

ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY: BEING PRESENT IN THE SOCIETY¹

SLOVENSKÝ

**SOŇA G. LUTHEROVÁ
MIROSLAVA HLINČÍKOVÁ**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/se-2019-0022> © Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV
© 2019, Soňa G. Lutherová, Miroslava Hlinčíková. This is an open access article licensed under
the Creative Commons

PhD. Soňa G. Lutherová, Mgr., Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava; e-mail: sona.lutherova@savba.sk;
PhD. Miroslava Hlinčíková, Mgr., Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava; e-mail: miroslava.hlincikova@savba.sk.

How to cite: G. Lutherová, S., Hlinčíková, M. (2019). Anthropology Today: Being Present in the Society. Slovenský národopis, 67(4), 386–398, <https://doi.org/10.2478/se-2019-0022>

INTRODUCTION

What is the place and the purpose of anthropology today? Are anthropologists able to react aptly to the current issues and problems in ever-changing societies and approach them in an accurate and scientifically rigorous way? In the last decades, ethnology and social anthropology have faced many challenges. These resulted in uncertainties about their position in post-colonialist and – in this part of the world – post-socialist societies. When we consider the position of ethnology, usually a concern about its relation to anthropology comes into question first. The comparison between these two disciplines has been widely discussed by various authors (e.g. Bitušíková, 2002, 2003, 2017; Hann, 1993, 2007; Podoba, 2007; Tužinská, 2008). Ethnology (in Slovakia as well as in other countries) was initially an historically oriented discipline, constructing such concepts as “folk” and “traditional” culture (Kiliánová, Stoličná, 2005). The “cosmetic change” from ethnography to ethnology in the early 1990s was described as the first step of

- 1 This work was supported by the VEGA Scientific Grant Agency, grant No. 2/0050/16 The application of innovative approaches in ethnology/social anthropology in Slovakia.
- 2 Not to rely solely on labels, in all of the ethnological/anthropological institutes and departments in Slovakia, both ethnologists and anthropologists often work side-by-side on common research projects and themes. Also, many of them have changed their place of employment from one department to another, regardless of its title or scientific affiliation. Consequently, the latter change of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences to the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS can be seen as a finalization of this integrative process.

“anthropologization” of ethnology in Slovakia (Bitušíková, 2017: 220).² From our perspective, the dialogue and cooperation between the two fields in the question (in terms of research scope, methods and methodology), have shifted from rather bashful to quite frequent and productive. According to Alexandra Bitušíková, currently, the distinctions between them lie in more formal than substantial matter (Bitušíková, 2017: 220). As written by Helena Tužinská, even though some paradigms within the disciplines might be incompatible, we all share the concern for the existence of human culture (Tužinská, 2008: 178). Hence, it seems that pinpointing the rivalry between the two fields have already lost its justification.³

In anthropology, everything has been problematized and relativized; from its theories and methodology to the way researchers choose their research topics and fieldwork (while being influenced by their very own positionality, biography and biases). Serge D. Elie describes this expressively as a series of disruptive articulations within the discipline, which resulted in the loss of innocence on the part of its practitioners and has unequivocally influenced the anthropological practice itself (Elie, 2006: 53). Consequently, as poignantly put by an historian of anthropology George W. Stocking Jr., students of anthropology (and also of ethnology, with its specific methodological problems and dilemmas as well as because of its precarious affiliation to anthropology) face “unprecedented problems of professional self-definition. In a very real sense, they must each, in becoming anthropologists, reinvent the field for themselves – rebounding it, if not rebinding it for themselves” (Stocking, 1992: 373).

Why are we in such doubt about the purpose and position of anthropology? Are there any particular qualities that make it worthwhile? Not only are these questions relevant in relation to self-identification of anthropologists and to the actual research practice, but also in regard to the vision and development of the scientific field as such. Anthropology is closely intertwined with current socio-political development and this makes the task of predicting its future trajectories particularly difficult. While trying, one might end up with an inspirational, yet rather essayistic science-fiction piece.⁴

Contemporary themes of anthropological research include (among others) environmental issues; natural disasters; body transformation and alteration; new technologies or neuro-anthropology... (Fardon, Harris, Marcharnd, Nutall, Shore, Strang, Wilson, 2012). We live in an era of dynamic shifts of power relations on the global scale, accelerated climate change, transnational identities and rapid movements of large groups of populations across the countries and continents... Not only are these topics the “it” themes for media and the general public: some of them are emerging as – or have already become – the topics for the research of local and international research teams (and are also grounded in the funding programmes and schemes, such as Horizon 2020 and others). But does this mean that anthropologists have finally – in the notorious words of Thomas Hylland Eriksen – lost their “fear of plunging into the vexed issues of modern societies” (Eriksen, 2006: 152)? And if it is the case, does this also include ethnologists and anthropologists in Central Europe, or specifically in Slovakia? Without any doubt, in many cases it does. However, as we have written elsewhere, anthropology (and even

