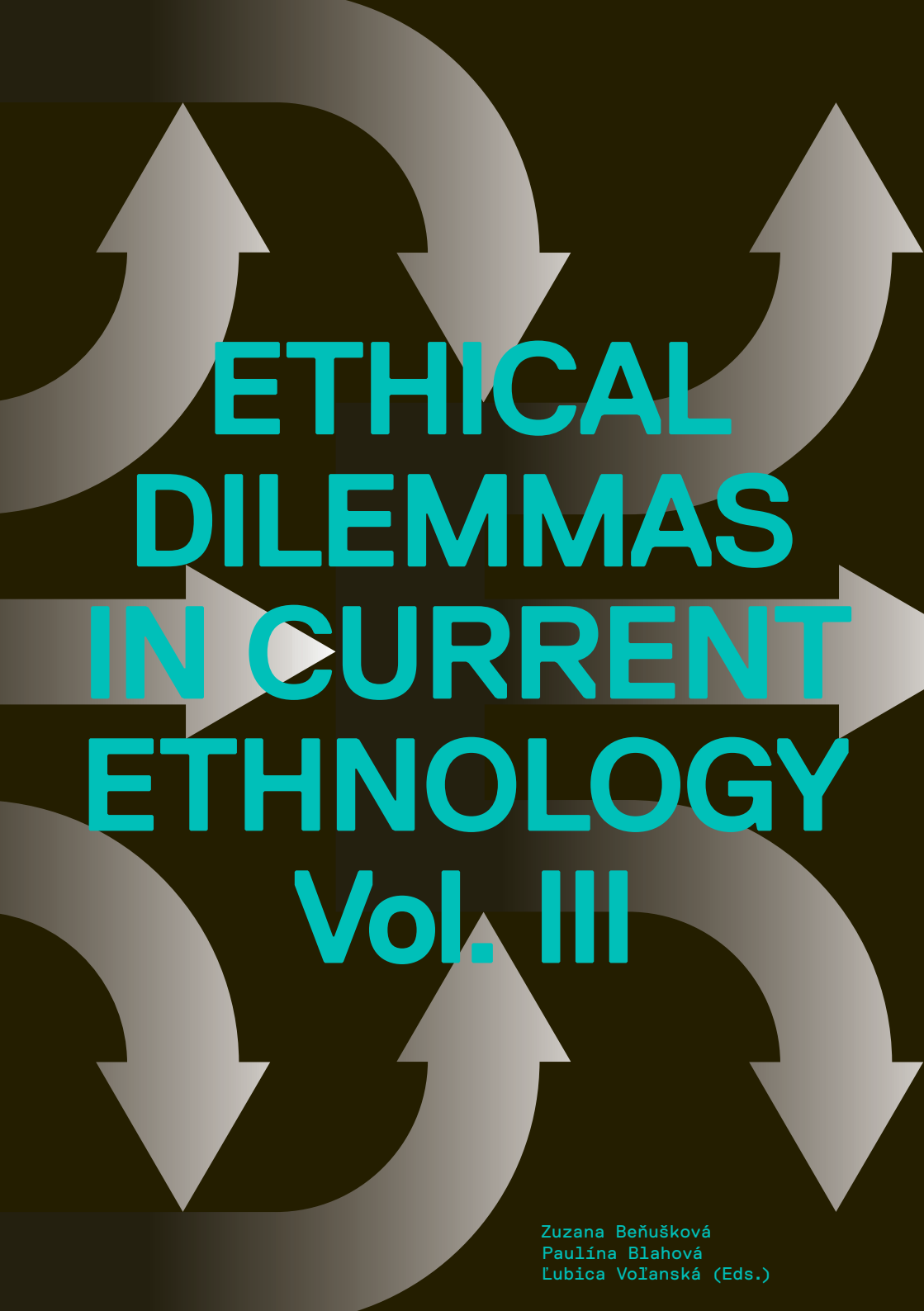




ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN CURRENT ETHNOLOGY Vol. III

