problemach antropologii postsocjalizmu.” In *Antropologiczne badania zmiany kulturowej: Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty transformacji systemowej w Polsce*, edited by Konrad Górny and Mirosław Marczyk, 33–55. Wrocław: Katedra Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej UW.
- Boyer, Dominic. 2010. “From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania.” In *Postcommunist Nostalgia*, edited by Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, 17–28. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Buchowski, Michał. 2001. *Rethinking Transformation*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Humaniora.
- . 2004. “Hierarchies of Knowledge in Central-Eastern European Anthropology.” *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22(2): 5–14.
- . 2006. “The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79(3): 463–82.
- . 2007. “Some Lessons from the Importance of History in the History of Central European Ethnology.” In *Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 90: 18–22. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf
- . 2012a. *Etnologia polska: Historie i powinowactwa*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje.
- . 2012b. “Intricate Relations between Western Anthropologists and Eastern Ethnologists.” *Focaal* 63: 20–38.
- Červinková, Hana. 2005. “Anthropology and the Politics of Learning.” In *Anthropology of Europe: Teaching and Research*, edited by Peter Skalník, 27–36. Prague: Set Out.

as an anthropologist. Consequently, unlike Juraj Podoba (2007), at one of the EASA conferences I was quite “shocked” when a “Western” colleague called me a “native anthropologist.”

- . 2006. *Playing Soldiers in Bohemia: An Ethnography of NATO Membership*. Prague: Set Out.
- . 2012. "Postcolonialism, Postsocialism and the Anthropology of East-Central Europe." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48(2): 155–63.
- Chari, Sharad, and Katherine Verdery. 2009. "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51(1): 6–34.
- Chivens, Thomas. 2007. "Płeć a interwencja: Nadzór policyjny nad przemocą domową w Stanach Zjednoczonych i w Polsce," translated by Karolina Szmagałska-Follis. In *Gender: Perspektywa antropologiczna*, vol. I, edited by Renata E. Hryciuk and Agnieszka Kościańska, 171–91. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Dunn, Elizabeth C. 2004. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business and the Remaking of Labor*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dunn, Elizabeth C., and Katherine Verdery. 2011. "Dead Ends in the Critique of (Post)Socialist Anthropology: Reply to Thelen." *Critique of Anthropology* 31(3): 251–55.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2002. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2012. "Comments on 'Changing Global Flows in Anthropological Knowledge.'" *Focaal* 63: 62–65.
- Fortun, Kim. 2012. "Ethnography in Late Industrialism." *Cultural Anthropology* 27(3): 446–64.
- Giordano, Christian. 2014. "Does Postsocialism in Eastern Europe Mirror Postcolonialism? Grand Narratives, Myths and Inventions about the Fall of the Berlin Wall and What Followed?" In *Does East Go West? Anthropological Pathways Through Postsocialism*, edited by Christian Giordano, François Ruegg and Andrea Boscoboinik, 225–43. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. 1992. "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 6–23.
- Hann, Chris. 2002. "Farewell to the Socialist 'Other.'" In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, edited by Chris M. Hann, 1–11. London: Routledge.
- . 2003. "The Anthropology of Eurasia in Eurasia." *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 57: 1–17. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/HANN2003_The_Anthropology_Of_Eurasia_In_Eurasia.pdf
- . 2005a. "Postsocialist Societies." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, edited by James G. Carrier, 547–57. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- . 2005b. "Correspondence: Reply to Michał Buchowski." *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23(1): 194–97.
- . 2007. "Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe." In *Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate*. *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 90: 1–11. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf
- . 2012. "Faltering Dialogue: For a Doubly Rooted Cosmopolitan Anthropology." *Focaal* 63: 39–50.

- . 2014. “Beyond Cold War, Beyond Otherness: Some Implications of Socialism and Postsocialism for Anthropology.” In *Does East Go West? Anthropological Pathways Through Postsocialism*, edited by Christian Giordano, François Ruegg and Andrea Boscoboinik, 35–56. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Humphrey, Caroline. 2002. “Does the Category ‘Postsocialist’ Still Make Sense?” In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, edited by Chris M. Hann, 12–15. London: Routledge.
- Kalb, Don. 2007. “The Path to the Post-Colony: Why Folklore won’t Save Us.” In *Anthropology’s Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 90: 22–28*. http://pendient.edemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf
- Kideckel, David A. 2014. “Post-socialism as Uncertainty, Uncertainty about Post-socialism.” In *Does East Go West? Anthropological Pathways Through Postsocialism*, edited by Christian Giordano, François Ruegg and Andrea Boscoboinik, 15–26. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Kubica, Grażyna. 2002. “In Place of Foreword: ‘Praga Magica.’” In *A Post-Communist Millennium: The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Peter Skalník, xii–xv. Prague: Set Out.
- Kürti, László, and Peter Skalník. 2009. “Introduction: Postsocialist Europe and the Anthropological Perspective from Home.” In *Postsocialist Europe: Anthropological Perspectives from Home*, edited by László Kürti and Peter Skalník, 1–28. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. “Anthropology: Its Achievements and Future.” *Current Anthropology* 7(2): 124–27.
- Marcus, George E. 2007. “Collaborative Imaginaries.” *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology* 5(1): 1–17.
- Owczarzak, Jill. 2009. “Introduction: Postcolonial Studies and Postsocialism in Eastern Europe.” *Focaal* 53: 3–19.
- Pine, Frances. 1998. “Dealing with Fragmentation: The Consequences of Privatization for Rural Women in Central and Southern Poland.” In *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, edited by Susan Bridger and Frances Pine, 106–23. London: Routledge.
- . 2000. “Kinship, Gender and Work in Socialist and Post-socialist Rural Poland.” In *Gender, Agency and Change: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Victoria Ana Goddard, 69–81, London: Routledge.
- . 2002. “Retreat to the Household? Gendered Domains in Postsocialist Poland.” In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, edited by Chris M. Hann, 95–113. London: Routledge.
- Pobłocki, Kacper. 2009. “Whither Anthropology without Nation-state? Interdisciplinarity, World Anthropologies and Commoditization of Knowledge.” *Critique of Anthropology* 29(2): 225–52.
- Rabinow, Paul. 2003. *Anthropos Today: Reflections on Modern Equipment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Rabinow, Paul, and George E. Marcus, with James D. Faubion, and Tobias Rees. 2008. *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Restrepo, Eduardo, and Arturo Escobar. 2005. "Other Anthropologies and Anthropology Otherwise': Steps to a World Anthropologies Framework." *Critique of Anthropology* 25(2): 99–129.
- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 1999. "Sexuality Education in Russia: Defining Pleasure and Danger for a Fledgling Democratic Society." *Social Science and Medicine* 49: 801–14.
- Skalník, Peter. 1998. "Comments." *Current Anthropology* 39(1): 10–11.
- . 2014. "Postcommunism Is Here to Stay: An Optimistic Anthropologist's View." In *Does East Go West? Anthropological Pathways Through Postsocialism*, edited by Christian Giordano, François Rugg and Andrea Boscoboinik, 219–23. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Skalník, Peter, ed. 2002. *A Post-Communist Millennium: The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe*. Prague: Set Out.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2006. "A Community of Critics? Thoughts on New Knowledge." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(1): 191–209.
- Thelen, Tatjana. 2011. "Shortage, Fuzzy Property and Other Dead Ends in the Anthropological Analysis of (Post)Socialism." *Critique of Anthropology* 31(1): 43–61.
- Valentine, David. 2007. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Verdery, Katherine. 1996. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1998. "Comments." *Current Anthropology* 39(1): 13–14.
- . 2002. "Whither Postsocialism?" In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, edited by Chris M. Hann, 15–21. London: Routledge.
- . 2007. "Franglus' Anthropology and East European Ethnography: The Prospects for Synthesis." In *Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 90: 48–51. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf
- . 2012. "Cold War Imperialism and After: US Anthropology of Eastern Europe." Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. http://www.wcaanet.org/downloads/AAA2012/Verdery_WCAA_AAA.pdf
- Wolfe, Thomas C. 2000. "Cultures and Communities in the Anthropology of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29: 95–216.

Monika Baer

monika.baer@uni.wroc.pl

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

University of Wrocław

<http://www.etnologia.uni.wroc.pl/>

Thinking with “Postsocialism” in an Ethnographic Study of Old Age in Poland

Jessica C. Robbins-Ruszkowski

Abstract: Twenty-five years after the end of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe, how useful is the category of postsocialism? In this article, I suggest one possible answer to this question through a discussion of how this category emerged during ethnographic fieldwork on aging, personhood, and memory in Wrocław and Poznań, Poland. A binary Cold War framework that opposes socialism to postsocialism and East to West does not sufficiently explain the complexities of processes by which persons and social relations are created and transformed. However, “postsocialism” is defensible as an ethnographic, rather than analytic, category because these binary categories shape people’s expectations, hopes and imaginations. Ethnographic fieldwork in a range of institutional and non-institutional contexts found that older people were often understood as relics of the socialist past, that some older people look to the “West” for moral exemplars, and that national narratives of suffering provide moral frameworks for older Poles’ life histories. By interpreting these findings through a theoretical framework that centers on the processual formation of personhood and relatedness, this article thus helps anthropologists of Central and Eastern Europe create research imaginaries that escape dominant binary frameworks.

Keywords: postsocialism, theory, ethnography, Poland, aging

Introduction: postsocialism as a category of practice

Twenty-five years after the end of state socialism in central Europe, how useful is the category of postsocialism?¹ What does “postsocialism” help us to understand

1 Thank you to two anonymous reviewers for insightful comments that greatly improved this manuscript. Many thanks to my anthropology colleagues in Poland for productive conversations on this topic over many years. Special thanks go to the participants of the 2013 workshop “Beyond Socialism and Postsocialism: Contemporary Ethnographic Perspectives on Central/Eastern Europe” (co-organizer Hana Červinková, Monika Baer, Mariusz Filip, Martin Hribek, Marcin Kafar, and Patrycja Polczyk), which was hosted by the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław and funded with an Engaged Anthropology Grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Ethnographic fieldwork on aging in Poland was supported by an IREX Individual Advanced Research Opportunity award, with support from the U.S. Department

about individual experiences, social relations, moral imaginations, and institutional structures in Central and Eastern Europe? Can we now speak of not only the socialist past, but also the postsocialist past?

In this article, I offer one possible answer to these questions by analyzing the utility of “postsocialism” as it relates to anthropological research on personhood in Central and Eastern Europe. The category of personhood offers a useful lens through which to view scholarly debates about the region and, in combination with ethnographic insights, suggests new perspectives for the practice and writing of anthropology of Central and Eastern Europe.

Specifically, I compare insights from secondary source literature with those drawn from twenty-two months of ethnographic fieldwork on aging, memory and personhood in Wrocław and Poznań, Poland. Despite my own experience as an American anthropologist trained during a time in which the socialist/postsocialist paradigm was dominant, I found that these categories were limited in helping me to make sense of the experiences of older people in Poland. In other words, this binary Cold War framework is insufficient to explain the complexities of processes by which persons and social relations are created and transformed. East/West differences do not hold up to historical and ethnographic scrutiny, nor do they explain as much as they promise.

It might therefore seem logical to do away with the anthropology of postsocialism and, more broadly, of “postsocialist.” However, I argue that “postsocialism” is defensible as an ethnographic, if not an analytic, category—that is, as a category of practice rather than a category of analysis (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). During my fieldwork, I found that older people were often understood as relics of the socialist past, almost as survivals of socialism. Moreover, some Poles of all ages look to the “West” for moral exemplars in many spheres of life. At the level of practice, then, East/West and socialist/postsocialist divisions continue to matter as categories that shape people’s expectations, hopes and imaginations. Because these terms still have utility, I suggest that we anthropologists pay attention to distinctions between categories of practice and categories of analysis in order to create research imaginaries that escape dominant binary frameworks.²

of State Title VIII; the Wenner-Gren Foundation (#7736); the National Science Foundation (DDIG #0819259); Elderhostel/Road Scholar, and several units at the University of Michigan. My greatest debts of gratitude, as always, are to the people who shared their lives with me during fieldwork.

2 Other topics in anthropology could also benefit from more clearly distinguishing categories of practice and analysis. For instance, recent discussions of care in American anthropology often confuse these fields, sometimes assuming that local Anglo-American understandings of “care” make it a useful cross-cultural category of analysis (personal communication of author with Elana Buch, Kathryn Goldfarb, Julia Kowalski, and Aaron Seaman).

Personhood in postsocialism: from labor to kinship

At the levels of both experience and analysis, studies of personhood in the anthropological literature on Central and Eastern Europe have been shaped by the political economy of the region. Post-1989 transformations in the socialist world led to dramatic changes in the structure and experience of political economic life in general, and of labor in particular. Because anthropology is a discipline that aims to describe, explain, and contextualize social change, there is now a large body of scholarship focusing on political economy and labor in Central and Eastern Europe. Anthropological studies of political economy and labor have thus contributed to explaining transformations in individual lives, social relations and institutional structures.

However, a recent debate (Dunn and Verdery 2011; Thelen 2011, 2012) demonstrates that anthropology's disciplinary focus on economic life can be seen as a product of institutional structures of knowledge, in which Cold War logic frames the categories of intellectual inquiry (see Buchowski 2012 for a related discussion). Scholars make two key points in this debate: first, the analytic focus on economics is justified because the category has historical and ethnographic significance (Dunn and Verdery 2011: 252; Thelen 2012: 88), and two, anthropological research in Central and Eastern Europe has sometimes reified the very East/West categories that it means to interrogate (Thelen 2012: 89). In other words, anthropologists should develop research projects that relate to significant contemporary social issues, while also maintaining a critical self-reflexivity about why and how *these* particular social issues become visible to the researcher.³ The role of the ethnographer and the ethnographer's training in the production of anthropological knowledge is fundamental to anthropological research across sociocultural and political-economic contexts (see Heider 1988 for a useful analysis of classic debates over conflicting ethnographic studies such as that between Robert Redfield and Oscar Lewis). However, the role of the ethnographer's own intellectual framework becomes especially important for anthropology in and of Central and Eastern Europe given both the hegemonic and doxic role of the Cold War and the historical relationship (or lack thereof) between scholars working within and from outside eastern Europe.⁴

In addition to marginalizing the work of scholars from the region (Buchowski 2012) and reproducing Cold War discursive categories (Thelen 2011, 2012), the fo-

3 Some argue that the need for critical self-reflexive perspectives on the formation of research questions is especially important for non-native anthropologists (Buchowski 2012; Červinková 2012).

4 See also the debate between Michał Buchowski (2004, 2005) and Chris Hann (2005) in *Anthropology of East Europe Review* for a discussion of the relationship between anthropologists trained in central and eastern Europe who also do research there, and anthropologists trained in the West who study central and eastern Europe.

cus on political economy and labor may also have the effect of excluding from study other dimensions of social life and other phases of the life course. For example, in the first decade after 1989 the topics of kinship and care received less explicit scholarly attention (but see Borneman 1992 and Pine 1996 among others for notable exceptions), although more recent work suggests that this is changing (e.g., Caldwell 2004, 2007; Carlbäck et al. 2012; Chelcea 2003; Haukanes and Pine 2005; Petryna 2002; Phillips 2011; Read and Thelen 2007; Rivkin-Fish 2005, 2011; Stanisz 2014; Stillo 2012; Zalewska 2009, 2010). In other world regions, studies of kinship and care are often closely related to studies of personhood (e.g., Buch 2013; Lamb 2000); however, in postsocialist Eastern Europe, studies of personhood have been more closely related to labor than to kinship.

