

## Editorial



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/SN.2022.4.36> © Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, v. v. i.  
© 2022, Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, Juraj Majo, Tomáš Kubisa. This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons

The *Slovenský národopis / Slovak Ethnology* 4/2022 issue represents an output from the research project VEGA 2/0060/19 *Ethnographic Research of Non-religion and Secularism in Modern Slovak Society (Life Trajectories and Stories)* (2019–2022), which focused on the qualitative research of Slovakia's religious, spiritual, and irreligious landscape. During the research, we realised that multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) should be crucial in the future research of non-religion – not only in piloting the design for quantitative surveys, but also in choosing proper categories to describe data and interpret the findings.

The current issue of the *Slovak Ethnology* is devoted to the anthropological aspects of recent Czech, Slovak, and Polish experience with secularism and non-religion. To amplify the national focus, we launched a call with the intention to capture non-religion in three neighbouring Central-European countries that witnessed post-socialist transformation. As also proven in this issue, the national paths from obligatory atheism to religious freedom and the pluralism of beliefs are considerably divergent in the post-communist region. Whereas the Czech Republic is one of the most secular countries in the CEE region, Poland is still the citadel of Catholicism in Europe, where “being Catholic” is intertwined with being “truly Polish” (Pew Research Center, 2018). Based on statistical findings, Slovakia is a “country in the middle” between Western and Eastern patterns of religiosity (Pew Research Center, 2018; Podolinská, Krivý, Bahna, 2013). Despite the comparative CE perspective, one of the primary purposes of this issue was also to mainstream the approach to the research of nones, which continues to be based on the analysis of statistical data from international or national surveys.

The issue offers three studies relying on the VEGA 2/0060/19 research project data. The first study, by Tatiana Zachar Podolinská and Juraj Majo, is a theoretical and numerical kick-off of the whole issue. The study titled *How to Approach (Non)Religion and Labelling Categories that Continue to Be Fuzzy (Theoretical and Numerical Take Off)* detects blind spots in the mainstream approach used in the research of non-religion worldwide. The authors also summarise the main theoretical paradigms and the *post-paradigmatic turn* outlined in the current sociology of religion. The authors see the future of the sociology of religion, spirituality, and

non-religion in a *qualitative turn* and *nationally (locally) embedded research* that reveals contextually grounded data and personalised/individualised life stories. In this regard, they propose more clarity and accuracy in generally used labels that will fit national and local circumstances. The fuzziness of the labelling categories impacts not only the scientific but also public discourse and, therefore, sensitive tuning grounded in qualitative research is necessary.

The study of Juraj Buzalka is based on qualitative research (biographies of non-religious persons) in three Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. The paper titled *Post-socialist Integralism and Its Non-religious Origins* discusses the sources of *reactionary conservatism* in the non-religious sphere, parallel to the revival of religious fundamentalism after state-socialism. The author argues that the *post-socialist conservative turn* needs to be analysed in the wider context of post-socialist transformation, also considering the transformations of the social organisation of politics under state-socialism and the post-socialist ideology that he defines as *post-peasant integralism*.

Sociologists, anthropologists, and theoreticians of religion are well aware of the concept of secularism (and the theories revolving around this concept; see e. g. Bruce, 2006) – but what is non-religion, how is it developed, and how does it manifest in an individual's life? This is exactly the topic of Juraj Majo's article "Well, I Have to Believe in Myself, Otherwise, It Makes No Sense" – *Outline of the Paths to Non-religiousness of Young People in Slovakia*, in which he presents his research findings on the "nonreligious turning points" in the lives of young Slovaks in recent times.

David Václavík's article *Cultural and Social Continuity and Discontinuity as Factors of Non-religion. The Case of the Czech Borderland* deals with the social continuity of *apatheism* in the Czech borderland region of Sudeten. This article unveils that non-religion, which is often confused with atheism (see also Václavík, Hamplová, Nešpor, 2018), rarely takes the form of a conscious and deliberate rejection of religion and is formed not only with religious (or ideological) elements, but the key role is also played by the elements considered worldly.

In his contribution on Vedic Slavism in Slovakia, Tomáš Kubisa demonstrates what forms the plurality of the religious market can take and that the boundaries between religion and alternative spirituality are very vague to the point of non-existence in the post-modern era. The paper *Vedic Slavism as an Intersection Between Alternative Spirituality and Religion* demonstrates the attractiveness of ethno-religion in Slovakia of Eastern origin. The phenomena illustrate that not only the Western forms of "alternative spirituality" benefit from the pluralism of beliefs in Slovakia, but we can also detect here their Eastern forms as a strong stream attracting a growing proportion of adherents from the middle and young generation of Slovaks.

Apart from the topic covered in this issue, i.e., the anthropological aspects of recent Czech, Slovak, and Polish experience with secularism and non-religion, the volume also contains an article by Polish author Jerzy Rohoziński, which deals with the relatively exotic environment of Uzbek workers in the 1940s in the USSR and their commercial activities, which were viewed with displeasure by the USSR Government

and gave rise to several “colonial” stereotypes. Its title is ‘*Uzbek Speculators’ Behind the Front Line. A Firmly Rooted Russian Colonial Stereotype Versus the Soviet ‘Friendship of Peoples’*’.

In general, the issue can be taken as a particular survey of the increasingly topical issue in the sociology of religion – how to approach irreligiosity, secularism, and people who declare to be atheist, apatheists, agnostics, humanists etc.? After almost half-a-century-long global research of the so-called “nones” or “unaffiliated people”, we still do not know who they are, what role is played by religion, God, and belief(s), practicing in their life, what the shapes and contours of “secular beliefs” are, etc. etc. We hope this issue is a small yet valuable contribution to the ongoing debates within the sociology of nonreligion.

TATIANA ZACHAR PODOLINSKÁ,

*Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS*

JURAJ MAJO,

*Department of Economic and Social Geography, Demography, and Territorial Development,*

*Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University*

TOMÁŠ KUBISA,

*Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS*

## REFERENCES

- Bruce, S. (2006). Secularization and the Impotence of Individualized Religion. *The Hedgehog Review*, 8(1–2), 34–45.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95–117.
- Podolinská, T., Krivý, V., Bahna, V. (2013). Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia. In: V. Krivý (Ed.), *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť* (pp. 181–265). Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV.
- Pew Research Center (2018). *Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities and Key Social Issues*.  
[https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/officefile/?x\\_api\\_client\\_id=chrome\\_extension\\_viewer&x\\_api\\_client\\_location=pdf-to-word&mv2=chrome\\_extension\\_viewer&uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Asc%3AUS%3A7df87476-4a5e-494a-aea-20b9512c0685](https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/officefile/?x_api_client_id=chrome_extension_viewer&x_api_client_location=pdf-to-word&mv2=chrome_extension_viewer&uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Asc%3AUS%3A7df87476-4a5e-494a-aea-20b9512c0685) (published October 29, 2018; accessed November 28, 2022).
- Václavík, D., Hamplová, D., Nešpor, Z. R. (2018). Religious Situation in Contemporary Czech Society. *Central European Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 2(2), 99–122.  
<https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2018.6>