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INTRODUCTION



Editors

Since 2024, the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences has been publishing the monothematic series *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology*, which has opened a reflective discussion on ethical approaches and unresolved questions encountered by both early-career and experienced researchers. The launch of the series aligns with one of the Institute's strategic priorities: to systematically address the challenges associated with the ethical collection, storage, and communication of data generated within individual disciplines, particularly those based on qualitative research methods. The series emerged in response to increasingly frequent ethical dilemmas related to research content and processes, especially in doctoral dissertations produced by the Institute's PhD students. By selecting innovative and often sensitive research topics, doctoral researchers have increasingly pushed the boundaries of knowledge into areas requiring new methodological approaches and heightened ethical sensitivity. In this context, they have sought guidance from the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, which addresses ethical issues arising throughout the entire research process—from the selection of research topics to the consequences of processing and publishing research findings. Established in 2019, the Committee's activities are primarily guided by the Code of Ethics of the Ethnographic Society of Slovakia, the Code of Ethics of the Slovak Association of Social Anthropologists, the Code of Ethics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and other fundamental standards of ethical conduct applicable at Slovak Academy of Sciences institutes.¹

¹ For more details, see <https://uesa.sav.sk/en/organizational-structure/ethical-board/>

To date, the series comprises two volumes containing four studies each that reflect on ethical dilemmas in social science research. Their authors are primarily PhD students of the Institute, although senior researchers have also contributed, enriching the discussion with insights drawn from many years of research experience and engagement in the international academic environment. The publication *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology: Volume I* edited by Miroslava Kinczer and Tatiana Zachar Podolinská (Kinczer & Zachar Podolinská, 2024) deliberately addresses thematically diverse areas of research. Nevertheless, all chapters share a common editorial intention: to highlight the pitfalls and various dimensions of research ethics encountered during preparations for fieldwork and data collection. In this volume, informed consent emerged as a common ethical challenge and a fundamental requirement emphasised in ethnographic codes of ethics. The individual contributions examine research in healthcare settings within marginalised communities (Cichová, 2024), research conducted in residential homes for older adults (Kinczer, 2024), studies of online groups and communities refusing vaccination (Slivková, 2024²), and negotiations of orthodoxy in local narratives contrasting popular religiosity with church doctrine in post-communist Belarus (Serdziuk, 2024).

In 2025, *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology: Volume II* edited by Elena Marushiakova and Iveta Štefanovičová was published (Marushiakova & Štefanovičová, 2025), further developing the discussion of ethical approaches to field research through four additional contributions. This time, E. Marushiakova joined the PhD students, drawing on her extensive experience of

² The results of Slivková's dissertation were published in 2025 (Slivková, 2025).

international research on Roma communities. Volume II builds upon the discussions initiated in Volume I by presenting articles and methodological approaches from various areas of the social sciences, extending beyond the boundaries of narrowly defined ethnological and anthropological research. The authors offer readers innovative and contextually grounded solutions that elaborate upon and, in some cases, go beyond recommended ethical standards. Thematically, the contributions focus on the biographies of contemporary practising astrologers based on a Russian-speaking sample of respondents (Farafonov, 2025), the ethical implications of incorporating visual participatory methods into gender identity research (Ondrejka, 2025), and the values and political orientations of Slovak non-believers in online environments (Štefanovičová, 2025). E. Marushiakova contributes a personal reflection on her ethnographic and historical research in Romani studies conducted during two distinct historical periods—the communist era and the present day—and across two culturally and historically different academic contexts: Eastern Europe (former Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria) and Western Europe (Germany and the United Kingdom). She also draws attention to the institutional and political dimensions of power, particularly the question of who possesses the legitimacy to speak about different communities.

Both volumes were edited by a tandem consisting of a senior and a junior editor, reflecting an intergenerational model of collaboration in which doctoral students are actively trained in editorial processes.