3 In this paper, we mainly approach anthropology and ethnology as convertible for the sake of simplification.

4 Such as Christopher Pinney’s futuristic perspective on anthropology in the first half of the century of the new millennium. He writes a fabricated overview from the fictive Institute for Indigenous Global futures in India in 2051 (Pinney, 2012). In his text, he describes the dramatic changes in world climate, politics and society on a global level, which supposedly will have happened in the next few decades.

more so ethnology) is not focused solely on the present times, but also it is not imprisoned in the past (G. Lutherová, Hlinčíková, 2016: 10). Certainly, that is not its vice but rather an advantage. What anthropologists should opt for is to provide socially relevant research findings, regardless of the choice of the specific theme of their inquiry.

This issue of Slovak Ethnology includes four papers from social anthropologists/ethnologists, based in Slovakia. They present a wide range of research topics (history of science, ethno-tourism, neo-shamanism and oral history interviews) and show various ways how to do anthropological research. While reading them, we might wonder – what makes anthropology unique? According to Tim Ingold, anthropology is anchored in seeking “a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human being and knowing” (Ingold, 2007: 69). In regard to this, a crucial element is the researchers’ interest in the people and the ambition to analyse social phenomena on various levels; the ability to absolve from your own position and put yourself in the place of the other; and the aim to approach the object of the research holistically and interpret it from various perspectives (G. Lutherová, Hlinčíková, 2016). As characterized by Lubica Voľanská: “thanks to ethnological research instruments, we can (...) better understand daily life issues through the context of culture and possibly subject them to criticism” (Voľanská, 2018: 180). Simply put, anthropology provides an insight into the lives of others. More importantly, it gives voice to and enables those, who are not able or cannot let themselves be heard otherwise. When you get to understand people, then you might be able to empathize with them. And indeed, empathy could be a solution for many burning issues of the present.

TO APPROACH THE PUBLIC

Is it enough to study co-current and possibly burning societal issues thoroughly, but not to make them heard? Should we be content with anthropological knowledge safely concealed behind “hermetically sealed” walls of academia (McKenna, 2010: 48)? Media anthropologist Brian McKenna objects to this; according to him, as scientists, we ourselves have to become public intellectuals and to make use of acquired data on the public fora. McKenna finds it paradoxical, that academic anthropology constantly worries about its future perspectives and yet “inhibits public journalistic action” (McKenna, 2010: 47). From our perspective, anthropologists do not have to become journalists themselves, but they certainly should learn how to present anthropological thoughts in an informative and yet compelling way. Also, they need to address the public on various platforms. Not to think in ‘either – or’ dichotomy (for example either scientific monograph or something “experimental” such as video or audio output), but to disseminate the anthropological knowledge across various media. To do this, they need to have effective transmedia skills and strategy (Brackenbury, 2016).

It is certainly not an easy task, to intercede complex research phenomena in an approachable, but still scientifically rigorous way. There are anthropologists who don’t keep away from engaging in public discourse, whether it is regular appearance on primetime TV, writing popularization texts for newspapers, or giving interviews and public lectures. However, these activities also need to be valued as a considerable part of scientific work (not only informally but also in formal evaluation at scientific institutions), rather than frowned upon as a peculiar hobby activity. In this sense, we all have to search for the answer to “how to tell and how to listen” – as Monika

Vrzgulová proposes in her paper in this issue. Not only how to listen to our informants (or partners in research) and to their personal stories, but also how to present the acquired knowledge to our perspective audience. Vrzgulová herself is certainly the best person to judge. Not only she is a leading expert on oral historical research on the holocaust in Slovakia, but also has personally engaged in many popularization and educational activities, such as (most recently) a civic initiative Zabudnuté Slovensko,⁵ realising public discussions about extremism and violence with young people throughout the whole country. In her professional career, Vrzgulová is a stellar example of how to be an engaged anthropologist and – nevertheless – a public intellectual as well.