Specifically, anthropological research has demonstrated well how labor regimes can shape personhood. For instance, research in Hungary shows that individualized personhood existed during socialism and was related to pre-socialist capitalist labor practices (Lampland 1995). Research in postsocialist Poland demonstrates how people use relational personhood to resist the individualization of neoliberal labor management (Dunn 2004). Drawing on theoretical perspectives from South Asian and Melanesian contexts (e.g., Daniel 1984; Dumont 1980; Marriott 1976; Strathern 1988), this research relies on a binary framework that juxtaposes individual to relational models of personhood. Although these categories are shown not to easily map on to capitalist and socialist world orders (Kharkhordin 1999), the categories themselves tend to remain analytically pure. That is, the category of personhood remains part of a binary framework.

However, I argue that if we rethink personhood as a category that is inextricable from kinship relations, we can begin to escape the binary categories of socialism and postsocialism—and thus sidestep attendant, potentially divisive debates about the politics of the production of knowledge. I propose that we re-center our theoretical perspective by drawing on scholarship from outside the postsocialist paradigm, thus redefining our understanding of personhood itself.

Both classic and more recent anthropological scholarship helps to develop this understanding of personhood. Marcel Mauss’s work on both the category of the person and the gift (1985[1938], 1990[1925]) shows that personhood is fundamentally social. Practices of exchange and social relations that constitute the interactional dimension of personhood are inseparable from political economies and belief systems. Moreover, these social relations are inherently moral, involving “judgments about what the world is and should be” (Beidelman 1993[1986]: 2). More recently, Janet Carsten (2000, 2007) has shown that ties of relatedness are created through everyday practices of care and memory that are inseparable from larger political structures and histories. When personhood is studied in this processual, relational way, we no longer need to explain how personhood is part of socialist, postsocialist, or capitalist ways of being, but can instead show the daily practices

through which personhood and ties of relatedness are created, maintained, or unraveled. By dissociating personhood from monolithic political-economic categories, we can thereby destabilize these hegemonic constructions. In other words, showing how personhood is processually constructed creates opportunities for rethinking categories across scales of analysis.⁵

Moreover, because personhood in postsocialism has tended to be understood as related primarily to labor relations, other domains of life besides labor have received less analytical attention. Studies that shift the focus to people who are largely outside the labor force, such as older people, can be useful to open other analytic perspectives on personhood in Eastern Europe.

Studying aging in Poland: an overview of ethnographic fieldwork

This analysis draws on twenty-two months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted since 2006 in Wrocław and Poznań, Poland, two cities in western Poland. The longest period of research occurred between 2008-2010; I conducted follow-up research during the summers of 2012, 2013, and 2014. All research was conducted in Polish and approved by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (IRB). The primary aim of this research was to understand ideals and experiences of old age in Poland, and specifically, to understand the role of historical sociopolitical transformations in shaping personhood, kinship and memory in late life. As a medical anthropologist, I have a particular interest in the way that experiences of health and illness transform personhood in old age. Towards this end, I sought a wide range of field sites in which I could meet older people of varying socioeconomic and health status.

From 2006 to 2013, my primary ethnographic field sites were educational and medical institutions for older people. In total, I interviewed over 100 people, most of whom were over the age of sixty. However, I did not specify the chronological age of participants in order to better understand the local meanings of old age. Primary institutional sites included *Uniwersytety Trzeciego Wieku* (Universities of the Third Age), which are continuing-education institutions specifically for older people, a *Zakład Opiekuńczo-Lecznicy o profilu rehabilitacyjnym* (Rehabilitative Care Institution), a *Dom Pomocy Społecznej dla osób przewlekłych somatycznie chorych* (Social Welfare Home for people with chronic physical illnesses), and a *Środowiskowy Dom Samopomocy dla ludzi z chorobą Alzheimera* (Day Center for people with Alzheimer's disease). In some ways, these institutions represent

5 It is not my intention to suggest that other work on personhood in postsocialist contexts omits the insights of Mauss, Beidelman, or Carsten; rather, my aim here is to focus on the processual formation of personhood that the work of these scholars highlights. Through a focus on the processual, I hope that we can see beyond the binary frameworks implied by the term "postsocialism."

starkly different ways of experiencing old age in Poland. The people who attend the Universities of the Third Age are mobile and relatively free of physical disability, while those who live in residential care institutions or attend the Alzheimer’s day center are not able to carry out so-called “activities of daily living” without assistance from others. These differences in physical ability and health have serious ramifications for social engagement in a context where the built environment limits the movement of people with disabilities. Additionally, people who attend Universities of the Third Age are generally from a higher socioeconomic status (many *sluchacze*, or attendees, are retired teachers, accountants or other professional workers), while research participants at the medical institutions were more likely to have worked as farmers or in factories.

These differing kinds of institutions (educational and medical) represent models of aging with different moral valences. Universities of the Third Age fit within an increasingly dominant cultural norm of what gerontologists have alternately called “successful,” “healthy,” or “active” aging; the last of these, “active aging,” is currently promoted by local, national, and transnational governments in Europe.⁶ Notably, 2012 was the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations,” and there is a Polish governmental initiative from 2014-2020 called *Rządowy Program na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych* (Government Program for the benefit of Social Activity/Active-ness of Older People). These international and national programs include funding for various educational and social programs for older people (in this context “older” means over the age of sixty). Universities of the Third Age are singled out in the Polish governmental initiative as especially popular and worthy programs. Although the kinds of programs and activities offered through these initiatives are varied, the ideal of maintaining health is at least implicit, and often explicit, in such programs. Residential care institutions (and those who live there) tend to fall outside the purview of such public discourse and programs—and are thus excluded from increasingly popular normative models of old age. However, despite this exclusion, my research showed that older adults at both medical and educational institutions maintain personhood and create new social relations through remarkably similar practices of storytelling, remembering, learning and commensality (Robbins 2013b). This finding demonstrates that discursive imaginations of old age fail to capture the lived experience of daily life through which personhood and social relations are maintained, transformed and unmade.

However, this research from 2006-2013 was limited by restricting primary field sites to educational and medical institutions, which are not representative of

6 See Foster and Walker 2014 for a discussion of the difference between the North American focus on “successful” aging and the European focus on “active aging;” interestingly, in this gerontological analysis, the meaningful geographic distinctions are not West versus East, but rather North America versus Europe.

most older Polish people's daily lives, and which, as described above, have differing moral valences. Therefore, during follow-up research I sought out other kinds of social groups for older people in order to understand whether maintaining social relations and personhood is accomplished through the same kinds of daily practices as in educational and medical institutions. My goal was to understand experiences of old age that are more normative and therefore perhaps less caught up in the moralized binary construct of "active aging" and its implied opposite. Thus in the summer of 2014 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in *kluby seniora* (senior clubs) affiliated with parishes, neighborhoods, labor unions, professional societies, *domy kultury* (houses of culture) and non-governmental organizations. I also conducted interviews with older people who are not affiliated with any institution, leaders of governmental and non-governmental organizations that organize programming for older people and the editor of a newspaper for older people. During this fieldwork period, I interacted with over 90 different individuals in a range of social contexts.

In this article, I draw primarily on examples from this most recent fieldwork period in order to sidestep the more polarized moralities of both the Universities of the Third Age and the care institutions.

Generational differences, class aspirations and national connections

While studying aging in Poznań and Wrocław, I began to think of postsocialism as a useful category of practice, rather than as a category of analysis. That is, I noticed that there were many ways that divides between East/West continue to matter, or were continually reproduced, in the lives of the Poles with whom I was spending my time. In particular, there are three principal ways that postsocialism continued to matter to my research participants.

First, I noticed that many negative attributes of older people in Poland were often associated with the socialist past. I often heard negative comments from people of roughly my own age (in their late twenties to mid-thirties), who would explain anti-Semitic, racist or conservative religious comments made by an older person by saying things like, "these older people just need to die off," or "Our society won't move forward until the older generations are gone." However, such comments about anonymous older Poles contrast with the same person's warm feelings towards his or her own grandparents. That is, the animosity towards the anonymous or unknown older person, or the elderly en masse, contrasts with the warmth that people feel for specific older people that they know. In these conversations with Poles of my own age, exactly which part of the past made older people problematic for the national future was not always clear. It was often their association with the nationalist far-right and its exclusionary policies and visions, but sometimes it was the very fact of their having come of age and worked during

the socialist era that led them to have a socialist-era *mentalność*, or mentality. Regardless, it was always their association with the past that made their future inclusion suspect.

This association of older people with the socialist past is not limited to younger generations. During my fieldwork, I also heard such comments from older people themselves. For example, one *działkowiec* (allotment gardener), a man in his seventies, commented to me that many people of his generation keep a “*dystans*” (“distance”) between themselves and other people. He described this social distance as resulting from the “*zmiany ustrojowe*,” or systemic changes, that occurred after 1989, during which people were not treated fairly. He made this comment while describing his garden and pointing out a section of the *działka* (allotment) that he gives to a close friend from his “*kawalerskie czasy*” (“bachelor days”) to grow some cucumbers and tomatoes. This description of an old friend prompted a reflection on the social tendencies of older people, who keep a social distance from others. It was unclear from this conversation exactly to which kind of unfair treatment he was referring, or exactly why this came up in a description of his *działka*. I interpret this offhand remark about the social distance of older people as part of a broader culturally patterned discourse about generational differences.

I heard similar remarks from a group of older women volunteers during a conversation about the reasons why they choose to become volunteers. They cited the openness and warmth of their fellow volunteers as a contrast to other older people who only participate in activities from which they themselves benefit. That is, the volunteers understand their participation as benefiting others, not only themselves. These women volunteers explained this difference between themselves and others by saying that older people tend to have a *mentalność* that is stuck in the socialist past. The non-governmental organization through which these women met explicitly fosters *aktywność* (activity, or active-ness) in old age. This *aktywność* is contrasted to *bierność* (passivity), which was supposedly encouraged by the state socialist system. Passivity and activity thus emerge as binary kinds of *mentalność* that fit within a socialist/capitalist binary.⁷ Postsocialism here emerges as a meaningful local category, in which people are thought to be associated with the time—and political-economic formation—within which they came of age, and therefore need to change to adapt to a new era. From the perspective of these women volunteers, postsocialism means belonging to a different era than the ti-

7 The dominance—and indeed the very existence—of the categories of *aktywność* and *bierność* in both scholarship and policies on aging, as well as in the broader neoliberal order, should be challenged and subject to anthropological inquiry. Specifically, there should be a historical political-economic investigation of these categories’ dominance vis-à-vis the concept of the social. In a book manuscript currently in progress, I address this issue through more detailed ethnographic and historical consideration of *aktywność* itself. Thank you to one of the anonymous reviewers for raising this point. See Krzyżowski et al. 2014 for a sociological study of this topic among Polish retirees.

me in which one lives, and carries problematic connotations of a failure to adapt to new conditions.

Second, many older Poles, particularly those with middle- or upper-class status—or middle-/upper-class *aspirations*—regard western Europe and the United States as superior to Poland in some regards. That is, the *mentalność* that is associated with state socialism, social distance and selfishness is often seen as inferior to the *mentalność* associated with capitalism, openness and being friendly. This comparison to other countries was not just along the axis of *mentalność*, but also about the practicalities of daily living. When complaining about waiting time to see medical specialists, older people would remark to me that old age in Poland is so much worse than in other parts of Europe (Germany, Scandinavia) and the U.S. This familiar lament, that old people *elsewhere* are better off than *here*, is a common trope of talk about old age across cultures, wherein the deictics “elsewhere” and “here” are shifters that encompass locally meaningful categories. In contemporary Poland, these deictics still map on to the referents of West and East, of capitalist futures and socialist pasts.

Programs that promote *aktywność* in old age try to move people from one category to the other, to bring the *elsewhere* to *here*. At the Universities of the Third Age, institutional leaders talk about transforming older people into “Euroseniorzy,” or “Euroseniors”—that is, older people who speak English, know how to use computers, travel internationally and take responsibility for their own health (Robbins-Ruszkowski *in press*). These Euroseniorzy are seen as appropriate to the current world order; individual practices map on to particular kinds of political-economic imaginaries. The figure of the Eurosenior thus functions as an aspirational category for some older people in Poland, not only at Universities of the Third Age, but also in many social contexts in which *aktywność* and being *aktywny* are promoted or valued. In other words, aspirations towards *aktywność* are part of broader political-economic imaginaries in which older people live satisfying, fulfilling lives and achieve society-wide respect and status.

Working towards these aspirational categories can be deeply satisfying for older people who have felt stigmatized in various social contexts, both public and private (Robbins-Ruszkowski 2013). For instance, women volunteers described with great enthusiasm the activities in which they participate: organizing parties and dances for seniors, making various kinds of handicrafts (e.g., felt jewelry, decorative papers and cards), volunteering at a home for people with dementia. They see their participation in such activities as socially important in a context where media only portray younger people, not older people, as volunteers. One woman mentioned that her children and grandchildren are starting to take interest in her activities and ask her how she spends her time; she commented that it makes her glad that they are asking about her. Implicit in her comment was that until she began volunteering, her family did not take an interest in her life. In this light, volun-

teering can be seen as activity that not only creates new kinds of social relations, but also strengthens existing kin ties.

Another group of women who meet at the city-sponsored senior center to design and create period-specific costumes characterize their participation in this group as overwhelmingly positive. Several women spoke up to describe realizing their lifelong dreams of attending a formal ball, while others described continuing their previous practices of sewing. The women viewed their participation in this group as not just satisfying personal desires, but also working to change negative stereotypes of older people in Polish society. They describe their group as having a warm, open, empathetic and active atmosphere, which they contrasted to other social contexts. “Here, we don’t speak about illnesses,” said the leader of this group, suggesting that talk about illness is otherwise the norm. Several women then went on to describe how they cared for others (parents, neighbors) through difficult illnesses to death, and mentioned their own struggles with particular diseases. Lurking in this conversation was the figure of the old woman waiting in line to see a doctor, a stereotype that I have heard invoked again and again as a contrast to social organizations that promote *aktywność*. Across diverse forms of social organizations for older people, the sentiment dominated that *these* groups were somehow better than *other*, everyday kinds of social interactions. In these groups, people seem to be striving for something beyond the everyday; often, this striving takes on connotations of transforming social relations towards an affiliative ideal in which people choose their activities and friends, rather than associating with others only because they share place of work or residence.

Finally, some older people draw upon Poland’s socialist past as a crucial element of Poland’s national status as the long-suffering Christ of nations, which always gives of itself to help others, but receives no help in return. As part of a national narrative of suffering, which also includes the histories of partitions, uprisings and world wars, socialism becomes another chapter of oppression by outside forces. Depending on their political views, some older Poles can view EU membership as yet another chapter in this tale of suffering and struggle, while others view EU membership as a sign of progress and as evidence of Poland regaining its natural place in the world order. Inasmuch as these tales of suffering are part of older Poles’ understandings of themselves as moral persons (Robbins 2013a), the categories of socialism and postsocialism function as meaningful moral categories for older people in Poland.

Socialism and postsocialism became most evident as moral categories during conversations that turned into life stories. It was not uncommon during fieldwork that I would ask about people’s experiences of old age, and, in response, hear what seemed to be their entire life stories, often going back to the war. This tended to happen most often when I was sitting alone with someone, rather than in a group, and also with people who spent more time alone. One recent experience very well

exemplifies the moral dimensions of life stories and categories of socialism and postsocialism. I met Pani Małgorzata, an 86-year-old woman who lives alone in a small one-room apartment in an apartment block in Wrocław, through a friend who lives in the same building.⁸ My friend suggested that Pani Małgorzata would be glad to help me learn about non-institutional experiences of aging. She is almost entirely blind and leaves the apartment rarely, only with the assistance of others. After I explained my research, Pani Małgorzata began speaking and did not stop for eight hours. She thought I had been sent by God, because her priest had recommended that someone record her stories. That day, I learned about the suffering of both her family and Poland. She interwove personal and national stories—or perhaps more precisely, these national stories *were* personal. Topics included: her successful escapes from what should have been certain death during the war; her schizophrenic and violent first husband; the suffering of Poland during World War II and after; Poland’s “two great leaders” (Józef Piłsudski, the interwar Polish leader, and Lech Kaczyński, the president who was killed in the tragic 2010 plane crash); the supposed conspiracy by Donald Tusk, the then prime minister, to kill Kaczyński; her ability to predict certain events, such as the plane crash, the murder of Jerzy Popiełuszko (a priest active in the opposition Solidarity movement in the 1980s who was murdered by the state secret police), and the moment of her father-in-law’s death; her ability to save lives and cure people (including strangers) through the laying on of hands, *bioprąd* (bioenergy), and *stawienie baniek* (cupping). For eight hours, these stories poured out of her, one after another, each told with a life-and-death intensity.