The opening of ethical questions in research revealed several broader themes within the ethics of scientific inquiry, which subsequently formed the basis for a separate

authorial monograph. In 2024, Tatiana Zachar Podolinská published *Ethical Challenges in Ethnology and Anthropology: The Case of Slovakia (Late 20th and 21st Centuries)* (Zachar Podolinská, 2024). The monograph aims to introduce Slovak readers to the highly important and complex discussion surrounding ethical research design in the social sciences, including a concise historical overview of reflections on ethics and research integrity in ethnology and social anthropology during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with particular attention to Slovakia. The author explores the development of ethical approaches and standards in Anglophone and Central European ethnology and social anthropology—from the emergence of the first ethical principles and general codes of ethics to contemporary reflections on the need for the continuous negotiation of ethically sensitive solutions throughout the entire lifecycle of research involving data, research participants, communities, institutions, and researchers themselves. Particular attention is devoted to sensitive and widely discussed cases in Romani studies in Slovakia during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. All these publications are available in open-access format and contain contributions in both English and Slovak.

Volume III likewise presents studies authored by PhD students that have emerged from reflections on their dissertation research. Three contributions address research involving stigmatised social groups and raise human rights issues, specifically in relation to the Roma minority (Ivanco, 2026; Mitrová, 2026) and individuals experiencing housing insecurity in commercial lodging facilities (Kováčsová, 2026). The studies of Ivanco and Kováčsová explore ethical dilemmas arising from researchers' multiple roles in the field, namely the transformation of an activist into

a researcher while studying Roma communities and the dual role of researcher and practitioner in the field of social housing. Paulína Blahová's study focuses on living heritage in the context of the nomination process for inscription on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. More specifically, it examines the extension of the existing transnational inscription of the element of Transhumance—the seasonal movement of livestock—to which the Slovak Republic has recently become a party. The author critically reflects upon the objectives and instrumentalisation associated with the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Blahová, 2026).

The authors approach the ethical dilemmas from different positions and at different stages of their research. Some contributions are more personal and reflexive, while others rely more extensively on scholarly literature; similarly, the extent to which the authors draw on examples from their own fieldwork varies. This diversity also reflects the realities of doctoral research. At the beginning of their studies, researchers may not yet have accumulated sufficient field experience and therefore necessarily engage more closely with theoretical and methodological debates. At the same time, all the studies concern highly sensitive fields, although sensitivity takes different forms in each case. Several contributions—particularly those by Laura Kováčsová and Štefan Ivanco, but also by Paulína Blahová—can be situated within the framework of engaged anthropology, as they seek not only to analyse existing conditions but also to contribute to changes in approaches, practices, and policies at different levels. Such efforts inevitably involve a wide range of actors and raise questions concerning their respective interests, responsibilities, and authority.

Across the volume, the authors also explore different forms and degrees of empowerment, as well as diverse ways of involving researched individuals and communities in the research process—from consultation and the articulation of their perspectives to more active participation in knowledge production and in decisions concerning the use and representation of research findings.

In addition to the four PhD students, Tatiana Zachar Podolinská has contributed a study focusing on the ethics of the final stage of the research process—the dissemination of knowledge through scholarly publication. She examines ethical issues related to the reporting of institutional affiliations in scientific outputs. The article is inspired by experiences from publishing practice that reveal ethically questionable tendencies among some authors and institutions to artificially inflate their publication records by reporting the same works multiple times under different institutional affiliations and without prior agreement from institutional leadership. The distinction between ethical and unethical conduct in this area has become increasingly refined at both national and international levels in response to the commodification of scholarly publishing and its influence on the strategies of scientific institutions. The chapter is intended to stimulate discussion among the wider scholarly community (Zachar Podolinská, 2026).

The publication outputs discussed above, including the present volume, demonstrate that ethics in social science research—and particularly in disciplines that work with individuals, communities, and institutions through qualitative methods—continues to generate new questions and challenges. These challenges arise from changing researcher positionalities, transformations in technological environments, and broader global political developments.