However, many still perceive the academic world as an isolated environment. This relates to the image and branding of academia among the general public, but it also reflects the perspective of scholars themselves. The way we as anthropologists see ourselves, our position in society, the responsibility towards the public and the need to contribute to the public discussion differs. It is deeply connected to the way we report about our work, how we share our knowledge and engage our partners in research into it. In accordance with Helena Tužinská, we find a contradiction in the stance of anthropologists, who are studying primarily humans and yet they avoid their public responsibility (Tužinská, 2008: 205).⁶ As characterized by Thomas H. Eriksen: “The tension between the internal and the external, between openness and closure, between building knowledge and sharing it, represents a fundamental dilemma in all group dynamics” (Eriksen, 2016: 30). Therefore, we need to look for the balance in the dissemination of anthropological ideas and knowledge to the wider public. The scientists’ engagement within the society is necessary and has diverse forms. Anthropology can and should be more focused on people and problems that directly interest them, as well as on pragmatic use of the research analysis. It should be done to such a degree, that it would shape public debates and shed light onto demanding social problems. One thing remains clear – if social scientists and anthropologists in particular won’t engage more and contribute to the public discourse, there is no future for anthropology behind the walls of academia.

SEARCHING “HOW TO TELL AND HOW TO LISTEN”

Due to the fact, that anthropologists study humans and social relations, they are inevitably entangled in miscellaneous relations, ties and their own biases during their research. There is a mutual dependence between the positionality of the scientist and the way he/she approaches the fieldwork, as well as the output of his/her research practice (Elie, 2006; Voľanská, 2019).

The papers in this issue of Slovak Ethnology introduce some of the ethical and methodological dilemmas anthropologists and ethnologists in Central Europe face

⁵ Zabudnuté Slovensko [Forgotten Slovakia]. For more information, see: <http://www.zabudnuteslovensko.sk/sk/>.

⁶ Contrary to that, applied anthropologists focus on utilizing anthropological knowledge to deal with social issues in various settings. There are many ways and opportunities for anthropology to be applied, engaged and public. The subdiscipline of applied anthropology is theoretically oriented on “recognizing hegemonies, power structures and relations, as well as deconstructing traditional approaches we as scientists use when working on solving practical problems of the present” (G. Lutherová, Hlinčíková, 2016: 13).

today. First, there is reflexivity in relation to a researcher's own bio, which undoubtedly influences and shapes our fieldwork (see Vrzgulová in this issue). In her paper, Vrzgulová goes beyond obvious truistic remarks, digging deep into her own emotions, which influence her oral history research on the holocaust.

Second, there is reflexivity towards one's scientific field, which Kiliánová focuses on in her text. She looks closely at academia – at the institutions of ethnographic research, the scientific community, as well as at the relations among its members. She carefully examines the way the Ethnographic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences – at a later time her own working place, which she also led as a director – was developed. Also, she focuses on the way its research practice was influenced by different power relations during communism. However, her findings do not only apply to social and political circumstances of that specific era. Scholars never work in a vacuum – besides responding to the current state of enquiry in a given academic community they always react “to certain social and political processes in the societies in which they live” (Kiliánová, in this issue). Kiliánová uncovers these ties while looking at the scholarly project on “Research of the Ukrainian Ethnic Group”,⁷ undertaken by the Ethnographic Institute in the 1950s. Through the detailed analysis of the archival data (scientific reports, correspondence among individual actors and other) she examines the relations between political power and scientific inquiry. Kiliánová looks back on the scholarly work as a specific kind of practice, as well as on its actors and their strategies and motivations. To put it simply – she is looking for the way how to tell the history of our field reflexively and critically (Tužinská, 2008; Podoba, 2005; Kiliánová, 2005).

Third, reflexivity might be used as a principle of the methodological approach itself. In her paper, Jaroslava Panáková explores cultural representations through the analysis of the production of a visible “tourist reality” materialized in the photographs (made by locals, tourists and researcher herself). This way, she examines the way tourists enter and interact with the local culture, as well as how they appropriate their experience. At the same time, she focuses on the locals and the way they construct their own culture and the tourist experience itself. Finally, she takes herself into the consideration – the way she as a researcher perceives the environment and participates on the cultural interaction.

Perhaps it is reflexivity in particular that makes anthropology unique and gives it its specific purpose. As anthropologists, we endeavour to understand people and their living conditions through their perspective, to include a researcher's own viewpoint, and at the same time to put this perspective under scientific scrutiny.