In her narration, stories about family members were told in the same breath as stories about political figures: Piłsudski, Kaczyński, Popiełuszko. She described a sense that her own life had been saved by miracles, that she had been chosen by God, that she had special powers. In these stories, I see an intense desire to have her agency recognized, to have these miracles recognized, as a process of witnessing. For her—and for others who told similar stories—her life is lived in a national context. There is no personal outside of the political, or vice versa. Indeed, she told a story about the deceased president, Lech Kaczyński, as a child, as if he were her own child.

Although these stories seem extreme or perhaps attributable to eccentricity, I interpret Pani Małgorzata as an exemplar of one of the many older Poles I know whose personhood is fundamentally national. This particular strand of intense Catholic nationalism combined with conspiracy theories is promoted by the far-right conservative nationalist party that is supported by people of her generation and gender. The church and priests also promote these views (sermons often comment on political issues). However, older people across the political spectrum al-

8 *Pani* is the formal term of address in Polish for women.

so tend to narrate their life in this way, to hook their own stories of suffering and joy, of life and death, onto national moments of the same. I see this narrative style, so common among older people in Poland as a way of creating a good, moral life, in which kin are both personal and national. Shared emotions make historical figures into kin; the national past becomes family history. In this context, postsocialism and socialism are time periods with particular moral valences; this morality comes from both personal and national contexts.

It is for these reasons—generational differences, class aspirations and intense connections between personhood and nationhood—that we should not discard postsocialism as a topic of study. If we understand postsocialism-in-practice to mean how people in Central-Eastern Europe reflect on contrasts between political-economic, temporal, and spatial histories and imaginations, it is evident that these distinctions continue to matter in significant ways. Therefore, if we carefully investigate postsocialism as an ethnographic category, as a category of practice, we can move on to other categories of analysis (personhood, kinship, care, memory) that may be more generative and allow for more creative possibilities of understanding life in Central and Eastern Europe.

Postscript: Reflexive considerations on postsocialism as a topic of inquiry

For all my concerns with postsocialism as a category of analysis, it is only fair to note that the category did play some role in my own entry to this topic of study. As I was beginning graduate school and contemplating in which region of the world I should locate my study of aging and memory, I was fascinated by the large-scale changes in Eastern Europe (here I say “Eastern” rather than “Central-Eastern,” since for me at the time it was most certainly the East). It was 2004 and the European Union was expanding to include many countries of the former socialist bloc. I was intrigued by the idea that these countries were making such radical “transitions” from socialism to capitalism, from East to West—even though I had only vague, stereotypical ideas of what these changes actually signified, or how socialist or capitalist societies actually functioned. But I knew that global and national political-economic transformations were occurring, and that many such changes had occurred in the course of the lifetimes of the oldest generations in the region. I had a hunch that this history of large-scale change would provide a fruitful context to understand experiences and ideals of aging and memory. In other words, it was a binary East/West, socialism/capitalism, Cold War framework that allowed me even to conceive of this project.

However, there was another dimension to my initial development of this project. Like many anthropologists and academics, I have a personal connection to my research. My academic interest in aging and memory began with my paternal grandmother’s experience of Alzheimer’s disease. From the moment of dia-

gnosis, she became a different person within our family; every utterance and action was interpreted through the lens of the diagnosis. The diagnosis of Alzheimer's crossed temporal boundaries in surprising ways, stretching into the past as an explanatory logic for any odd behavior, and guaranteeing that the future would be marked by further decline and horrors. As time passed and I began to think about my grandmother from an anthropological perspective (anthropology as therapy?), I learned that all this was not specific to my own family, but was rather an indicator of the status of Alzheimer's in the contemporary United States (Cohen 1998). If I want to understand similar kinds of experiences among older people in Poland—how power can change among kin relations, how moral authority can shift within families, how personhood can be transformed or even erased—I cannot find explanations only in etic binary frameworks based on macro-level political-economic change. Nor can I find such explanations in scholarly debates about the utility of these frameworks. Rather, I find theories of kinship and personhood more valuable in explaining these intimate transformations.

However, understanding the intimacies of kinship and personhood does not mean eschewing political-economic perspectives. Indeed, as recent scholarship (McKinnon and Cannell 2013) in kinship studies demonstrates, everyday, intimate, and remembered practices of relatedness are not isolated from political-economic spheres, but are rather inseparable from such formations. This insight about the interconnectedness of domains is fundamental to anthropology as a discipline; indeed, deconstructing the categories through which we and our research participants know the world has long been a central goal of the field. However, the modernist tendency to view kinship as separate from politics proves to be a particularly difficult categorical separation to avoid. It is towards this end of breaking down artificial categorical distinctions that I present the above critical self-reflection. Perhaps by investigating our own personal motivations for research on Central and Eastern Europe that lie outside East/West socialist/capitalist frameworks, we can move towards a more nuanced and less polarized understanding of post-socialist persons, relations and worlds.

REFERENCES

- Beidelman, Thomas O. [1986]1993. *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought*. Washington Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Borneman, John. 1992. *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 2000. “Beyond ‘Identity.’” *Theory and Society* 29: 1-47.
- Buch, Elana D. 2013. “Senses of Care: Embodying Inequality and Sustaining Personhood in the Home Care of Older Adults in Chicago.” *American Ethnologist* 40(4): 637-650.
- Buchowski, Michał. 2004. “Hierarchies of Knowledge in Central Eastern European Anthropology.” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22(2):5-14.
- . 2005. “Correspondence: Reply to Chris Hann.” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23(1): 198-200.
- . 2012. “Intricate Relations between Western Anthropologists and Eastern Ethnologists.” *Focaal* 63: 20-38.
- Caldwell, Melissa L. 2004. *Not by Bread Alone: Social Support in the New Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2007. “Elder Care in the New Russia: The Changing Face of Compassionate Social Security.” *Focaal* (50): 66-80.
- Carlback, Helene, Yulia Gradszkova, and Zhanna Kravchenko, eds. 2012. *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Carsten, Janet. 2000. “Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness.” In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, edited by Janet Carsten, 1-36. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. “Introduction: Ghosts of Memory.” In *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*, edited by Janet Carsten, 1-35. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Červinková, Hana. 2012. “Postcolonialism, Postsocialism and the Anthropology of East-Central Europe.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48(2): 155-163.
- Chelcea, Liviu. 2003. “Ancestors, Domestic Groups, and the Socialist State: Housing Nationalization and Restitution in Romania.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45: 714-740.
- Cohen, Lawrence. 1998. *No Aging in India: Alzheimer’s, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Daniel, E. Valentine. 1984. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dumont, Louis. 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dunn, Elizabeth. 2004. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dunn, Elizabeth Cullen, and Katherine Verdery. 2011. “Dead Ends in the Critique of (Post) Socialist Anthropology: Reply to Thelen.” *Critique of Anthropology* 31(3): 251-255.

- Foster, Liam, and Alan Walker. 2014. "Active and Successful Aging: A European Policy Perspective." *The Gerontologist*. <http://gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/06/09/geront.gnu028.abstract>
- Hann, Chris. 2005. "Correspondence: Reply to Michał Buchowski." *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23(1): 194-197.
- Haukanes, Haldis, and Frances Pine, eds. 2005. *Generations, Kinship and Care: Gendered Provisions of Social Security in Central Eastern Europe*. Bergen, Norway: University of Bergen.
- Heider, Karl G. 1988. "The Rashomon Effect: When Ethnographers Disagree." *American Anthropologist* 90(1): 73-81.
- Kharkhordin, Oleg. 1999. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Krzyżowski, Łukasz, Wojciech Kowalik, Katarzyna Suwada, and Anna Pawlina. 2014. *Młodzi emeryci w Polsce: Między biernością a aktywnością* [Young Retirees in Poland: Between Passivity and Activity]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.
- Lamb, Sarah. 2000. *White Saris and Sweet Mangos: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lampland, Martha. 1995. *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mariotti, McKim. 1976. "Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism." In *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1985[1938]. "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person, the Notion of Self." In *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, 1-25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1990[1925]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by W. D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton.
- McKinnon, Susan, and Fenella Cannell, eds. 2013. *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Petryna, Adriana. 2002. *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Phillips, Sarah D. 2011. *Disability and Mobile Citizenship in Postsocialist Ukraine*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pine, Frances. 1996. "Naming the House and Naming the Land: Kinship and Social Groups in Highland Poland." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2(3): 443-459.
- Read, Rosie, and Tatjana Thelen. 2007. "Introduction: Social Security and Care after Socialism: Reconfigurations of Public and Private." *Focaal* 50: 3-18.
- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 2005. *Women's Health in Post-Soviet Russia: The Politics of Intervention*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 2011. "Health, Gender, and Care Work: Productive Sites for Thinking Anthropologically About the Aftermaths of Socialism." *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 29(1): 8-15.

- Robbins, Jessica C. 2013a. “Shifting Moral Ideals of Aging in Poland: Suffering, Self-Actualization, and the Nation.” In *Transitions and Transformations: Cultural Perspectives on the Life Course*, edited by Caitrin Lynch and Jason Danelly, 79-91. New York: Berghahn Books.
- . 2013b. “Understanding *Aktywność* in Ethnographic Contexts: Aging, Memory, and Personhood in Poland.” *Forum Oświatowe* (Educational Forum) 1(48): 87-101.
- Robbins-Ruszkowski, Jessica C. “‘Active Aging’ as Citizenship in Poland.” In *Generations: Rethinking Age and Citizenship*, edited by Richard Marback. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, forthcoming.
- . 2013. “Challenging Marginalization at the Universities of the Third Age in Poland.” *Anthropology & Aging Quarterly* 34(2): 157-169.
- Stanisz, Agata. 2014. *Rodzina Made in Poland: Antropologia pokrewieństwa i życia rodzinnego*. Poznań: Agata Stanisz.
- Stillo, Jonathan. 2012. “Who Cares for the Caregivers: Romanian Women’s Experiences with Tuberculosis.” *Anthropology Now* 4(1): 10-17.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Thelen, Tatjana. 2011. “Shortage, Fuzzy Property and Other Dead Ends in the Anthropological Analysis of (Post)Socialism.” *Critique of Anthropology* 31(1): 43-61.
- . 2012. “Economic Concepts, Common Grounds and ‘New’ Diversity in the Anthropology of Post-Socialism: Reply to Dunn and Verdery.” *Critique of Anthropology* 32(1): 87-90.
- Zalewska, Joanna. 2009. *Stary człowiek w kulturze młodości. Doświadczenie starości wśród warszawskich seniorów*. Polska Akademia Nauk.
- . 2010. “Starość a przemiany więzi społecznych [Old Age and Changes in Social Relationships].” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 54(3): 131-150.

Jessica C. Robbins-Ruszkowski

jrr@wayne.edu

Institute of Gerontology

Department of Anthropology

Wayne State University

<http://www.iog.wayne.edu/>

<http://clas.wayne.edu/anthropology/>

Local Scholars, Global Experts: from a Native's Point of View

Agnieszka Pasięka

Abstract: In recognizing the hierarchies among different kinds of scholars and scholarships, my paper tackles the problem of the absence Eastern European anthropologists from mainstream scholarly discourse. Going against a line of thought which explains this absence in terms of "Western hegemony," the paper shifts attention to different issues, asking: is Eastern European absence necessarily detrimental? What are the conditions of translating local concerns into global ones and what is the cost of this process? And finally, in which ways is Western scholarship present in the works of local anthropologists and what are the problems that local anthropology is facing? Although the paper discusses developments in Poland, I hope it may shed light on a broader Eastern European context. I also trust that the discussion on the present-day challenges of anthropology in Eastern Europe may be helpful for addressing dilemmas and queries within anthropology at large.

Keywords: Eastern European anthropology, hierarchies, publishing, ethnographic writing, anthropology at home

In the winter of 2013, I attended a seminar at an American university devoted to the topic of modern European history.¹ The speaker, an advanced doctoral student, presented her work on the Polish intelligentsia and urban resistance under Nazi occupation. One of the first questions she got after finishing her engaging talk was quite blunt: "Why did you choose *such* a topic?" a young professor asked her, "Is it because of your Polish origins?" The speaker explained that she does indeed have a Polish surname, but that she grew up as an American and that neither the Polish language nor Polish culture were cultivated in her home. "I chose this topic because it is fascinating," she replied and then asked rhetorically: "Would you ask me the same question if I studied the French intelligentsia or resistance in Germany?"

By comparing an apparently very peculiar Polish subject of research with other no-need-to-be-justified research problems, the speaker touched upon a very salient issue regarding both the hierarchy of problems/concerns/areas studied and hi-

1 Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Michał Buchowski, Chris Hann and Agnieszka Halemba for inspiring discussions. Very special thanks go to Mariya Ivancheva for hearting talks among "natives."

erarchy among researchers, both of which may easily translate into the hierarchy of the knowledge(s) we produce. This phenomenon best manifests itself in the perception of some academics as “local scholars” - as those who can barely illuminate local specificities – and others as “global experts,” capable of shedding light on universal phenomena and concerns (see Laas 1997 on the conflation between “local” and “particular”/“marginal”). Although anthropologists have expressed little interest in Western Europe, with the choice to study it being, at least until recent decades, not as “obvious” as it was for historians or sociologists (Rogers 1997: 718), a hierarchy of concerns and research sites is also perceptible within the discipline of anthropology. First and foremost, this hierarchy concerns the very knowledge that different scholars build. For even though both local and global anthropologists may draw their conclusions on the basis of carefully scrutinized local contexts, only the latter are perceived as capable of translating these into broader insights.

Furthermore, local scholars are likely to hear that the comments they make or the positions they take result from their “Polish/Croatian/Mexican” perspective; in contradistinction to global experts’ queries, local scholars’ questions do not arise from their anthropological sensitivity or years of scholarly training, but rather from their “insiders” perspective or even the “national lenses” through which they supposedly view the world. In short, a local scholar is often more a “local” than a “scholar,” while global experts seem to have a monopoly of discussing universal issues: his or her local insights illuminate global ones and s/he is never biased. What is important to pinpoint here is the fact that “national lenses” appear to be more condemnable than those of any other sort: the accusation of bias is rarely made against scholars who view research sites and research problems through, say, “neoliberal,” “romantic Marxist,” or “socialist-nostalgic” lenses. As philosopher (and Eastern European) Renata Salecl observes (1994: 1-2):

“Whenever I was invited to speak at a Western university I was always expected to speak about what was going on in Eastern Europe. Even the most abstract theoretical paper I delivered provoked questions such as ‘How are things for women in Eastern Europe?’ In a way, there is a special kind of prejudice at work in this attitude of Western intellectuals. If, for example, Western feminists speak about feminism they can discuss such abstract issues as ‘women in film noir,’ ‘the notion of the phallus in feminist theory,’ etc.; but someone coming from Eastern Europe must speak about the situation of women in her own country because of the ‘horrors’ going on there. But are not similar backlashes happening to women in the West in regard to their abortion rights, sexual harassment in the workplace and the rise of moral majority ideology?”²

Salecl’s reflections on the expectations towards “local scholars” also point to the nexus between “natives,” the places they come from and certain images such peo-

2 I’m grateful to Mariya Ivancheva for pointing my attention to this book.

ple and places evoke. As one goes to India to study hierarchy and to Italy to study honor and shame (cf. Appadurai 1988), so is a scholar from Eastern Europe expected to speak about the difficulties of postcommunist transformation, nationalism and other “horrors going on there.” No matter what s/he does, s/he is a *local expert* on these issues.