They call for continuous reflection, sensitive negotiation of ethical frameworks, the search for context-specific solutions, and methodological innovation aimed at conducting meaningful and practically applicable research that respects the dignity, rights, and well-being of research participants.

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I. WHOSE VOICE COUNTS? Negotiating Ethics, Knowledge, and Authority in Living Heritage Governance

Paulína
Blahová

1. Introduction

Before turning to the ethical dilemmas that I encounter as an early-career researcher in my dissertation project, I must first consider the subject of my research and the conditions under which it operates. Understanding this framework is essential for identifying where tensions and ethical dilemmas emerge in practice. The research I introduce in this chapter concerns UNESCO, an organisation globally recognised as a pioneering actor in fostering ethical and democratic principles and as a primary example of the protection of human rights and the establishment of standards for working with human and non-human actors, including technologies. Each UNESCO sector operates with established standards and conventions specific to its field. Within the field of culture, UNESCO has developed a series of conventions, including those concerning the protection of cultural property (the 1954 Hague Convention), the prevention of illicit trafficking (the 1970 Convention), the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage (1972), underwater heritage (2001), and the diversity of cultural expressions (2005). The 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* was a direct response to the demands raised by experts and communities that, rather than material heritage, possess an abundance of living traditions, practices, and expressions in need of safeguarding for future generations. Instruments for promoting and documenting cultural expressions had been developed over time (the 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, the 1997 *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, the 1994 *Living Human Treasures programme*, and the 2001 UNESCO *Universal Declaration*

on Cultural Diversity)). However, it was only with the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* that a set of international, comprehensive definitions and norms was introduced (Arantes, 2019). These norms further define heritage by establishing ethical principles that guide the identification, representation, and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in practice. In doing so, the Convention recognises only those expressions consistent with human rights and therefore presents safeguarding as an inclusive act that contributes to national and global peace (UNESCO, 2024a).

Even with highly regarded ethical principles, challenges may arise in practice when working with living heritage. UNESCO's ethical intentions often clash with bureaucratic barriers or fixed interpretations of otherwise dynamic practices (Petrillo, 2025; Schreiber, 2025; Bakka, 2015).

When dealing with knowledge and its transmission, specific questions arise regarding essentialisation, representation, and power hierarchies among the various actors involved in heritage processes. Therefore, in my research design and methodology, it is important for me to reflect on the operational documents and ethical principles incorporated into UNESCO's frameworks for safeguarding ICH.

UNESCO (2015) has established the *Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which represent a set of good practices for governments and organisations; however, these are only recommendations, and countries are not held accountable for them under either international or national law. The principles emphasise respect for communities in defining and safeguarding their own living heritage, as well as recognition of the dynamic and living character of each element. They further warn against any external judgement or assessment of value, as only

communities should determine what they deem important to their identity (UNESCO, 2015). Such ethical considerations become especially evident in cases where multiple actors participate in heritage processes, each bringing their own motivations and expectations regarding the outcome.

Within the framework of the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, ethical principles are operationalised through a set of institutional mechanisms that identify, recognise, promote, and safeguard ICH at both international and national levels (Petrillo, 2025). The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is the most extensive and visible of these instruments, serving as the primary register of inscribed elements (Voľanská, 2019; Voľanská, 2025).

The inscription of an element on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is a complex process that requires several steps over a number of years, including prior inscription in the State Party's own inventory of ICH and the preparation of a complete nomination file with the written consents of the community. The nomination is then submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat of the 2003 Convention, where it undergoes a technical check and is subsequently evaluated by the Evaluation Body against the Convention's criteria before a final decision on inscription is taken by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2024; Voľanská, 2019; Voľanská, 2025).

My research specifically concerns the inscription of *Transhumance, the seasonal movement of livestock*, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. *Transhumance* spans multiple regions, from the Carpathian Arc through the Southeastern Balkans to

the Iberian Peninsula. It involves not only the pastoralists themselves but also the cultural community that has evolved around the element, including craftspeople, musicians, ethnographers, and enthusiasts. It also concerns farmers, agricultural professionals, and environmentalists. Moreover, it involves non-human actors and is deeply connected to the natural environment, raising further questions about multispecies ethics within heritage governance.