WRITING AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

We carry, share, analyse and scrutinize the knowledge we gain in the research mostly through our texts. Even the act of writing might be engaged, as an act of advocacy or act of innovation – via writing, we can make the invisible visible. As opposed to quantitative work that can possibly carry its meaning in tables and summaries, qualitative work “carries its meaning in its entire text” (Richardson, St. Pierre, 2005: 960). Moreover, as we might add, the meaning is also constructed in the act of reading

⁷ This particular research mirrored the attempts of the ethnographers at that time to collect all possible validation of a nation's specificity (Tužinská, 2008: 194).

itself. Even though writing ethnography has changed a lot in the last decades, we are often expected to be writing in a certain genre, style and the most prevalent is the analytical way of writing (Wiesner, 2018: 336). It is a realistic style where the researcher vanishes from the story, writing in the third person. Formally, it is a passive style, which many consider to be more valid, serious and “objective”. With that being said, we suggest that specifically in anthropology a researcher’s voice is important to hear. Presently, there are more and more anthropologists who use different styles and formats to describe the reflexive process of their research. They present their personal stories through text: their own experiences, thoughts, emotions, internal dilemmas or doubts... Also, they openly write about their vulnerability and challenges they face as researchers – individuals with a certain life story, social (and political) locality, who are not fully neutral. As researchers, we produce knowledge that is “an active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit” (Guillemin, Gillam, 2004: 274).

What shapes our positions, the choice of a specific topic and is it scientifically acceptable to be emotionally “touched” by our research subject/informants (partners in research)? We can probably all agree on a notion that we are influenced by the stories we hear and analyse. Therefore, we should reflect all dimensions of our positionality in writing and acknowledge in what way our own experience affects the topics we choose and explore.⁸ In ourselves, we can see different “selves”: the personal self, the researcher’s self and his/her relations with people in the ‘field’, the academic self that reflects the relation to other anthropologists in the “anthropological field”, while all of the selves are processual and changing, situated and open-ended (Giabiconi, 2013).

Monika Vrzgulová’s paper in this issue deals with the emotions and the “grey zones” she encounters in her work. Her text is autoethnographic,⁹ because she (as a researcher) shares her subjective impressions of two particular examples from her fieldwork and tries to understand the experience she has lived through. She explores “ethically important moments in doing research – the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice” (Guillemin, Gillam, 2004: 262) in regard to the method of oral-history interview. Monika Vrzgulová has been involved in holocaust research in Slovakia since the 1990’s; she acknowledges the changes in her perceptions coming from the stories she has heard. For many of us, it definitely can be difficult to write in a reflective and personal way. To be able to uncover yourself as a researcher, you need to be sufficiently introspective about your feelings, motives or contradictions you experience (Ellis, Bochner, 2000). In this sense, Vrzgulová’s paper gets very personal and even therapeutic as she explores specific situations. Hence, the writing is becoming “an agent of self-discovery of self-creation” (Ellis, Bochner, 2000: 746). Writing itself “serves as a particular ‘method of inquiry’ (which helps the ethnographers) to learn about themselves and their research topic” (Richardson, St.

8 See also Wiesner, 2017; Wiesner 2019; Vořanská, Wiesner, 2019.

9 “Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition” (Ellis, Bochner, 2000: 739).

Pierre, 2005: 959). A methodological paper written in such a personal way bears power and intimacy of the writer's voice (Ghodsee, 2016). As readers, we perceive certain actions through the lens of the researcher herself. Also, this relates to a specific writing style, when the author contemplates ethical dilemmas and tensions she faced in her everyday research practice and tries to resolve them.¹⁰ In this way, the reflexivity helps us to validate and consider the ethically important moments and it is taking us back to our own stories, ethics and reflexivity as a basis. The person as an ethnographer can become his or her own tool for the research within the ethnography – what he/she explores, can be researched thanks to his/her full engagement in the field and full participation (Wiesner, 2017: 196).

To know our scientific world involves a critical awareness of both the larger political field from which ethnology emerged, and of the micro-practices and relations of power within and across the discipline. Therefore, it is important to openly discuss and deconstruct the ethnological/anthropological knowledge production.

ANTHROPOLOGY AS “SLOW SCIENCE”?

There is another quality, which seems to be quite specific for anthropological research (as well as for the projects presented in this issue). It is the length and thoroughness of anthropological fieldwork, providing the first-hand experience of the studied phenomena (Ingold, 2007). Whether it is the study on neo-shamanism and its relation to dominant authoritative medical knowledge (as in the research of Tatiana Bužeková), or oral-historical research on holocaust victims (see the paper of Monika Vrzgulová), doing long-term research ensures rich data for analysis and provides the researcher with a specific insight into the studied phenomena.