So far, so conventional: a well-worn complaint of an “Eastern European” scholar about “Western hegemony” and a continuous lack of attention of Western scholars to local scholarship. But the aim of this paper is different; in recognizing the hierarchies among different kinds of scholars and scholarships, I would like to focus my attention to “our” side of the problem and ask: why are Eastern European anthropologists absent from mainstream scholarly discourse? Is this absence necessarily detrimental? What are the conditions of translating local concerns into global ones and what is the cost of this process? And finally, in which ways is Western scholarship present in the works of local anthropologists and what are the problems that local anthropology is facing? I am limiting myself to discussing developments in Poland – the context I am most familiar with - yet I hope that my reflections may shed light on a broader Eastern European context. I also trust that the discussion on present-day challenges of anthropology in Eastern Europe may be helpful for addressing dilemmas and queries within anthropology at large. In discussing these issues, I set off with some critical reflections on anthropological writing and then supplement them with brief considerations on the challenges of ethnographic fieldwork and “native” anthropology.

On Eastern Europeans’ non-presence

In his oft-quoted article from 2004, Michał Buchowski presents his interpretation of the persisting hierarchies of knowledge and the perception of “Western” scholarship as a “better” one. Criticizing Western academics for the use of scholarship from Central-Eastern Europe mainly as a source of data and not as one of theoretical inspirations, he also indicates a peculiar mix of an “inferiority” and “superiority” complex among his fellows from CEE (2004: 10). Rather than “blaming” the West, he discerns complex reasons behind the different statuses of different anthropologies, including the influence of specific ethnological traditions loaded with pejorative stigmas and a dismissal of local intellectual traditions, also by local scholars who hasten to use trendy Western theories. He also observes that while Polish sociologists and philosophers have made their way to the West, no Polish anthropologist has become widely recognized.

A decade later, his observations are still valid. Not only are few Polish anthropological books translated into English, but the key anthropological journals rarely publish contributions by Polish authors. Certainly, the last statement can be reversed: we could also query why few Polish anthropologists send their articles to

the most recognized journals? Apart from reiterating persistently mentioned factors, such as linguistic difficulties and/or financial constraints, it is worth asking whether Polish authors are ready to play according to the rules set by Anglophone publishing houses and highly ranked journals. A look at the works published in one of the most prestigious Polish series – “Monographs” by the Polish Science Foundation³ – makes one wonder why few of the exceptionally thick volumes that appeared in this series could be easily published in one of the foreign presses.⁴ For a look at the works published by big international (mainly American and British) publishing houses makes one recognize that they are eager to apply the rule “the more concise, the better;” that they are allergic to long theoretical chapters, pedantically described historical backgrounds and detailed footnotes; and that a comment on the back cover starting with “this beautifully written, elegant ethnography” suggests, in fact, that the author has managed to squeeze his or her ethnographic material into 250 pages. Such requirements often go against what many scholars were taught to do and provoke justified objection as they tend not to allow researchers to acknowledge all the works that shaped their own and make them present their arguments in a simplified manner. At the same time, they also force authors to rethink and clarify their arguments, avoid longueurs and simply make their academic books more “readable.” In his response to Buchowski, Chris Hann rightly points out (2005: 195) that in order to be widely read, Eastern European works need to be written with more “depth and sophistication.”

Yet the issue of publishing means much more than the question of length and “density:” it is a question of writing skills and the capacity of rendering in a non-native language rich-in-detail ethnographic descriptions. What follows is also the capacity of following certain (quickly changing) writing conventions and current vogues, as well as the ability and courage to experiment with one’s text and ethnographic material. The possession of necessary linguistic skills and being up-to-date with “conventions in force” are what make numerous anthropological English-language works into novel, tone-setting and memorable contributions, while at the same constituting a common line of defense for non-English speakers. Being a non-English speaker myself and having long abandoned the hope of becoming a new Joseph Conrad, I sympathize – at least partly – with such a “defense.” However, in an act of repentance, I find it important to highlight yet another aspect of writing strategies which go well beyond the barrier of (foreign) language: namely the question of an artful intertwining of ethnography and theoretical discussions, and the very understanding of what ethnographic material is.

3 <http://www.fnpp.org.pl/monografie/>. Anthropological books are listed under the “Sociology” section.

4 A monograph by Magdalena Zowczak (2000) is at the moment being translated into English for publication in de Gruyter.

In bringing up this issue, I want to point to one serious drawback in Polish scholarship: the fact that in Polish anthropological works, informants mostly *talk*. The main body of the text tends to contain quotes from (recorded) interviews, but not necessarily descriptions of the speakers. The reader may learn from the interviewed people about their relations with neighbours, but s/he can rarely read a description of any neighbourly interactions. S/he may learn about the difficult life conditions in a postindustrial town, but often does not get a chance to imagine the urban landscape. Reading about the attachment to the Catholic faith expressed by the speaker, s/he might not get to know whether the room in which the conversation took place was decorated with a cross and what program was on in TV. I aim neither to fetishize the ethnographic context nor to argue that it is equally relevant in every situation. Yet I do find it very problematic that many social actors we get to know while reading anthropological works are presented in isolation from their social, political and geographical background, and consequently that we get to know them merely as “interviewees” – as a matter of fact, we barely get to know them. In short, contemporary Polish anthropological works too often come close to a sort of selectively conducted “discourse analysis” and this tendency puts it at odds with the Polish ethnological tradition, rich in thick-description-type monographs and skillfully painted portraits of informants (even if marked by – condemnable in our eyes – feelings of superiority, manifested in the notions of “primitive peasants,” “simple folk” or “backward villagers”).

Apart from the “discourse-analysis with elements of ethnography” type, I would like to name two other increasingly popular styles (neither of which was “invented” in Poland, but both of which are well represented there). The first are “anthropological” reportages and journalistic accounts, which, rather than being published in newspapers and magazines, begin to colonize scholarly publications. The tendency most probably results from that fact that Polish authors have recently begun publishing for a wider audience (in journals and on different internet platforms) and publishing in different registers often leads to blurring the boundaries between academic and non-academic writing. Without entering into the details of the widely debated issue of anthropologists’ public presence (e.g. Eriksen 2006; Pelkmans 2013; Zimniak-Haľajko 2010), it seems worth mentioning that the blurring of the two – scholarly and professional – identities often has important consequences for the writing. By “consequences” I do not only mean the problem of “taking sides” and “value-laden” comments, but the very ways in which we deal with collected material, use gained knowledge and craft texts.

The second type resembles what Roger Sanjek (2004) calls the “theory parades” genre. The drawback of this genre lies in an imbalance between ethnography and theory, or more precisely: in an emphasis on theory at the expense of ethnography. Recent Western scholarship is indeed present in Polish scholarly work, but the applied theories are usually detached from the ethnographic material they originally

supported. “The exchange of tools,” which supposedly constitutes one of anthropology’s strongest points, seems to apply only to theoretical considerations, less so to human experiences and endeavours. And it is precisely for this reason that locally observed phenomena remain *local*. Rather than being compared to the Hutu refugees studied by Liisa Malkii (1995), the beloved Polish “tribe” of Lemko-Rusyns are portrayed as romantic aborigines with an unusual predilection for nostalgia and remembering. The Silesian separatist movement is rarely confronted with the activity of Basques or Catalans, studied by Jacqueline Urla (1993) or Begoña Echeverría (2007). And mushrooming works on “multicultural dialogue” and “multicultural coexistence” rarely refer to the ethnographic works on multi-ethnic and multi-religious neighbourhoods in London or Berlin (e.g. Baumann 1995), but instead reproduce the – rather static – views of Zygmunt Bauman. Consequently, such works are confined to a national frame (Hann 2005: 196). Even contributions that have explicit theoretical ambitions are often “recycled goods,” which “address ‘trendy issues’ invented by continental tyrants” (Buchowski 2004: 9).

The discussions on the non-presence of anthropological writings from Eastern Europe tend to focus on the hegemony of the English language and the domination of highly ranked journals, to which access is carefully safeguarded. A counter-hegemonic strategy is supposed to entail “active bilingualism,” to use Ulf Hannerz’s expression, and an attempt to keep a balance between publications in one’s native language and in English. What is rarely recognized is the fact that such advice and strategies involve detectable hierarchies, too. First, publishing in one’s own language is important for the development of local anthropology, but, whether we want it or not, it often reinforces authors’ positions as “only” local scholars. And second, one can observe a sad – although perhaps pragmatic – tendency to divide one’s contributions into categories of better and worse. “This article is *too good* for a Polish journal,” I happened to hear from colleagues, “I wish I had sent it elsewhere.” Rather than complaining about hegemony and pretending we ourselves attribute the same value to different scholarly traditions, it would be much more productive to reflect on the flaws of our own works and on ways of improving them.

In concluding my comments on ethnographic thinness and a specific use of theory, I would like to refer to Kirin Nayanar who observes (1993: 680):

“As I see it, there are currently two poles of anthropological writing: at one end stand accessible ethnographies laden with stories, and at the other end stand refereed journal articles, dense with theoretical analyses.”

It is not surprising, Nayanar notes, that introductory courses to anthropology involve many narrative ethnographies as it is through them that people become “seduced” by anthropology. She therefore calls for “connecting compelling narrative and rigorous analysis,” as only such an approach enables us to render “the viv-

id humanity of the people with whom we work,” as “it is *people* and not theoretical puppets who populate our texts” (1993: 681). She sees a direct link between the problem of writing and certain misconceptions about “native” anthropology, to which I turn in the following section.

The native and the exotic

The above reflections on academic writing and the difficulty of translating local concerns into global ones apply mainly to Polish anthropologists studying the Polish context. This is not only because such scholars continue to be more numerous,⁵ but because these are the “native anthropologists” or “anthropologists at home” most frequently labelled as “local scholars.” At this point, I would like to address one more issue: the contestation of the fundamental distinction between anthropology at home and abroad, the familiar and the exotic, and the extent to which the undermining of this dichotomy has (or has not) changed our ideas about the “ideal anthropologist.” To be clear, in discussing this issue I do not aim to argue that the contestation of the difference between the two anthropologies is right or wrong. Although I strongly believe in the value of native anthropology, I do not feel competent to suggest that fieldwork at home is equally important for training an anthropologist and that it is “a matter of perspective.” What I aim to highlight, instead, is the fact that this very contestation tends to be false; the difference between at home and abroad is maintained, yet veiled under notions of “trans-local,” “global” or “multi-sited.”

To me, the outcomes of the on-going discussions on “native anthropology” seem rather obvious: to be a non-native anthropologist continues to be considered more serious, more real, perhaps more “anthropological.” This fact may come as surprising given the amount of works which deconstruct the idea of “traditional” fieldwork; I mean here not only postcolonial and postmodern critique, but also a critical take on the discipline’s founding fathers’ methodology (e.g. Stocking 1983). Despite field-sites becoming more and more mobile, the demarcating of their “boundaries” seeming increasingly difficult and Western, urban, “white” societies gradually becoming objects of ethnographic studies, the notion of “native anthropologists” is still a powerful one. It is powerful despite the fact that it is not

5 The reasons behind this fact vary, yet, in my view, financial constraints continue to constitute the main obstacle. First, and very simply, lack of funds prevent people from carrying out long-term fieldwork abroad; they consider that instead of short-term research abroad, it is better to conduct in-depth research in their own country. Due to increasing opportunities for getting grants and funds for research, this tendency has been slowly changing. Second, many doctoral students have permanent and semi-permanent employment which prevents them from undertaking long-term fieldwork abroad, and consequently their doctoral research is often connected with their work (This is especially true for people working for NGOs, in the fields of migration, urban developments, etc.).

clear what it actually means and who exactly is to be defined as an “insider” and an “indigenous scholar.”

The idea of native anthropologist incorporates two problematic, albeit seemingly contradictory, assumptions. The first is the idea of “authenticity.” As Nayaran notes (1993: 676), “a native anthropologist is assumed to be an insider who will forward an authentic point of view to the anthropological community.” The second common assumption, in its turn, implies “lack of distance” and “cultural bias:” being too much of an insider, the native anthropologist may take many things for granted and thus might render “authenticity” in a highly uncritical way. Evidently, none of these assumptions takes into consideration the complexities of people’s identities, the manifold influences we are exposed to, and the multiple ways in which our knowledge is situated – no matter whether we are “insiders” or “outsiders.”

Moreover, the label of “native anthropologist” may be a permanently ascribed one. As an illustration, I would like to refer to one personal experience. Having conducted my doctoral research in Poland, I embarked on a new project which investigates the relationship between class and ethnic identity, focusing on the descendants of Polish immigrants living in the U.S. A vast majority of the people I talked to were third or fourth generation immigrants, had very little knowledge of Poland and did not know any Polish. And yet, when describing my project to a few fellow anthropologists, I heard that the research was probably *easy* for me given that I am a *native*. Native of what or native where? Such assumptions, along with the ideas of “authenticity” and “cultural bias,” expose a very important problem, namely a persistent idea of a native “culture” as bounded and homogenous; as interpretable in the same way by its bearers; as an unchangeable set of meanings, values, and references; and finally, as the main channel through which we engage with the world, as if being a woman, a young person, a leftist or a representative of the upper middle class mattered less than the magic of being a “native.” They too reveal the perception of fieldwork at home as “easier,” free of the difficulties that real outsiders face. Once again, I do not aim to question that fieldwork abroad, an immersion in a “completely” new reality, is more difficult and more demanding. I simply want to underline that certain assumptions about native anthropology ignore the very process of becoming anthropologists, the importance of professional identity and academic training: the fact that “[n]obody is born an anthropologist, and curious though it may seem, still less is anyone born a native” (de Castro quoted in Young 2005: 208). To reiterate my earlier observations, a “native scholar” is often more a “native” than a “scholar.”

The solutions advocated against the discourse of native anthropology bear resemblances with those proposed in the context of the hegemony of English language in academic publications. Rather than discussing the pros and cons of anthropology at home and abroad, I believe we should look critically at our own

studies, recognize their weaknesses (often mirroring problems detectable in anthropological writings) and pay more attention to the quality of our fieldwork; a fieldwork which should be carefully prepared and carried out, and which can later translate into meaningful stories, combining “compelling narrative and rigorous analysis.” Doing fieldwork at home, we should aim to demonstrate that the gathered material does illuminate broader phenomena, speak to different contexts and is not confined to “national frames:” it is in this way that we can expose the continuous reproduction of the idea of the “exotic” within anthropological thought (cf. Kapferer 2013) and the hierarchy of research sites, questions and dilemmas integrally connected with it. It is through high-quality work that we can try to challenge the dominant narrative of the bias of local scholars, exposing different ways in which our work is linked to and conditioned by different discourses, ideologies and institutional pressures. In so doing, we could also help the discipline to rethink and better articulate the subject of and the way of conducting anthropological inquiries. In light of a new hegemony – that of the ethic committees and review boards which might soon render any participant observation and interviews questionable - the need of such a reflection seems more pressing than ever.

Acting globally, struggling locally

Our capacity to make such a contribution and “go global” depends, once again, on a more critical view on our own scholarship. I do not mean here solely a recognition of weaknesses and drawbacks - some of which have been discussed in this paper - but also a constructive reflection on what kind of fashions we want to follow, what kind of traditions to draw on and what audience to address. It is a question many of us have to address not only while researching and writing, but also while preparing syllabuses and mentoring students. I also contend that such a critical view demands from us abandoning a conviction about the exceptionality of our (precarious) status within the world-system of anthropology.