I have intentionally chosen the pastoral community in Slovakia because the ongoing nomination process offers a rare opportunity to observe heritage-making in real time. Since 2024, I have been able to participate in meetings of relevant stakeholders—from local cultural events and nomination working group meetings to international assemblies involving all countries participating in the nomination—and to gain access to both online and offline communication related to the inscription process.

Although the research is grounded in the case of Transhumance, its focus is not on the heritage element itself but on the framework under which it is recognised as part of intangible cultural heritage. Transhumance serves as a lens through which to examine how diverse actors participate in inscription processes and how their knowledge, values, interests, and concerns are recognised, negotiated, or marginalised within transnational governance structures. While I focus on the case of Slovakia, the questions I encounter are equally relevant to other communities engaged in heritage governance processes.

The tension between institutional narratives and community understandings is further explained by Laurajane Smith's (2026) concept of the authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), which highlights how heritage is shaped by dominant, Western institutional narratives that privilege

expert knowledge, formalised categories, and state-led processes (2006). Although the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* appears to shift authority to communities, it continues to operate through frameworks that require specialised knowledge of heritage governance as well as standardised forms and language. In the context of my research, this raises questions about whose knowledge is recognised as legitimate and how pastoral practices are translated into UNESCO ICH frameworks. From the perspective of Smith's concept of AHD, the inscription process may reinforce existing hierarchies when local, practice-based knowledge is required to conform to bureaucratic expectations.

Besides the unequal power hierarchies and the recognition of knowledge, the question of community is equally critical in heritage governance. The 2003 Convention emphasises community participation but fails to clearly define it. Christopher Brumann (2013) argues that communities within UNESCO frameworks are often treated as internally coherent and unified groups, even though they are composed of actors with diverse interests, motivations, and varying levels of influence. The diversity of the community, which is informal and geographically dispersed, is also evident in the case of Transhumance. This group not only includes pastoralists themselves but also the experts who prepared and coordinated the nomination. Drawing on their long-term ethnographic fieldwork, experience in project coordination, and established relationships with practising communities, these actors often regard themselves as legitimate representatives capable of identifying and articulating what they consider to be the defining characteristics of the heritage elements. While recognising their expertise in researching inclusive participation in the

nomination process, it is highly important that my ethical design critically examines how authority is distributed and how certain voices are prioritised, mediated, or excluded within processes of representation.

2. UNESCO ICH Ethical Principles

Building on these questions of representation and community, the 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives consider the active participation of communities in safeguarding their own cultural heritage to be essential. Free, prior, and informed consent lies at the heart of the Convention (UNESCO, 2022). According to the 2003 Convention, no element can be inscribed without the approval of the practising community or the individual concerned. To be inscribed on the Representative List, an element must be recognised by communities as part of their cultural heritage, be transmitted across generations, be constantly recreated, and provide them with a sense of identity and continuity (UNESCO, 2024a). In this sense, the 2003 Convention presents itself as a democratic framework that places responsibility for identifying heritage elements in the hands of communities themselves.

Communities are equally central to the *Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage* adopted by UNESCO in 2015. The document presents a set of aspirational instruments that serve as guidelines for institutional bodies and governments working with living heritage. These principles are closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which promote equality, justice, peace and partnerships, as well as climate action and responsible production, among other objectives. These are not legally binding obligations but rather soft-law

principles intended to serve as a basis for the development of specific regional and sectoral ethical codes.

At the centre of the Ethical Principles is the recognition that communities, groups, and, where applicable, individuals have the primary role in safeguarding their own intangible cultural heritage (1). The document further recognises the right of these groups to continue the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills necessary to ensure the viability of the element (2). It also emphasises mutual respect, as well as the mutual appreciation of intangible cultural heritage among States and communities themselves (3).