Indeed, time is an important aspect of ethnographic research – to become part of the observed world, to carve out social relations, to soak in the culture and learn to act accordingly (Rivoal, Salazar, 2013). When an anthropologist spends a longer time period doing the fieldwork, the interaction with his/her informants (or partners in the research) develops and deepens. Consequently, the character of the research practice (whether it is realized through interviews, participant observation or other research methods) is changed as well as the quality of the research data. The longer the stay – the more profound is the understanding of the context and relations between different aspects of the studied phenomenon. We need time to unveil the “otherness”, the unexpected, because ethnographic theory thrives on the principle of serendipity (Salazar, 2019). Pek Van Andel defines serendipity as “the art of making an unsought finding” (Van Andel, 1994: 631). It requires a sufficient background knowledge as well as good insight into the research field, an open mindedness, and good timing (Rivoal, Salazar, 2013: 178). And despite ethnography having a changing tendency, serendipity, together with reflexivity and openness, might just be the crucial and essential characteristics (and strengths) of the ethnographic method (Rivoal, Salazar, 2013: 178). Serendipitous research requires time to “observe, understand and ponder, as well as

¹⁰ Guillemín and Gillam distinguish two different dimensions of ethics in research, which they term a) procedural ethics that usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans; and b) “ethics in practice” or the everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research (Guillemín, Gillam, 2004).

stretching time, if needed, to go back and forth between the traditionally separated periods of data gathering and analysis” (Rivoal, Salazar, 2013: 180).

Sadly, as many scholars agree, the comprehensive and slow approach to science and knowledge production does not thrive in the current socio-political and economic context. The rapid and profit oriented ethos has induced undesired transformations in how academics in general have to work (Rivoal, Salazar, 2013: 180). The possible solution is to find a necessary balance between these tendencies – try to be faster and more effective, but still remain substantive. Usually, such character of the research practice is necessary in applied anthropological cooperation with non-governmental organizations, municipalities, and the business sector or other.

According to Václav Soukup, the distinction between academic anthropology and applied anthropology is not based on the difference of the fieldwork methods, but it derives from different goals. For applied anthropologists, the motivation is to influence and manage social relations; not only to observe and interpret them, but to actively change them (Soukup, 2004: 203). However, in applied projects researchers are often dependent on a tight time schedule. Because of this, also the research methods usually have to be altered and transformed to be used in specific circumstances of applied research.¹¹ Some might object that the essence of anthropology gets “lost in translation” this way. But different times call for different measures.¹² We cannot renounce the “fast” anthropological approach and banish anthropology to tranquillity in the “ivory tower” of academia, but we rather have to get methodologically creative and find new ways to acquire and use anthropological knowledge in an applied manner.

With everything that has been said, all of the papers in this issue are derived from long-time research – in Killiánová’s case archival and in all the others in the research field. During the fieldwork, researchers had enough time to acquire rich research data, to create close but also well balanced relations with their informants and critically reflect on their own perceptions and emotions (and hence reevaluate them). These particular research processes need serendipitous time – only rarely and with great difficulty can you dive into them in hast.

Monika Vrzgulová reflects her ethical boundaries and opens the question of her relations toward her informants – partners in research. She strongly disagrees with some of the ideas they express and feels discomfort. In her paper, she reflects on her inner fight with emotions – disillusion and bewilderment, because of not being able to rise above her own feelings. Only time allowed her to get a different perspective and critically reconsider her own positionality in the research.

Tatiana Bužeková has carried out her research for several years in Bratislava and observed the activities of neo-shamanic groups – urban shamans and their “circles”. During her fieldwork, she has managed to gain trust and enter small private circles of people who gathered and practiced shamanism. In her paper, she focuses on the topic

¹¹ Such as Setha Low’s rapid ethnographic assessment procedures (REAP) used in anthropological research on public spaces (Low, Taplin, Scheld, 2002), or applied methods used in design anthropological research (Richard, Gheerawo, 2011).

¹² After all, the situation is comparable to anthropologists conducting their research in the urban context. Quite often, they also have to look for new approaches and research methods appropriate for their particular research situation. To give an example, in anthropological research on the home, you rarely can physically stay with your informants/partners in research to observe them for longer time periods. The solution might be in triangulation of research methods, while experimental and reflexive approaches are often used (G. Lutherová, 2014).

of healing and explores legitimization of charismatic neo-shamanic healers in relation to biomedicine which is a dominant authoritative body of medical knowledge in European societies. Thanks to her observations and long time spent in the field, she was able to describe distinctive nuances in the rhetoric of two charismatic healers who come from different cultures and operate in various neo-shamanic groups in Slovakia. She examines representations constructed by non-biomedical healers and by their followers and in this way helps us to understand their reasoning.