In making this call for self-critique, I am far from ignoring the manifold constraints or claiming that everything lies in our hands. After all, the herein addressed problems need to be situated in a broader context of the changing landscape of the academic world. In Poland, this changing landscape means a decreasing number of students which has a direct influence on the number of academic positions. What ensues is a tendency to attempt to attract and keep students at all costs, lowering standards of education. The question of what readings to choose – how to make students familiar with current scholarship without simplistically perpetuating Western hegemony and ignoring local scholarship – appears to be less urgent once the main problem is the very lack of a will to read. Similarly, encouraging students to try to write in English needs to be more and more often balanced by an attempt to *teach* them how to write correctly in their native language. Inti-

mately connected to this is the promotion of the business-model university, by and large detrimental for the humanities and social sciences which are supposed to play according to the rules set by the natural sciences and prove their usefulness and profitableness.

Last but not least, shamefully low expenditures on research cannot but clip scholars' wings: they too are co-responsible for the "local" status of the knowledge we produce (and the way it is produced). I certainly wish this paragraph would end with a "light at the end of the tunnel" sentence, but unfortunately recent years have brought further limiting of funds (for instance in the field of textbook publishing and translations) and controversial decisions, such as the classification of "anthropology" as a "knowledge of the past" in funding processes. New requirements regarding publications discourage scholars from working on monographs and edited volumes, which not only lie at the heart of the discipline but, to use Nayaran's expression, help us to "seduce" new generations of anthropologists. All these constataions are not to question the presence of numerous fantastic scholars and teachers who continue to promote anthropology, practice it in an admirable way and publish inspiring works⁶ – and who do so "despite" rather than "because of."

In concluding, the task of Eastern European (and, perhaps, other sorts of "local") anthropologists is particularly difficult, given that not only do we want to shape "global imaginaries" but that we still fight for recognition and find it hard to become experts "even" in our own countries. There still exists an enormous discrepancy between anthropology's possibilities and its role in academic structures and the public sphere (Zowczak 2011). The relation between the local and the global turns out to be much more complex than it would seem at first sight and so are the causes of the persisting hierarchies – of knowledge, academics, research sites and research problems. As a matter of fact, struggling for the position of global experts may soon become no less urgent than reasserting oneself as a local scholar.

6 An increasing number of Polish anthropologists, especially representatives of the young generation, writes in English for an international anthropological audience (see, e.g., contributions by Monika Baer, Magdalena Grabowska, Agnieszka Halemba, Renata Hryciuk, Ewa Klekot, Agnieszka Kościańska, Agata Ładykowska, Anna Niedźwiedz, Kacper Pabłocki, Magdalena Radkowska, Małgorzata Rajtar, to name but some). It is also worth mentioning that a vast majority of these people received at least part of their training abroad. And that the very way of defining someone as a "Polish anthropologist" might be quite problematic.

REFERENCES

- Buchowski, Michał. 2004. "Hierarchies of knowledge in Central-Eastern European anthropology." *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22(2): 5-14.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2006. *Engaging Anthropology. The Case for a Public Presence*. Oxford: Berg.
- Echeverria, Begoña. 2007. "Learning and working in Basque: Implications for Basque identity." In *Language of the Land: Policy, Politics and Identity*, edited by Katherine Schuster and David Witkosky, 179-194. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Hann, Chris. 2005. "Reply to Michał Buchowski." *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23(1): 194-197.
- Kapferer, Bruce. 2013. "How anthropologists think: configurations of the exotic." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19.
- Laas, Anu. 1997. "Provocations of European Ethnology" (Part: "The Role of Europe in the Study of Anthropology"). *American Anthropologist* 99(4).
- Mallkii, Liisa. 1995. *Purity and exile*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nayanan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95(3): 671-686.
- Pelkmans, Mathijs. 2013. "A wider audience for anthropology? Political dimension of an important debate." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19: 398-404.
- Rogers, Susan Carol. 1997. "Provocations of European Ethnology" (Part: "Explorations in Terra Incognita"). *American Anthropologist* 99(4): 713-730.
- Salecl, Renata. 1994. *The spoils of freedom. Psychoanalysis and feminism after the fall communism*. London: Routledge.
- Sanjek, Roger. 2004. "Going public: responsibilities and strategies in the aftermath of ethnography." *Human Organization* 63.
- Stocking, George. 1983. "The ethnographer's magic: Fieldwork in British anthropology from Taylor to Malinowski." In *Observers observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, edited by G. Stocking. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Urla, Jacqueline. 1993. "Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics: Numbers, Nations and the Making of Basque Identity." *American Ethnologist* 20(4): 818-843.
- Young, Donna. 2005. "Writing Against the Native Point of View." In *Auto-ethnographies: The Anthropology of Academic Practices*, 203-215. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.
- Zimniak-Hałajko, Marta. 2010. „Antropologia etyczna? O powinnościach badacza ruchów społecznych." In *Granice kultury*, edited by A. Gwóźdź. Katowice: Śląskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Zowczak, Magdalena. 2000. *Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje wątków biblijnych w kulturze wsi*. Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, Monografie FNP. Seria Humanistyczna, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Funna.
- . 2011. „Antropologia, historia a sprawa ukraińska. Taktyka pogranicza." *Lud* 95: 45-68.

Agnieszka Pasięka

aga.pasięka@gmail.com

Institute of Slavic Studies

Polish Academy of Sciences

<http://ispan.waw.pl/default/en/>

What is “National” in National Anthropological Associations? An Interview with Zdeněk Uherek and Juraj Podoba (Jakub Grygar)

Juraj PODOBA (b. 1958) is the President of the Slovak Association of Social Anthropology (SASA). He works at the Institute of Social Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University; for thirty years he was employed at the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. He was a visiting lecturer at domestic and foreign universities, in 1994-1995 he was a visiting fellow at the University of Cambridge. In his research work, he has devoted himself to the issue of material culture, especially the problems of architecture and housing in the countryside, the issue of the modernization and transformation of (post)socialist societies, studies of ethnicity, collective identity, nationalism and ethnic conflict, environmental anthropology and problems of permanently sustainable development and environmental movements. He also publishes on the issue of the history and methodology of the social sciences.

Zdeněk UHEREK (b. 1959) is the president of the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA), director of the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v.v.i., and president of the National Committee of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. He teaches at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Pardubice and also supervises doctoral students at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University. He is the contact person of the program UNESCO – MOST for the CR. In his research work, he has focused on international migration, studies of ethnicity and nationalism, urban anthropology and Roma studies. Besides the Czech Republic, he has conducted research in the Balkans, Slovakia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Canada.

Jakub Grygar: *In science today, great emphasis globally is put on the internationalization of professional production and on the development of knowledge that goes beyond the borders of nation states. This emphasis has many forms: from the evaluation of the professional production of scientists according to the number of foreign publications, through the widening of the editorial boards of scientific journals with foreign experts all the way to taking into account the involvement of foreign researchers in upcoming projects when grant agencies consider their support. In this situation, what do you see as the benefits of the existence of national anthropological associations, such as CASA and SASA? What is the reason for their existence in a situation*

where more Czech and Slovak anthropologists are members of a similar organization, the international EASA?

Juraj Podoba: I think it is an improperly defined problem: the existence of a European organization, or in general international scientific and professional organizations, and the existence of national organizations are complementary, rather than being redundant. Moreover, membership in the EASA is something completely different than (active) membership in an organization resolved to develop a specific (social) scientific discipline – in this case, social anthropology – in an academic milieu, where it was previously not represented, and where even today it scarcely promotes itself – quoting Peter Skalník – “in a hostile environment.” Also, the mention of a massive representation of Czech and Slovak members in EASA is rather a matter of embarrassment, for the motivation to join is more often decorative and prestige related, rather than in fact meaning anything in terms of scientific and professional work within the field and its development in the domestic milieu, even from an international perspective. SASA is a civic association. It is this status that determines the logic of its role and the meaning of its existence. Like other civic associations, it brings together the people involved – in this case, people with an interest in social anthropology and qualitative social science research in general – in order to respond to their own interests and common goals. What this means, however, depends on how they define the goals, interests, work, the way the organization functions, etc. The organization’s role depends on the decision of the members of the civic association. In other words, the character of the Association will be how we are going to make it.

Zdeněk Uherek: Membership in EASA really opens up a wider scope for activity than the SASA or CASA. I have been a member of EASA since 1990. I joined right after its first conference in Coimbra, thanks to the offer of Václav Hubinger, and through regular participation in their conferences I have been able to meet people with whom I would otherwise barely have come into contact and participate in panels which have moved me forward in many ways. There is a huge difference between reading the work of one’s contemporaries and being able to see and talk to them. If an anthropologist is professionally engaged in their field, it should be his/her duty to be in at least one such global or European organization and to regularly attend conferences. In the event that one teaches and goes to the panels which relate to the subjects one lectures on, every two years one obtains a renewed impulse of ideas of how to work with the subject, what to read and how to think about it. It cannot then happen, as is still customary in the Czech Republic, that teachers under the name of one subject present diametrically different things at two schools and that they teach misguided or outdated things. Each teacher should have to try to present at such conferences. One can in this way come closer to world renown, but equally, if only those who will speak immediately after you remain at the lecture, at least one can see that nobody cares about the theme one

works on, or how one conceptualizes it, or that it is perceived as unimportant. An unpleasant experience that lasts fifteen minutes can save a person years of work, or on the contrary, on the same basis once can find good examples or colleagues for an international project. CASA will probably never have such a role, or just a locally limited one, but again at EASA it will hardly be possible to find an adequately and appropriately sympathetic forum to address such issues as how to look at the situation at individual Czech schools, or the extent to which the Ministry or the appropriate council of the government can intervene in the results of requested projects and the like.

In my opinion, the Czech Association for Social Anthropology emerged for several reasons, some of which are no longer topical. The first, and perhaps it will sound trite, is that part of the ethnologists and anthropologists in the Czech Republic wanted to prove that such an organization could emerge at all. At first, it was not possible for a long time, then there was no time and energy. The establishment of the CASA demonstrates that social anthropology exists in this country and has an institutional base. Another reason, no less banal, is the visibility of the fact that there are any social anthropologists here. Although I am an advocate of the concept that social anthropology, cultural anthropology and ethnology are one discipline, many academics in the field disagree with me. Through the existence of CASA, ethnologists and anthropologists can declare themselves as specialists in the same field and as a group with the same interests. Through CASA, researchers who studied ethnology or anthropology and now work in departments with various names can be declared to be part of a certain field and community that subscribes to certain themes and methods. Under the conditions in the Czech Republic, where previously the only professional trade organization was the Ethnographic Society, is the founding of the CASA is a symbolic act with a certain value. Other ethnologists have made an interesting step in the same direction. To my surprise, the Czech Ethnographic Society became a member of the World Council of Anthropological Associations this year. Given that before the founding of the CASA, we had negotiated with the Czech Ethnographic Society that we did constitute a section within this organization's umbrella and that this step had not been met with consensual understanding on the grounds that we were a different field, I am more than astonished by this change (the Czech Republic is therefore represented in the WCAA by two organizations, which is a unique precedent in the world).

Another reason that is probably more up to date is a professional discussion at the local level. The various workplaces in Bohemia know about each other, but mutual professional communication, which is often not sufficient even on the basis of individual departments, is sluggish. What the EASA does for Europe, the CASA should do for the Czech Republic: students should come into contact with specialists from other institutions, and debate should flow across the boundaries between individual departments; the CASA should reflect on ethical issues and

receive stimuli, regardless of whether they be from students, pensioners, the unemployed or department heads. Granted, this is happening only partially, but still it is better than nothing, above and beyond the conference, which performs at the regional, Central European level a role similar to the EASA conference at the European level. Moreover, at this point, the CASA is a member of the WCAA, which connects our local anthropological association with the world and gives all members of the CASA the opportunity to write and respond to stimuli from around the world. Graduates may also use this opportunity, even though they are not subsidized professionals who will travel to European and world congresses. An added bonus is the journal, about which I am genuinely happy and which is profiling it self more clearly as being truly Central European.

Jakub Grygar: *So in the terms in which we are now talking about them, it seems that the CASA, and maybe even the SASA, are only emancipatory projects within the national academic community. Indeed, the EASA was established in 1989, whereas the SASA and CASA only in 2007 and 2008 respectively. It is as if through their national associations, the Czech and Slovak anthropologists want to tell their surroundings that they are here and that the name of social Czech or Slovak anthropology can no longer speak so easily to colleagues from other disciplines.*

Zdeněk Uherek: Most of the local European anthropological associations were established before the foundation of the EASA, a fact which was due to the need for contacts at the national level that preceded the international level. After the creation of international institutions, they did not, however, disappear. The CASA had it backwards: the need to establish such an organization was there, regardless of the existence of the international association. The question is whether it really satisfies demand at the local level.

How could I verify this in contacts with other organizations? Each local anthropological association sets its goals slightly elsewhere. In one place they focus mainly on legislation, elsewhere the association stands on the line between professional associations and trade unions, somewhere else they focus on the representative presentation of their members, and somewhere else again on the network and conferences.

This year's conference, the upcoming issues of the journal *Cargo* and the Gellner seminars perhaps suggest that the CASA could become an attractive place for anthropologists meeting with people from other disciplines and also with people of the wider Central European region. In addition to the attractiveness of cooperation with Slovakia, the interest of Polish contributors has pleasantly surprised me, not to mention also those from Germany, and other places overseas interested in contact or cooperation. Although the CASA acts primarily as a station for short stops, it may be possible to get new incentives from visitors which on the contrary have a longer-term impact.

Juraj Podoba: I have no reason to say that, in the recent or distant past, it was colleagues from other disciplines that spoke on behalf of Slovak anthropology. In the 1990s, although in many post-socialist countries it became fashionable to declare oneself a cultural anthropologist, particularly among (some) philosophers. The Slovak case suggests almost the contrary. The period demand became a declared distance from anthropology, with just some Slovak folklorists during the intervening period declaratively claiming to be anthropologists. But, above all, it was a situational, and largely a decorative position, essentially the same type of career strategies widespread also within arts and humanities in post-communist Europe. These might be characterised as the holding of quite different epistemological positions and significantly different field orientations depending on the particular situation, or the character and quality of the academic milieu, in which a particular individual happens to be at the time.

However, in order to avoid excessive simplification and a particular focus only on our own discipline, it can be generally stated in the practical operation of academic institutions in post-socialist Slovakia, the position of qualitative social research is an unfavourable one. On the first level, this research is discriminated against by the real grant schemes (in Slovakia the situation in the funding of science has been much worse than in the Czech Republic) and the application of evaluation mechanisms as well. And also the negative consequences of “academic feudalism” for the development in particular of the newly-constituted social science fields or disciplines that focus on qualitative research so outside of our current ideological debates in the public discourse, as well as outside of regional-study investigation and production (often more recycling), what some colleagues call “popularizing literature”. However, this is already a topic for a wider debate that goes beyond the framework of our interview.

The establishment of the SASA at the end of the last decade was more a pragmatic response to the thus defined the situation in the milieu of academic institutions and to the overall atmosphere after the collapse of the totalitarian system. The attempt (so far quite successful) of the institutional entrenchment of social anthropology in a hostile or indifferent academic milieu should be supported by an (as yet not so successful) attempt to establish a civic association which would bring together people with an interest in the field and at the same time help it – metaphorically speaking – in its “pilgrimage to the (Slovak) world.” So in my recollections as a member of the Preparatory Committee of the SASA, what was paramount were pragmatic goals. In the context of the past two decades, I would rather leave out the word “only” with regard to emancipation. On the contrary, it seems to me that, at least in the case of younger colleagues who have completed long-term stays at quality Western European and American universities, and have adequate language skills, theoretical foundations and have built quality personal contacts, it is easier to assert themselves in the international rather than in the domestic professional context.

Jakub Grygar: *What Juraj is now saying actually gets us to the topics that Zdeněk was earlier broaching when he spoke of the National Association as a space that should allow, or even encourage, dialogue, both within the discipline as well as between generations or across different disciplines. Personally, I think that the attractiveness of the CASA or SASA (or perhaps even their viability?) may be reflected precisely in what such a dialogue is about, or even in what the objects of our conflicts are. What topics in this respect have the CASA and SASA managed to open up and what are the reactions of the expert and the wider publics?*

Zdeněk Uherek: If I were to build on the current topics of conferences and ideas that have appeared in the journal *Cargo* or at the Gellner seminars, I would note several themes that recently have probably resonated most frequently. First place in the ranking would likely belong to discussions of transformation processes. To be more specific, what is meant here is the particularly prevalent issue of the transformation from the early 90s to the present. In 2014 alone, two representatively attended conferences were held on the subject in Prague. Besides the CASA conference entitled *Transition 2.0? Anthropology of the world (s) in reform*, there was also the conference of the Institute of Ethnology, in cooperation with the University of Poznan, the University of Banská Bystrica and the Central European University in Budapest, entitled *Rethinking Anthropologies in Central Europe for Global Imaginaries*. The study of social change has long been a key anthropological topic and, although in both cases the theme of transformation referred in particular to transition in Central and Eastern Europe, it was nice that local anthropologists did not appear only as learned aboriginals and that the topic of transformation was not understood simply in a localized sense. The theme of Central and Eastern European transformation is a good communication bridge between local anthropological communities and the anthropological public beyond Central and Eastern Europe. I myself frequently make use of this communication bridge. On the other hand, I do not see my role as that of guiding colleagues from other parts of the world through transforming my native landscape. As an anthropologist, I feel the need to comment on various native landscapes and global problems, and if we get stuck only in our own transformation issues, then we would probably devalue their role. The stimuli to do so are frequently also external. I often observe that, on arrival at Western universities, anthropology students from the Czech Republic who previously were focused on a range of differentiated topics suddenly begin to return to the processing of "Czech" themes, and I can imagine why: they are asked by their teachers and fellow students. Of course, their answers on these matters are convincingly well-informed, but I do not think that this is enough for their professional advancement.

Other frequent topics were medical anthropology and visual anthropology, which in the Czech milieu are still so little explored, as well as ecological studies,

with a long-term interest also being shown in the subjects of migration, gender studies and marginalized groups. All these topics are interdisciplinary, and the interested parties from other disciplines also discussed these issues at anthropological meetings. This gives anthropological encounters an additional dynamic. Some topics on the contrary are disappearing, such as culture as a truly difficult concept to grasp. Equally, in comparison with ten years earlier, there is less talk about ethnicity, and in Bohemia territorial studies are largely disappearing. Specialized meetings today are not even usually organised on such classic themes as family, linguistic anthropology and political anthropology, although in this context the anthropology of religion is fairing rather better. There are good academicians in these areas here, but they do not advertise themselves. In summary, we might say that anthropology is evolving and it is good. All scientific branches are developing and usually such that they deepen the understanding of their domains, become more specific about their topics and come to ask more sophisticated questions. Sometimes I feel that anthropologists have a tendency to jump from topic to topic. This is how fashion designers work and not scientists: sustainability today, borders tomorrow, methodological nationalism the day after tomorrow, then again identity, remittances... Developments in the subjects addressed should have a certain logic. I would like to believe that this is an internal development of the field and not merely a wandering.

Juraj Podoba: I can only support Zdeněk's arguments; although I fear that in this case this is principally a result of generational vision problem. Many younger colleagues run up against precisely this model of existence in academic space he criticized; and the criticism is a very valid one. And yet we have the good fortune that Slovak ethnology and its nascent anthropology are contaminated by the fashionable wave of post-modernism, especially that of American anthropology of two-three decades ago, to a minimum extent. The majority of elder colleagues from the milieu of ethnological workplaces, but not only the older ones, have also been recycling professional issues very viably for 30-40 years, which, from the perspective of epistemology and the theory and methodology of the ethnological/anthropological disciplines, is comparable to something like the timespan of the period between the late 19th century and the 1950s. Furthermore, a special problem is present in the social sciences of Central European countries that my colleague was tactfully silent about, and that is that a large part of the publication production occurs outside the epistemological and theoretical-methodological definitions of the various scientific disciplines. Or, to put it more broadly – outside social theory. What I refer to here are the texts frequently dealing with questions of persistent regional studies (*Heimatkunde*) and cheaply popularizes at the level of trading with “folk culture;” these publications range from nonfiction and publications of an essayistic sort, to those of a fictional character. In this context, it becomes more difficult for the predominant model for producing specialized publications

to act as an impulse for productive intra-disciplinary or interdisciplinary discussion that would move the discipline forward, particularly in relation to the international scientific context.

Again, this is a much broader problem, which goes beyond the scope of this interview. I want to say that these questions cannot be efficiently solved by professional associations and civic associations of the type of the CASA / SASA. They can only, within their means, help to articulate such conflicts and engender dialogue. It is, however, much easier for them to act in a situation when within the academic community there is an interest in critical debate and a certain academic culture of discussion. In the Slovak academic milieu – and now I am referring not at all only to Ethnology and Anthropology – there has been a long term lack of interest in such a debate. This is a reflection of the real atmosphere in academic workplaces in Slovakia, where people who have their office within the same building, even on the same corridor, do not have/want to have even an elementary knowledge of what their counterparts are actually dealing with. During the past quarter century, I have repeatedly attempted to create a space for such collegial discussion forums; the first time in the early 1990s, as an editor of the bulletin *Národopisné informácie*, in the so-called Discussions on our Science in that periodical. And I certainly was not alone: there have been several such attempts over the past 25 years. However, the efforts made in this direction have always ended up lost ... in apathy and indolence, often in conjunction with a half-education, specialized-idiotism and arrogance that probably best express the atmosphere of most socialscience workplaces in our country, and at the same time are one of the welcomed preconditions of a successful academic career. Finally, critical analytical essays and methodological studies have often been published in highly specialized journals and unrated anthologies. This indicates that across generations and social science disciplines there were authors who consider the current state and future direction of their own field, and of the social sciences in general, as still dominated by a majoritarian interest to maintain the status quo. In the milieu of many academic workplaces, a different attitude is sanctioned often only under the spectre of unpleasant career consequences.

To allow or encourage an intra- and interdisciplinary dialogue was undoubtedly one of the planned targets of the SASA at its inception, but it can only be fulfilled when a generation of anthropologists and other social scientists appears with a focus on qualitative social research and social theory who have a genuine, but also an active interest in such a dialogue. And they would have a positive attempt to do something constructive for creating and maintaining such dialogues.

Jakub Grygar: *The last topic that I would like to broach concerns the ethics of anthropological practice. Over time, I am more and more inclined to think that, considering the invasive nature of anthropological research and the implications for the in-*

vestigated terrain and research participants that our publication practice causes, the topic of research ethics should not be discussed in the last chapters of textbooks of social-science research, but right on their first pages. While anthropology students are usually aware that the ethical context of their research is something they should pay attention to, at the same time they often approach it as actually something somewhat secondary for their own research. Besides its Code of Ethics, the AAA has a functional permanent ethics panel, the EASA is working with a Code of Ethics, and the CASA has a considerably elaborated code of ethics and ethical guidelines for the Czech situation, even if their depth cannot compare with, for instance, the documents of British sociologists (BSA). I wonder what your experience with the reception and enactment of the emphases of these documents is. Do they serve as a decorative ornament, which is a bit of a “must have”, or do their existence contribute to the transformation of Czech and Slovak anthropologists’ actual research and publishing practice? Do you have any experience with this?

Zdeněk Uherek: Many will certainly oppose me, but in the area of ethics great shifts have occurred in the past twenty-five years. When David Scheffel wrote the article *Anthropological Ethics in Central Europe* in the *Národopisný věstník* [Ethnographic Journal] in 1992, a number of scholars did not even bother with anonymizing their sources, nor with how field data was created or whether an actor wants to be published. This did not concern only information about magical practices, with which Scheffel’s text primarily deals, but also photo documentation, audio-documents and other records. Currently, every aspiring researcher has adequate training to know how to proceed in the field and how to behave in relation to data. It is of course another question as to whether this is followed in practice.

The question of the ethics of conduct with regard to the researched subject is one faced by all fields of the life sciences and human society. They all seek a balance, of how to act in creating as little hardship as possible while still getting data. In finding this balance, anthropology suffers more than other branches, because anthropologists do not believe that the data acquired has sufficient value to offset the damage their collection and publication can cause. As has been shown many times in history, this concern is often quite well-founded. The conduct of anthropologists when striving for maximum adherence to ethical principles is extreme, and can lead to data becoming not comparable and not verifiable; data unanchored in time and space lose their value. Work of this type provides an opportunity to actors from the non-anthropological world, who are not bound by any ethics whatsoever, to work with information that is distorted, but concrete in a way that can damage subjects more by being subjected to the representation through the tabloid press. To not publish one’s knowledge is also unethical, as it provides a scope for distorted information. Another problem is the danger of being overly biased towards the researched actors. For the reader, the anthropologist thus runs the risk of becoming an unreliable and biased activist. Ultimately, anthropologists

best strategy is to capitalize on a realistic interpretation, although this does not bring theatrical effects. Unfortunately, any shifts in the field of research ethics usually come after scandals where the limits of existing ethics are shown. The scandals around the research by Napoleon Chagnon and James Neel show that extreme approaches evoke extreme reactions, and it is good to avoid them in all directions. To be a source of high-quality, educated and in all respects correct information for the examined groups and for the sponsor of the research generally implies that none of the players will feel damaged.

Moreover, the ethics of scientific work does not concern merely the protection of the person of the informant. Scandals with plagiarism are a global phenomenon; and, while in the Czech Republic plagiarism is not punished very much by employers, at least the careers of the plagiarists, if nothing else, do suffer. But, as far as spreading unsubstantiated information, delusions which do not have permanent relevance, improper conduct of polemics with colleagues in professional journals and misrepresentation of research results are concerned, these are really still not a concern for many graduates of anthropological disciplines here. These areas are hard to punish and discrediting those involved often takes place desperately slowly. Scientists take their example from the world of journalism, and not fully educated sponsors of research do not see a big difference between journalism and scientific work. Success, in my opinion, will not come from tightening the screws in ethical codes, but in consistent decision-making in the organs which grant the relevant certificates, select articles to be published and grant scientific degrees. We must weigh for whom we write a positive assessment or give a positive review; the future quality of the discipline depends on it.

Juraj Podoba: The question of the ethics of anthropological practice, or more generally of qualitative social-science research that works with specific individuals and small social groups, where the examined social facts cannot hide behind anonymous statistical data, is undoubtedly a relevant and current, or even acute problem of the contemporary social sciences. It is, however, too banal. What is certainly not trivial is the problem tabled by Jakub of the interest of practicing anthropologists and ethnographers in this seemingly trivial problem. Again, we will only agree with Zdeněk that a certain shift has certainly occurred over the past quarter-century. The audience of social anthropology courses at the faculty where I work are taught about this issue as early as during the first semester of their bachelor's degree and must also apply the standards of the ethics of anthropological research during their field research and when writing their theses.

Another question is what specifically the standards of anthropological practice should look like in terms of mandatory codes of ethics. Within the SASA, this has been discussed often enough in the recent past, but we have not adopted a code of ethics. My personal opinion is – and certainly many will not concur with it – that it is not necessary to rush through with the adoption of such a document, as

it is very important to consider in detail its various aspects to come up with thoroughly thought-out specific formulations, so as not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Again, I would reinforce Zdeněk's view of the practical projection of ethical principles into academic reality with which we are confronted every day. I am very concerned that from time to time a manifesto-declared ethical fundamentalism goes hand-in-hand with a generally accepted negative phenomena deeply rooted in the social-science academic milieu: in assessing the manuscripts of monographs, and studies and articles intended for scientific journals, in deciding on granting academic degrees, within commissions accepting candidates for PhDs or for posts at academic institutions, and so on. Therefore, I would also rather argue with a standardization of the criteria in this area, and methods for enforcing compliance with them. At the risk of being repetitive, we repeat that again we are moving beyond the scope of non-state non-profit voluntary professional associations, such as the Slovak Association of Social Anthropology.

Undoubtedly, there is a perceptible desire to have a prestigious organization in our discipline, covering the entire discipline and acting as a dignified representative of social anthropology not just to the professional public, but also to the wider public: one which would have a fundamental influence in ethical issues. Of course, I understand this desire well. However, to build a professional organization with such a generally accepted authority requires the hard, systematic and purposeful work of several generations, in which everyone with an interest in working in the field must be involved: from scientific personalities with international renown to doctoral candidates and students. There is no other way.

Zdeněk Uherek

uherek@eu.cas.cz

Czech Association for Social Anthropology

www.casaonline.cz

Juraj Podoba

juraj.podoba@fses.uniba.sk

Slovak Association of Social Anthropology

<http://www.antropologia.sk/>

Anthropology Limited: Studying Anthropology in the Czech Republic (and England)

Nikola Balaš

Introduction

Cultural and social anthropologists, at least since Geertz, have liked to talk about the necessity of the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge.¹ According to their view, only when enriched by various disciplines like philosophy, literary criticism, biology, economics, psychology, jurisprudence, archaeology, geography, history and others can anthropology keep pace with the world and the people who inhabit it. This was also the message of the ninth international student conference of the anthropological journal *AntropoWeb*. The conference took place 17 - 18 October 2013 in Plzeň in the Czech Republic and it went under the name *Anthropology Unlimited*. In this article based on my talk at the conference, I argue that – in opposition to the opinion outlined above – the lack of interdisciplinarity is the most minor problem – at least in Czech anthropology. The laments about the lack of interdisciplinarity veil more acute problems that face anthropology in the Czech Republic. Hence the article's name, *Anthropology Limited*.

Many contemporary Czech anthropologists are well aware that Czech anthropology is not in a healthy state. Some of them blame our socialist past that prevents us from creating a real western-style anthropology, which is the only acceptable standard for the discipline (Skalník 2002). Others, like David Scheffel and Josef Kandert, claim the problems of Czech anthropology exist due to unresolved conflicts between provincial ethnology and the modern discipline of anthropology. According to their view, this conflict stretches beyond the forty years of socialism in Czechoslovakia (Scheffel 2007; Scheffel and Kandert 1994). Not completely inimical to the aforementioned voices are those of Marek Jakoubek and Zdeněk Nešpor who like to stress that the development of modern anthropology is pre-

1 I am immensely grateful to Liisa Pool, Markéta Šebelová, Rob Flanagan and Diana Vonnák who were kind enough to read various drafts of this article and give me very valuable comments. Responsibility for the article remains mine.

vented by the very fact that anthropology is generally understood either as a science of folklore or as a science of the human body, both of which have deep roots in engrained disciplines of the Czech academe. Thus, to speak about socio-cultural anthropology today would merely be to use a different label for old approaches (Nešpor and Jakoubek 2004; Jakoubek 2012: 323). Whatever the causes are, Czech sociocultural anthropology is consensually thought not to be in a good state and the possibilities for it to thrive are judged to be limited.²

All these ideas about the current condition of Czech anthropology are based on historical inquiries. In my article, I share the critique of Czech anthropology but I advance a different kind of argument. I claim that the parochialism of Czech anthropology is also caused by the structure, form and content of contemporary curricula in sociocultural anthropology. I do not contest historical explanations, but at the same time I want to offer a more down to the earth point of view. I am not interested as much in causes, as in demonstrating consequences and corollaries.

In the first part of my article I offer a general description of educational practices at a Czech department of anthropology. In the second part I say a few words about my Erasmus experience in England, which results in a comparison in the third part. In the end, I propose some solutions.

It is important to stress that my point of view is a student's point of view. It is predominantly senior academics who write critical articles about Czech anthropology. However, I feel that their respective positions within the system prevent senior academics from seeing the bigger picture. Not asking students' opinions is the rough equivalent of conducting fieldwork without taking into account the statements of informants. To complete the picture, the student's point of view is also necessary.

Before I develop my argument, I would like to point out that my paper is not a result of systematic research. I base my argument on informal discussions with my classmates, professors, students and friends, as well as on my own experience within two departments of anthropology. The aim of my paper is not analysis, but criticism.