Jaroslava Panáková also based her findings on the data collected in long-term fieldwork. It was realised during multiple research visits to Russian Chukotka over the span of six years. In the field, she has conducted in-depth interviews, participant observations and also applied an experimental visual-anthropological method through analysing photographs. In her paper, she patiently puts the object of her research – the phenomenon of ethno-tourism – under detailed scrutiny. The act of positioning herself as a researcher under the examination is just one last necessary piece in the puzzle. In her analysis, Panáková focuses on photographs, which she does not take for the passively produced “mimetic images of the world”. She rather perceives them as the traces of specific cultural experience and social relations, which have been realized through this experience. To discover and understand the connections between phenomena, the researcher needs time and – certainly – serendipity as well.

Gabriela Kiliánová knows the research environment that she analyses (the Institute of Ethnology of Slovak Academy of Sciences¹³) by heart – in the later years she led it as a director. In the paper, she critically examines its past. This particular kind of reflection presupposes a deep knowledge of the processes and mechanisms of the research practice. On the side of researcher, it also requires scientific distance and immersion, which is – yet again – connected to time: Time to reflect and to (re)consider. In the end, anthropology might not be a slow science, but a thorough and nevertheless, a holistic one. That is the essence of anthropological inquiry.

CONCLUSION

One of our Swedish colleagues once tried to describe to us the beauty and meaning of holistic research in anthropology. She drew a pencil sketch of a diamond and explained: “When you are doing research, you might look at the subject from different perspectives. Imagine that the phenomenon you are studying is a diamond. Now look at the diamond – you always see only some parts of it. But the more you turn it and look at it from different angles, the more you understand it. However, you always understand only some aspects of it and the way they relate to one another.” Such is the character of anthropological research. Although presently we live in fast times and we certainly have to accommodate, we should aim to stay thorough, critical as well as become more socially relevant.

The area of anthropological and ethnological research in Central Europe is quite wide: not only in terms of the research topics, but also in relation to methodology and research methods. However, what anthropologists have in common is the need to understand the social world around them, to counter the “objective truths”, perspectives and discourses of the dominant knowledge. In relation to this, there often arises the

13 Currently Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS.

need to confront internal as well as external constraints and boundaries of their scientific endeavours. For individual scholars, the ways to overcome them differ – may it be reflexivity, use of experimental methods¹⁴ or other...

In this editorial, we have tried to define the uniqueness of anthropology and the way its current development reflects in the papers in this issue of Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology. At the same time, we have asked ourselves, how do we as anthropologists/ethnologists approach the public, how do we search for a way to present the results of our research and if the research we conduct is still anthropologically “juicy”. After all, what all presented texts have in common is the essence of good ethnography, which reflects, doubts, discusses, compares and deconstructs. As one of the great popularisers of our field Thomas H. Eriksen once characterized: “Our strength lies in producing knowledge about phenomena that cannot easily be counted or measured; anthropologists have to make an effort to show the relevance of their irrelevant knowledge. Equally, if nobody understands what we are saying, that is not an indication of profundity but of poor language skills and muddled thought” (Eriksen, 2016: 35).

REFERENCES

- Bahna, V. (2019, in print). Experiment v antropológii. In: L. Volanská, A. Wiesner (Eds.), *Nové prístupy v etnológii a sociálnej antropológii na Slovensku* [New Approaches in Ethnology and Social Anthropology in Slovakia]. Bratislava: Veda (pp. 27–69).
- Bitušíková, A. (2002). Anthropology as a Taboo: A Few Comments on Anthropology in Slovakia. In: P. Skalník (Ed.), *A Post-Communist Millennium: The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe*. Prague Studies in Sociocultural Anthropology 2. Prague: Set Out (pp. 141–146).
- Bitušíková, A. (2003). Teaching and Learning Anthropology in a New National Context: The Slovak Case. In: D. Dracklé, I. R. Edgar, T. K. Schippers (Eds.), *Educational Histories of European Social Anthropology*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books (pp. 69–81).
- Bitušíková, A. (2017). Between Ethnography and Anthropology in Slovakia: Autobiographical Reflections. In: A. Barrera-González, M. Heintz, A. Horolets (Eds.), *European Anthropologies*. New York: Berghahn Books (pp. 211–230).
- Brackenbury, A. (2016). 2016: *Trends in Teaching, Publishing, and Anthropology*. Available at: <http://www.utpteachingculture.com/2016-trends-in-teaching-publishing-and-anthropology/> (accessed on November 11th, 2019).
- Elie, S. D. (2006). Anthropology and Post-Colonial Thought: The Paradoxical Quest for Positionality. *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, 12, 53–72.
- Ellis, C., Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject. In: N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage (pp. 733–768).
- Eriksen, T. H. (2006). *Engaging Anthropology, The Case for a Public Presence*. New York: Berg Publishers.
- Eriksen, T. H. (2016). Public Anthropology in the 21st Century, with Some Examples from Norway. *Český lid*, 103(1), 23–36.
- Fardon, R., Harris, O., Marchand, T. H. J., Nutall, M., Shore, C., Strang, V., Wilson, R. A. (Eds.) (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd.

14 For example, see Bahna, 2019.

- Ghodsee, K. (2016). *From Notes to Narrative. Writing Ethnographies that everyone can read*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Giabiconi, J. (2013). Serendipity... mon amour? On discomfort as a prerequisite for anthropological knowledge. *Social Anthropology*, 21(2), 199–212.
- Guillemin, M., Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity, and “Ethically Important Moments” in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280.
- G. Lutherová, S. (2014). Sweet Property O Mine. *Home Cultures*, 11(1), 79–102. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174214X13807024690828>.
- G. Lutherová, S., Hlinčíková, M. (2016). Úvod. In: S. G. Lutherová, M. Hlinčíková (Eds.), *Za hranicami vedy? Aplikovaná antropológia v spoločnosti* [Beyond Borders of Science? Applied Anthropology in Society], Bratislava: Ústav etnológie SAV, VEDA (pp. 9–17).
- Hann, C. (1993). Introduction: Social Anthropology and Socialism. In: C. M. Hann (Ed.), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*. London: Routledge (pp. 1–26).
- Hann, C. (2007). Rozmanité časové rámce antropologie a její budoucnost ve střední a východní Evropě. *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 43(1), 15–30.
- Ingold, T. (2007). *Anthropology is Not Ethnography*. Proceedings of the British Academy 154. London: The British Academy (pp. 69–92).
- Kiliánová, G., Stoličná, R. (2005). Introduction. In: G. Kiliánová, K. Kostlin, H. Nikitsch, R. Stoličná (Eds.), *Ethnology in Slovakia at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Reflections and Trends*. Vienna: Institut für Europäische Ethnologie der Universität Wien; Bratislava: Ústav etnológie SAV (pp. 9–16).
- Kiliánová, G. (2005). Continuity and Discontinuity in an Intellectual Tradition under Socialism: The ‘Folkloristic School’ in Bratislava. In: C. Hann, M. Sárkány, P. Skalník (Eds.), *Studying Peoples in the People’s Democracies. Socialist Era Anthropology in Eastern and Central Europe*. Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Euroasia, Volume 8, Münster, LIT Verlag (pp. 257–271).
- Low, S., Taplin, D. H., Scheld, S. (2002). Rapid Ethnographic Assessment in Urban Parks: A Case Study of Independence National Historical Park. *Human Organization*, 61(1), 80–93.
- McKenna, B. (2010). Anthropology Must Embrace Journalism. *Tsantsa*, 15, 47–60.
- Pinney, Ch. (2012). Anthropology in the New Millennium. In: R. Fardon, O. Harris, T. H. J. Marchand, M. Nuttall, C. Shore, V. Strang, R. A. Wilson (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd. (pp. 393–399).
- Podoba, J. (2005). On the Periphery of a Periphery: Slovak Anthropology behind the Ideological Veil. In: C. Hann, M. Sárkány, P. Skalník (Eds.), *Studying Peoples in the People’s Democracies. Socialist Era Anthropology in East-Central Europe*. LIT Verlag, Münster (pp. 245–271).
- Podoba, J. (2007). Social Anthropology in East-Central Europe: Intellectual Challenge or Anachronism? In: *Working Papers of the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology No. 90*, 28–33.
- Richard, J. A., Gheerawo, R. (2011). The Ethnography in Design. In: A. J. Clarke (Ed.), *Design Anthropology. Object Culture in the 21st Century*. Wien, New York: Springer Verlag (pp. 45–55).
- Richardson, L., St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing: A method of Inquiry. In: N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage (pp. 959–978).
- Rivoal, I., Salazar, B. N. (2013). Contemporary Ethnographic Practice and the Value of Serendipity. *Social Anthropology*, 21(2), 178–185.
- Salazar, B. N. (2019). *Ethnographic theory: A product of observation, reflection ... and travel*. Available at: https://networkofethnographictheory.wordpress.com/ethnographic-theory-a-product-of-observation-reflection-and-travel/?fbclid=IwAR2abCvh7SYxyXRyAldJPnJ4DYFm8ldg0n0pq5Tb5psRGfB7jcbZ2_riYdQ (accessed on November 8th, 2019)
- Soukup, V. (2004). *Dějiny antropologie*. Praha: Karolinum.
- Stocking Jr., G. W. (1992). *The Ethnographer’s Magic and Other Essays in The History of*