A Jack of all Trades

I have been involved with Czech sociocultural anthropology since 2005, the year I started to study my bachelor degree at a department of anthropology (further referred to as Gotham). While I was a bachelor student, my classmates and I had to take many different courses. We studied the basics of sociology, philoso-

2 For a general discussion about socio-cultural anthropology and its relation to the central European tradition of ethnography and ethnology in the post-socialist world, see Hann et al. 2007.

phy, archaeology, biological anthropology and evolutionary theory, political science, linguistics, museology, folklore, history and historical anthropology, qualitative and quantitative methods, and finally, cultural and social anthropology. Beyond the courses that were obligatory for every student, we were able to select additional courses. They included ethnographies of world regions (Africa, Americas, Asia), English language and another foreign language. During our second year, we had to pick a topic for our bachelor thesis. In the third year, we had to hand in our theses, defend them and pass the final exams.

I had to extend my studies from three to four years because of a failed language exam but, as far as I know, prolonging studies is a fairly ubiquitous phenomenon in Czech anthropology. As there are no tuition fees at public universities in the Czech Republic, extending the length of one's study does not entail serious financial difficulty. The same is true in the case of students studying their MA; sometimes they prolong their studies.³

I do not find the four years of my bachelor studies ridiculous when I judge it by the amount of courses I had to pass. I glanced at my diploma and found that in order to obtain my degree I had to pass forty-nine courses, write a final thesis and pass final exams. To be eligible to obtain a degree one must, among other things, collect 180 study credits in total, with one course usually worth three or four credits. Forty-nine courses over three years made an average of *sixteen courses per year* and *eight per semester*.

What does a typical course look like at a Czech university? Some of the courses consist solely of lectures, others consist only of seminars, whilst some of them consist of both lectures and seminars. Seminars and lectures are attended weekly or fortnightly in a thirteen-week long semester. During my studies there were a few courses that consisted of neither. In such rare cases, students were supposed to join an educational excursion and write a report.

It is one thing is to attend lectures and seminars, but another thing to pass a course. How can a student pass her course at a Czech university? As far as I know, there are no guidelines concerning the appropriate method of examination; every professor is thus at liberty to choose her own method. Some want students to write essays. Others want students to take written tests, whereas other professors prefer oral exams. Usually two of the above mentioned are necessary (e.g. an essay and an oral exam) and sometimes all three are necessary for a particular course.

3 Many of my classmates worked and studied at the same time, so they did not have enough time to graduate in three years. It is also not exceptional for people to study on more than one study programme at a time. I have a friend who studied law and anthropology, another who studied economics and law, and another who studied ethnology and anthropology. Sometimes people study on different programmes at the same university; sometimes they study different programmes at different universities.

The important thing to note is that students spend most of their study time in the classroom. Every lecture and seminar is usually ninety minutes long, during which time students have to follow professors' presentations and take notes. This is the prime source of acquiring knowledge at Czech universities. After every semester follows a six-week long exam period, during which students are supposed to pass their exams. If a student studies from her notes, given that they are detailed and comprehensive enough, there is usually nothing that stands in the way of a successful outcome. Of course, some curricula require the reading of additional books and articles, but readings were only a secondary source of knowledge and additional resources were not important for passing the majority of our exams. A student could usually pass her exams without having read any books or articles.

My bachelor degree gave me some basic ideas about anthropology and it provided me with a general outlook on the humanities. My bachelor thesis allowed me to tackle a particular topic, but my knowledge about anthropology and other fields was mainly achieved by learning by rote and not by learning by reading and discussing matters. I gained a degree in social and cultural anthropology, yet I did not really know what anthropology was. My bachelor's degree was anthropological merely in name. I knew a little about many things and some things about sociocultural anthropology, making me feel like the educational equivalent of a 'jack of all trades.'

Master of Anthropology

I finished my bachelor's degree in 2009 and started my master's degree at the same department in the same year. When I started my master's degree in the autumn of 2009, I was filled with enthusiasm. I was looking forward to getting acquainted with what I considered to be 'real' social and cultural anthropology. I expected that the master's degree would be far more interesting; that there would be a lot more time to discuss anthropology and that my classmates and I would be able to pursue anthropological topics that lay within the scopes of our particular interests. Moreover, in my class there were between twenty and thirty students, far less than there were during my bachelor's studies, so I assumed we would be given an increased amount of care and attention.

It was during the very first semester that I realized that the expectations of deepening my anthropological knowledge would never be fulfilled. Again, there were many different courses covering many different topics with a specific course for every anthropological topic. We had courses in political, applied, historical, biological, current, economic, visual and urban anthropology, courses in the anthropology of religion, family, globalization, development, kinship and multiculturalism, and some other courses as well.

I attended twenty-seven courses within two years – around *fourteen courses per year* and *seven per semester*, as well as having to write my master's thesis and pass final exams. The structure of the curriculum was almost identical to the bachelor's curriculum with only one difference; while bachelor courses covered a variety of topics from the humanities, the master's courses covered a variety of topics within anthropology. I did not have time to focus on and pursue my own anthropological interests, because an array of various courses – some interesting to me, some completely not – constantly diverted me. I had the advantage that I had studied my bachelor degree for four instead of three years. During the extra year, I was allowed to enrol in courses from the master's degree in anthropology. So I had passed several of the twenty-seven courses for the MA in advance. This made my master's degree less tense.

In the spirit of fairness, when compared to the bachelor's degree, where socio-cultural anthropology represented only a part of my curriculum, the majority of courses during my master's degree were indeed on sociocultural anthropology. During my master's, there were also some really engaging and interesting courses that deepened (rather than broadened) my knowledge, but the number of interesting courses did not exceed five. And when one has to work equally for seven courses per semester, because one has to pass every course in order to graduate, one cannot devote too much time to each of the courses anyway.

I talked to my professors about the structure of both curricula. They told me that the bachelor's degree was supposed to be a conversion degree. In other words, students came from different high schools with different educational backgrounds, resulting in a diverse swarm of students with different levels of knowledge and types of skills. I was from a business academy where I did not learn much about the humanities. As universities are open to anyone who has successfully passed a school-leaving exam, they must in the first place provide all students with some basic knowledge. Anthropological courses themselves cannot go too deep, because many of the students coming to study anthropology have only a vague notion about what anthropology is. Because this was also my case, I understood the professors' contention as reasonable.

The master's degree was supposed to be a conversion degree too. There were students with bachelor's degrees coming from different anthropological and non-anthropological departments. And as all the students did not have the same knowledge about anthropology as the students who had previously graduated at the anthropology department in Gotham, my professors told me that they had to start from scratch. That is what I was told. Again.

This time, the reply did not seem reasonable at all. I had been doing anthropology for six years and I was still at the beginning. No surprise that after having graduated from my MA in the spring of 2011, I felt not only like a 'jack of all trades,' but also like a master of none.

The Mecca of Anthropology

After finishing my master's in anthropology, I decided to further pursue my anthropological career by doing a PhD. At the time, I was enjoying anthropology and related disciplines although my knowledge about anthropology was still limited. Before I started my PhD, I had not read many anthropological works.⁴ I wanted to get deeper into the discipline of anthropology. I applied at two departments but I was accepted only in Gotham. Department endogamy, or department inbreeding (Rychlík 2014), as I have heard, is quite unusual abroad but is a commonplace in the Czech Republic.

During the first year of my PhD, I applied for an Erasmus scholarship at a department in England (further referred to as Mecca) for a yearlong stay, for which I was subsequently selected. I was very enthused by the fact that I had been selected, because England is one of the cradles of modern anthropology. I thus spent the second year of my PhD in England.

Before I left for Mecca, I clearly saw the problems that the education in anthropology at my home department offered to its students. Nevertheless, after my Erasmus stay, my opinion was cast in a different light. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau – by meeting the foreign academic, we understand the academic at home.

In Mecca, I was thrown into an absolutely different system. As a doctoral student at my home university, I was allowed to study courses from the regular MA programme in sociocultural anthropology. In England, it takes only one year to obtain one's MA in anthropology. Regular students in Mecca take seven courses in the whole year (that makes no more than four courses per semester), undertake a month-long fieldwork and write their theses during the summer vacation. The fieldwork can be conducted either in England or abroad. It is also possible to obtain funding for fieldwork in a different continent.

In Mecca, I was expected to read a book or a number of articles for every seminar. For example, during one course (they are called *modules* in Mecca) we had to read a different book for each seminar. At one of the modules, we got acquainted with Malinowski's *Argonauts*, the controversy between Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman, we read *The Interpretation of Cultures* and had to read through the two volumes of *Structural anthropology*. We became familiar with some of the crucial topics and authors of twentieth century anthropology from Malinowski to Latour.

Students in Mecca have enough time to do their readings. Every course is usually two hours long. The first half is devoted to professor's presentation, the oth-

4 To demonstrate the point I checked the anthropological literature I used in my master thesis. The only anthropological authors I quoted were Gellner, Douglas, Geertz, Kuper, Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss and Barth.

er half to students' discussions over the literature. Students in Mecca are evaluated on the basis of writing essays and presenting reports. Contrary to the BA students at the same department, MA students never write tests or go to oral exams. There are no final exams either. This means that students have to spend most of their time in libraries reading books and articles, writing their essays and preparing for seminars.

The educational practice I encountered in England was a far cry from Czech practice. The cultural shock I suffered in England made me ponder the nature of the two systems. My task in the following part will be twofold. I want to highlight the differences and point out weaknesses and strengths of both the systems described.

The Two Systems Compared

There were two interrelated problems in Gotham. The first was that my bachelor and master's curricula were wide in their scopes but, in most cases, lacked depth. The second issue, which follows from the first, was that students had no incentives to read exhaustively. We acquired knowledge from our notes and this was all the knowledge that was important (save for very rare cases) for passing our exams.

A related and most important problem is that anthropology is to a large degree an English-speaking discipline. To take anthropology seriously means that one has to be fluent in English. This presented a serious obstacle for my classmates and me in Gotham. Professors at Czech universities usually complain that students coming to their departments do not have good language competences, but even those who knew English from their previous education had virtually no experience in reading academic texts in English. Anthropology presented a double obstacle – it was in English and, even if we literally understood words and sentences, we did not always understand what they were really about.⁵

I cannot imagine students reading specialised literature without being given some introductory ideas about it, especially if the discipline is in a foreign language. There must be someone who helps students to break the hermeneutic circle and enable them to enter the body of anthropological knowledge. There must be someone who fills the gap of their understanding, shows them the path and blazes the trail; someone, who builds for them the bridge between the terra firma of com-

5 Indeed there are books about anthropology in Czech and anthropology books translated to Czech, but the number of anthropological works in Czech is negligible compared to the amount of anthropological books published every year in English. An anthropologist who takes her trade seriously cannot rely solely on anthropology books in Czech. The authors translated to Czech are Malinowski, Mead, R. F. Murphy, Benedict, Lévi-Strauss, Geertz, Balandier, Bateson, Turner, Gellner, Eriksen, Holý, Pospíšil, Graeber, Augé and Bourdieu.

mon sense and the seemingly remote island of anthropology. Otherwise, the result is chaos. To present an example, I cannot imagine reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* without being given some prior ideas about it. I bet that if you do not have any ideas about Kant in particular, and about the development of modern philosophy in general, you will not understand the book. And as one American philosopher remarked, you can do philosophy with Kant or against Kant, but never without Kant (cf. Rabinow 1986). And if the example with Kant seems too detached from anthropology, substitute for him Bourdieu and the first *Critique* for *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

The example with Kant and Bourdieu is an extreme one. There are books in philosophy and anthropology that are easier to read and to understand, and are even accessible for laypeople. However, understanding one book does not make anyone a philosopher or an anthropologist. What is of crucial importance is not books and articles themselves, but the relations among them; and this is the moment where the guidance of professors is necessary. Professors can recommend related texts and suitable secondary sources, provide students with context, explain key concepts and help students to avoid some frequent mistakes that beginners usually fall victim to.

If I said that the Gotham education was deficient in reading, the Mecca education was deficient precisely in guidance related to reading. I seldom recall a moment in which a professor at Mecca corrected a student's opinion in a seminar. It is a sort of paradox because in Mecca, notwithstanding the enormous amount of time students can spend reading, not many professors help students with shaping and guiding their ideas. I do not mean making fools of students or even humiliating them. I mean giving reasons. That does not necessarily mean that the professor's opinion is a sacred cow. It means that there are established ways of understanding with which one has to be acquainted. As the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer humbly recalls his first attempts at philosophy: "Only when I was older I learnt to keep silent." (Gadamer 2011: 406). Compared to Gotham where professors were never tardy in proving students' judgement wrong, there was no one in Mecca to lecture silence.

Some of my classmates in Mecca, who had not studied anthropology before, often complained about the fact that they did not understand the subject matter. They had problems with understanding concepts or paradigms. During lectures and seminars, we were given some crude notions about anthropologists, their lives and their books, but very little about the ideas and paradigms they represented. I remember that during some lessons students got professorial approval after expressing rather naïve or utterly mistaken ideas.

I wondered why it was that the modules were too general and did not go deeper. In one of the discussions with our professors, we were told that as there were students coming from different backgrounds it is necessary to start with the ba-

sics because the MA degree in anthropology in Mecca was supposed to be a conversion degree...

In contradistinction to Mecca, I attended many interesting and helpful seminars and lectures in Gotham. The advantage of education in Gotham is that it offers students better opportunities to understand the subject matter. It is easier for Gotham students to grasp and understand what and why some authors wrote what they did. The major problem is that students in Gotham do not have ample opportunities to utilize their classroom knowledge by pursuing library knowledge. The result was that we were going over the same ground during many different seminars, hearing lots of things all over again. We did not read much and we were unable to synthesize knowledge from books with knowledge from seminars.

The only chance for a student in Mecca to receive critical comments is by receiving assignment feedback. I must say that I received valuable comments on my essays in Mecca. I had the feeling that my professors had read my assignments and their comments made me reflect on what I had written. In this regard Mecca offers a better discipline when it comes to writing. For any future anthropologist writing essays is a necessary skill that is worth constant cultivation.

In Gotham, where writing essays and a final thesis was a necessary condition for everyone to graduate, no one really taught us how to write. We had no courses in academic writing and we seldom received helpful feedback.⁶ It was somehow expected that we would know how to write academic texts. It goes without saying that a student at a university has to have skills in writing. I remember that there were professors who were surprised that students did not know how to cite. Some professors even scolded their students for it because the issue of citing is closely related to the issue of plagiarizing, which is a delicate issue at Czech universities. A paradox is that socio-cultural anthropologists should be the first to note that skill in citing is not a natural capacity of *discipulus vulgaris* and ignorance of Harvard style is not due to the absence of a corresponding gene.

In Gotham, students do not receive much disciplinary training when it comes to writing. The discipline in Gotham has always been rather formal. This can be said of attaining knowledge by rote, as well as of writing without receiving feedback. Students pass exams for exams' sake and write essays because writing essays is an inseparable part of higher education. Sadly, the added value is missing. As Petr Jánký observed, this can be said of Czech higher education in general.⁷

6 No surprise that a substantial part of the folklore of Czech students is stories about assignments their professors have never read and about funny words and sentences students smuggled into their assignments, which their professors never noticed. A far bigger issue is with so-called shadow scholars (see Dante 2010).

7 Panel discussion organized by Student society Agora from the Faculty of Education that took place on 28 April 2014 at Faculty of Education of the Charles University.

The Mecca education was very narrow in its scope and at the same time the education was solely concerned with anthropology and nothing else. Anthropology students in Mecca could devote a lot of time to readings and were also able to write extensively. Students usually had to write one formative assignment (usually one thousand words) and one summative assignment (usually three thousand words) for every course. The focus on writing makes Mecca superior, because it produces better-trained junior academics. The problem about anthropology in Mecca is that the degree is supposed to be a conversion degree and yet it is only one year long.