- Anthropology*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press.
- Tužinská, H. (2008). How Far Have We Gone with Being Applied? From Národopis to Anthropology. Curricula Heterogeneity and Public Engagement in Slovakia. *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, 20(1), 193–209.
- Van Andel, P. (1994). Anatomy of the unsought finding. Serendipity: origin, history, domains, traditions, appearances, patterns and programmability. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 45(2), 631–648.
- Voľanská, L. (2018). Contextualising Ageism in an Interdisciplinary Perspective. An Introduction. *Slovenský národopis*, 66(2), 178–189.
- Voľanská, L. (2019, in print). Organizačná antropológia ako metóda pri výskume nehmotného kultúrneho dedičstva? In: L. Voľanská, A. Wiesner (Eds.), *Nové prístupy v etnológii a sociálnej antropológii na Slovensku* [New Approaches in Ethnology and Social Anthropology in Slovakia]. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, Veda (pp. 70–106).
- Voľanská, L., Wiesner, A. (Eds.) (2019). *Nové prístupy v etnológii a sociálnej antropológii na Slovensku* [New Approaches in Ethnology and Social Anthropology in Slovakia]. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, Veda.
- Wiesner, A. (2017). *Jediná jistota je změna: autoethnografie na transgender téma* [The Only Certainty is Change. Autoethnography with Transgender Topics]. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie SAV, VEDA SAV.
- Wiesner, A. (2018). Autoethnography: Beyond Gender Binary through Writing Lives. *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA*, [S.I.], 66(2), 335–346.
- Wiesner, A. (2019, in print). Od psaní o sobě ke spolupráci. Reflexivní psaní a spolupracující přístup v terapii a (auto)etnografii. In: L. Voľanská, A. Wiesner (Eds.), *Nové prístupy v etnológii a sociálnej antropológii na Slovensku* [New Approaches in Ethnology and Social Anthropology in Slovakia]. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, Veda (pp. 109–143).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SOŇA G. LUTHEROVÁ – is a social and visual anthropologist. As a research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, she focuses on the themes of individual/social identities, memories and material culture. She is also interested in the application of innovative and reflexive methods in ethnographic research. Her papers have been published in domestic and international anthropological journals and monographs. She has co-edited a monograph *Za hranicami vedy? Aplikovaná antropológia v spoločnosti* [Beyond Borders of Science? Applied Anthropology in Society] and directed a visual anthropological documentary *Zatopené* [Flooded] (AH Production, RTVS, SFI). Most recently, she has written a popularization children's book on identity *Môžu superhrdinovia nosiť okuliare?* [Can superheroes wear glasses?] (E.J. Publishing). Currently, she is directing a documentary feature film *Šťastný človek* [A Happy Man] (Azyl Production, Mimoid pictures, LittleBig Productions, in production).

MIROSLAVA HLINČÍKOVÁ – works as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, where she received a PhD in 2013. She has been member of various research teams regarding different minority issues: disadvantaged groups in the society (migrants, minorities, and women), social exclusion, equal opportunities, civic participation, integration, human rights and diversity in the urban environment. She has cooperated as an analyst at the Institute for Public Affairs; Citizen, Democracy and Responsibility and Centre

for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture. She is the author and co-author of several monographs and studies, such as *Integrácia ľudí s medzinárodnou ochranou na Slovensku: Hľadanie východísk* [Integrating People with International Protection in Slovakia: Seeking the Starting Points], *Migranti v meste: prítomní a predsa (ne)viditeľní* [Migrants in the City: Present and (Not) Visible] and *Za hranicami vedy? Aplikovaná antropológia v spoločnosti* [Beyond the Borders of Science? Applied Anthropology in Society].