I remember that our professors in Mecca encouraged us at one of the first classes, saying that our previous education did not matter. We were told the classical anthropological myth: Leach was originally an engineer, Fortes was a trained psychologist, Geertz had a BA in philosophy and Nadel before his academic career pursued a career in music. It is considered as an advantage that a future anthropologist has a background in a different discipline or enterprise. This myth of interdisciplinarity was supplemented by another implicit assumption: what makes an anthropologist of you is not the books you read or the seminars you attend, but the *fieldwork* you carry out. Your fieldwork is where you get your data from and it is also the anthropological *rite of passage*. Fieldwork, preferably a year long, as the tale of Malinowski goes, is the cornerstone of anthropology. Books are always secondary and supplementary.

I find it good for students in anthropology to undergo a month long compulsory fieldwork (it was not compulsory in Gotham). It is good to gain experience in doing fieldwork, but fieldwork is of no use if it is not based on hypothesis, theory or conjecture, regardless of whether these are well established or experimental. Nonetheless, the kind of education based solely on conducting fieldwork and underestimating literature cannot but yield ill results.⁸ It is without doubt encouraging for students coming from different disciplines to hear such words, but at the same time anthropologist should not forget what Lévi-Strauss said about training new anthropologists:

“Throughout the entire training, therefore, the theoretical and practical courses would be complemented by compulsory reading, at the rate of some thousands of pages per year; this reading would be checked by various procedures (written summaries, oral précis, etc.) which we cannot describe in detail here. This implies (a) that every institute or school of anthropology must have a library containing copies, in duplicate or triplicate, of a considerable number of works; (b) that, in present circumstances, the student will have to possess, at the outset, adequate knowledge of at least one of the foreign languages which have been most frequently used in recent years by authors of anthropological works.” (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 370–371)

8 For an interesting account of current practice of training new fieldworkers in Poland, see Łukas Kaczmarek and Pavel Ładykowski 2013.

I would dare to say that the majority of anthropologists, regardless of their theoretical allegiance, would agree with Lévi-Strauss.

To conclude, therefore, the advantage of Gotham is classroom knowledge and that Gotham also provides students with a general outlook on the humanities. It is akin to the German idea of *Bildung*. This advantage is at the same time its biggest disadvantage, because there is a multitude of courses. Hence, students have little time to read and few opportunities to master writing. At the same time, the interdisciplinary nature of the Gotham curriculum lacks any depth, particularly regarding the core subject of anthropology. I also had the feeling that the structure of the curriculum compelled students to exchange means for ends. Students were more interested in passing courses rather than in learning something new. Unfortunately, for a professional anthropologist it is not *A's* from tests that matter during his or her professional career. Contrary to Gotham, students in Mecca have more opportunities to read and write. There are fewer courses so that students can focus on their subject matter. They also have a possibility to experience their first fieldwork. On the other hand, it is questionable whether one can become converted to anthropology in one year. Mecca professors could also be more helpful in assisting students' understanding.⁹ Even if Mecca is closer to excellence, I am afraid that neither of the two offers an excellent education. I am only afraid about what will happen in the coming years if both curricula in question are not reformed.

What ought we to do?

I hear from my friends from different Czech universities that the situation at their departments is not that different from the situation I experienced in Gotham.¹⁰ Gotham can thus serve as an example of some of the maladies of Czech anthropological education. If Czech anthropological education wants to improve, it should follow a radical path. The first thing Czech academics have to realize is that written tests and oral exams are rather superfluous for MA students. At the same time, anthropology departments should focus on improving students' hard academic skills – writing, reading and improving their competence in English or some other foreign language. If students are to spend more time writing and reading, departments should lower the number of courses. Students should not take more than four courses per semester. If the teaching faculty feels that students

9 It would be very interesting to track how the Bologna system shaped and crippled different educational systems in different ways (cf. Liessmann 2010).

10 One can compare various anthropology curricula at Czech universities: FF UP in Olomouc (http://www.ksoc.upol.cz/pro_studenty/obor_kulturni_antropologie/studium.html), FF ZČU in Plzeň (<http://www.antropologie.org/cs/studijni-obory>), FF UK in Prague (<http://etnologie.ff.cuni.cz/node/118>) and FHS UK (http://www.fhs.cuni.cz/antropologie/pro_studujici/index.php#uzitecne_odkazy).

ought to know different aspects of social phenomena like economic, cultural, legal, moral, political, aesthetic, religious or many others, one or two compulsory lectures for every student would do enough justice to each of the fields. As Lévi-Strauss said, it is not possible to overwhelm “students with the enormous mass of knowledge which would be necessary in order to do full justice to all these stand-points” (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 369).

It would not be surprising to find that curricula abounding in courses result in higher rates of cheating. As Peter Pabian insists, cheating is to a large degree context-bound (Pabian 2014). It is surprising to find that many professors, with whom I talked in Gotham, judged cheating from a moral standpoint and were unaware of the possibility of cheating being a product of a specific educational context. Coincidentally, professors can be heard to say that many of the students lack intelligence, will to work (or *Sitzfleisch*) and academic skills. Off-record they like to spurn students as lazy and indolent, and not keen enough in reading. Professors sometimes employ the proverb of ‘separating the wheat from the chaff.’ They suppose that students coming to universities can be divided into two groups – silly students and smart students. The purpose of the university, according to many professors, is to separate the two groups. The proverb, as I see it, should be understood in different terms – there are students who, given appropriate disciplinary training, prove to be good academics, and those who, in the same conditions, do not. As I said, there is not much introduction to the discipline and blaming students serves as a good excuse for one’s own inaction and a relinquishing of one’s own responsibility. No one denies that academics face their own problems, especially in times when they are expected to fry fish, as David Graeber aptly put it (Graeber 2013).

The lack of concern and subsequent scolding of students can have grave consequences. It is the students on whom the future of anthropology depends, as the American sociologist George Ritzer put it in a nice way in his article about popularizing sociology. One of the ways to make sociology more attractive to the wider public is to educate students in sociological topics and to teach them to think sociologically (Ritzer 1998: 450). Ritzer is aware of the fact that it is not only the students who become academics who are important for the future of his discipline. It is also the majority of students who never pursue the discipline beyond educational boundaries, but who could also enjoy reading academic books. If current professors do not pay attention to their students, the students will not in exchange pay attention to their professors and their cherished discipline.

In my article, I have attempted to show what anthropological education at a particular university looks like from a students’ point of view. I have also attempted to show a different educational practice at work and highlight some differences between the two systems. I have argued that neither of the systems is perfect and that it would not go amiss if the academics responsible did something to improve

them. It is questionable how much both universities represent their corresponding educational systems and how much they are anomalous. This is a topic, which I would like to leave for a subsequent discussion. However, what I do want to argue is that if we are serious in searching for the causes responsible for the limited nature of Czech anthropology, we cannot get far with historical explanations. The founding fathers of Czech ethnography, as well as the socialistic apparatchiks for whom anthropology was but a bourgeois science, are long dead. In this light, historical explanations and an occasional talk about the necessity of interdisciplinarity look more like way of diverting attention from serious topics.

REFERENCES

- Dante, Ed. 2010. "The Shadow Scholar: The Man Who Writes Your Students' Papers Tells His Story." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 12. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Shadow-Scholar/125329/>.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2011. *Pravda a Metoda II: Dodatky. Rejstříky*. Praha: Triáda.
- Graeber, David. 2013. "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs." *Strike Magazine* (Summer 2013): 10–11. <http://strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>.
- Hann et al. 2007. "Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and Its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate." *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 90*. Halle/Saale. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf.
- Jakoubek, Marek. 2012. "Doslov: Antropologie v České Republice." In *Etnicita a Nacionalismus: Antropologické Perspektivy*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Kaczmarek, Łukasz, and Paweł Ładykowski. 2013. "Ethnographic Training in Borderland: Students Fieldwork, Serendipities, and Tight Limits of Polish University System." *Cargo. Journal for Cultural/Social Anthropology* 10 (1): 99–118. <http://cargojournal.org/index.php/cargo/article/viewFile/61/68>.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Liessmann, Konrad Paul. 2010. *Teorie Nevzdělanosti: Omyly Společnosti Vědění*. Praha: Academia.
- Nešpor, Zdeněk R., and Marek Jakoubek. 2004. "Co Je a Není Kulturní/sociální Antropologie." *Český Lid* 91 (1): 53–80. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/42639301?uid=3737856&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21105571178353>
- Pabian, Petr. 2014. "Why 'cheating' Research Is Wrong: New Departures for the Study of Student Copying in Higher Education." *Higher Education* (September 6). doi:10.1007/s10734-014-9806-1. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s10734-014-9806-1>.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1986. "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and Marcus E. Fisher, 234–261. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

- Ritzer, George. 1998. "Writing to Be Read: Changing the Culture and Reward Structure of American Sociology." *Contemporary Sociology* 27 (5): 446–453. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2654473>.
- Rychlík, Martin. 2014. "Jak Okysličit České Vysoké Školství." *Česká Pozice*, July 11. http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/jak-okyslicit-ceske-vysoke-skolstvi-dvm-/tema.aspx?c=A140711_101838_pozice-tema_paja.
- Scheffel, David, and Josef Kandert. 1994. "Politics and Culture in Czech Ethnography." *Anthropological Quarterly* 67 (1): 15–23. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=00035491&AN=9405050426&h=GRxk7GPFHEKNw53Y9Ldx4KLtqt5XSjefSt1wC%2F1nVCAPrvvBUH7dp6BYJcNomB8RzllivDBjH8JrF9a6UEgA%3D%3D&crl=c>.
- Scheffel, David Z. 2007. "Minulost a Budoucnost Antropologie ve Střední a Východní Evropě: Poznámky K Vizi Chrise Hanna." *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 43 (1): 183–186. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41132487>.
- Skalník, Petr. 2002. "Politika Sociální Antropologie Na České Akademické Scéně Po Roce 1989." *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* XXXVIII (1-2): 101–115. http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/a00f23b224f1d6fbb40ff39c2b0d3e650e2431c5_126_skalnik1-2-02.pdf?origin=publication_detail.

Nikola Balaš

balas.nikola@gmail.com

Independent researcher

Rethinking Anthropologies in Central Europe for Global Imaginaries

(May 26 – 27, 2014, Vila Lanna, Prague, Czech Republic)

On May 26 - 27, 2014, the Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic organized an international anthropological conference, entitled, *Rethinking Anthropologies in Central Europe for Global Imaginaries* supported by the International Visegrad Fund Standard Project, *Social and Cultural Change in Contemporary Central Europe*. The conference took place at Vila Lanna, the conference center of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. The meeting was co-organized by representatives of partner institutions, including: Alexandra Bitušiková - Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Michał Buchowski - Adam Mickiewicz University and Vlad Naumescu - Central European University.

All project partners actively participated in the conference preparation as members of the scientific committee that distributed call for papers internationally and in institutions in their respective countries and made the final selection of papers to be presented. The speakers came predominantly from Visegrad Member countries - 12 from Poland, 14 from the Czech Republic, 4 from Hungary, 6 from Slovakia, while 3 paper presenters came from outside Visegrad member countries (1 from Sweden, 1 from the USA and 1 from Germany). The conference program featured 7 panel sessions that were moderated by representatives of all four partners from Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. The conference included 34 papers presented by 37 invited speakers and was attended by other participants from Prague and Bratislava, bringing the overall number of participants of the two-day event to 53. The conference was evaluated as an important platform at which high-quality work of anthropologists from neighboring countries could be presented and discussed. New partnerships were formed and participants agreed that the event should become a cyclical (annual or bi-annual) meeting of anthropologists from Visegrad countries, who rarely have a chance to meet and get to know each other's work and form regional partnerships that strengthen their chances in competing for international funding and publication venues.

For more information about the conference and the project please visit the project website at http://www.eu.avcr.cz/Social_and_Cultural_Change_in_Contemporary_Central_Europe/index.html.

Hana Červinková and Zdeněk Uherek

BIOGRAF

Journal for qualitative research

For online version and further information about journal, authors, themes and subscriptions see: <http://www.biograf.org>

In the content of last issue 60/2014 you can find:

TEXTY

Michal Synek and Radek Carboch

Professional blindness and regimes of haste: Support of self-sufficiency in eating in institutional care for people with mental disability

Yifat Gutman

Transcultural memory in conflict: Israeli- Palestinian truth and reconciliation

TAK I TAK

Irena Kašparová

The Active and The Eurogadjo

Pavel Barša

Looking for a shared memory

DO OKA

Michal Šimůnek

Interactive documentary and digital ethnography: A report from the world of new technologies and innovative approaches in ethnography

RECENZE

Miroslav Tížik

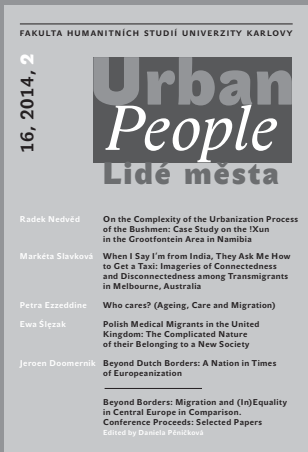
Pseudo family, pseudo job, pseudo cultural exchange: On convincingness of the fiction

Roman Rakowski

Critical theory in Czech critical thought

Biograf is published only in Czech and Slovak languages.

Kontaktní adresa: Zdeněk Konopásek (redakce Biografu),
CTS, Jilská 1, 110 00 Praha 1; redakce@biograf.org



LIDÉ MĚSTA URBAN PEOPLE

is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal focused on anthropological studies with emphasis on urban studies, and related social sciences and humanities. It is published three times a year, twice in Czech (in May and December) and once in English (in September).

Published by: Faculty of Humanities of Charles University
U kříže 8, 158 00 Praha 5, Czech Republic

Editors-in-chief:

Zdeněk R. Nešpor zdenek.nespor@soc.cas.cz (Czech edition)

Hedvika Novotná hedvika.no@gmail.com (English edition)

Content of last issue:

- ▶ On the Complexity of the Urbanization Process of the Bushmen: Case Study on the !Xun in the Grootfontein Area in Namibia (*Radek Nedvěd*)
- ▶ When I Say I'm from India, They Ask Me How to Get a Taxi: Imageries of Connectedness and Disconnectedness among Transmigrants in Melbourne, Australia (*Markéta Slavková*)
- ▶ Who cares? (Ageing, Care and Migration) (*Petra Ezzeddine*)
- ▶ Polish Medical Migrants in the United Kingdom: The Complicated Nature of their Belonging to a New Society (*Ewa Ślęzak*)
- ▶ Beyond Dutch Borders: A Nation in Times of Europeanization (*Jeroen Doomernik*)
- ▶ Beyond Borders: Migration and (In)Equality in Central Europe in Comparison Conference Proceeds: Selected Papers (*Edited by Daniela Pěničková*)

www.lidemesta.cz

Editorial Board

Jakub Grygar, editor-in-chief (Charles University in Prague; Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i.)

Tatiana Bužeková (Comenius University in Bratislava)

Hana Červinková (University of Lower Silesia; Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i.)

Emá Hrešanová (University of West Bohemia)

Bob Kuřík (Charles University in Prague)

Zuzana Sekeráková Búriková (Masaryk University)

Edit Szenássy (Charles University in Prague)

Zděněk Uherek (Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i.)

Technical Editor

Anežka Jiráková (Charles University in Prague)

Proofreading

Benjamin Cope (European Humanities University)

Editorial Advisory Board

Michał Buchowski (Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań; Europe-University Viadrina, Frankfurt / Oder)

Chris Hann (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)

Haldis Haukanes (University of Bergen)

Krista Hegburg (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Martin Kanovský (Comenius University in Bratislava)

Marcin Lubaś (Jagiellonian University, Krakow)

Janusz Mucha (AGH University of Science and Technology, Krakow)

Alexandra Schwell (University of Vienna)

Maruška Svašek (Queen's University Belfast)

Cargo Website Manager

Jan Beseda (Charles University in Prague)

Cover

Matěj Macháček - <http://matejmachacek.com>

Layout

Dušan Růžička, Nová tiskárna Pelhřimov, spol. s r. o.