All interactions should be guided through transparent collaboration, dialogue, negotiation, and consultation, and should be based on the community's free, prior, sustained, and informed consent (4). The principles also recognise that safeguarding is inseparable from access to the instruments, objects, artefacts, cultural and natural spaces, and places of memory necessary for the expression of heritage, including in situations of armed conflict. Practising communities should be granted such access even where this may limit broader public access (5).

In addition, communities, groups, or individuals should determine the value of their own heritage, and that value should not be subject to external judgements of worth (6). Another important principle concerns the moral and material interests of communities, namely that bearers should benefit from the protection of their heritage, as well as from its use, research, documentation, promotion, or adaptation (7).

The dynamic and living nature of heritage must be continuously respected, and ideas of authenticity or exclusivity should not become obstacles to safeguarding (8).

The short- and long-term impacts of any action that may affect the viability of heritage or the communities that practise it should be carefully assessed (9). Communities themselves should play a significant role in identifying threats such as decontextualisation, commodification, and misrepresentation, and in deciding how to prevent or mitigate them (10).

The principles also insist on respecting cultural diversity and, with sensitivity to communities' values and cultural norms, call for specific attention to gender equality, youth involvement, and respect for ethnic identities in the design and implementation of safeguarding measures (11). Finally, while safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is considered to be of general interest to humanity and should be supported through international cooperation, communities should never be alienated from their own intangible cultural heritage (12).

While the principles provide a coherent ethical framework, their implementation depends largely on national institutions and nomination practices. This is met with criticism from experts on ICH as well as regional actors working with communities. Pier Luigi Petrillo, UNESCO Chair Professor of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Comparative Law, argues for stronger legal enforcement to bridge the gap between aspirational ethical principles and practice (2025). He emphasises that “given its elusive nature, protection (of ICH) passes through the protection of cultural rights and identity rights” (Petrillo, 2025, p. 64). Hannah Schreiber, a UNESCO expert in Poland, draws on a case in which bureaucracy undermines the community's authority despite ethical guidelines. She notes the weak integration of principles such as transparency and limited community involvement in inventory processes, resulting in top-down control. According to Schreiber, this is due to the rather

normative nature of ethical principles, which do not always translate into a localised context (2025). As Kumínková et al. (2025) further argue, consensus in living heritage governance is invoked across multiple levels, yet real outcomes vary and often fail to address all interests without robust, informed community consent. Due to the diverse number of actors, consensus at the state and local levels is more akin to majority rule, whereas at the evaluation level, it is more often an absence of objection (2025).

Community participation is further assessed through the Evaluation Body of the Convention's evaluation of nomination files. In this context, the Evaluation Body often refers to Convention criterion R.4, according to which the nominated element has to “follow the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned, and with their free, prior and informed consent” (UNESCO, 2024b). Yet the Evaluation Body consistently warns that, although consent is formally documented, nominations often lack detail on how communities were involved in the nomination file or the decision-making process (UNESCO, 2018; UNESCO, 2019; UNESCO, 2021b; UNESCO, 2022).

In response to the implementation gaps of the 2003 Convention, UNESCO also introduced monitoring mechanisms such as the *Overall Results Framework*. While the Ethical Principles set overarching standards, the *Overall Results Framework* is used to measure and analyse the impact of ICH policies on governments and communities and includes clear objectives, timeframes, indicators, and benchmarks (Schnüttgen, 2025). This is translated into periodic national-level reports regularly prepared by each participating State, reflecting on community participation, increased awareness, and capacity building.

What I find particularly relevant in the case of *Transhumance* and what needs to be reflected in my ethical design is the 2003 Convention's attention to participation. While participation in the nomination for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovakia involves broad community inclusion, it is technically impossible to engage the community equally in the multinational nomination. I therefore do not assume that inclusive participation has taken place; rather, I examine how participation is produced, negotiated, and experienced in practice, as well as the conditions under which it becomes limited. During my fieldwork, I pay particular attention to who is invited to participate in discussions, who remains absent, who is positioned to speak on behalf of others, and how decisions are communicated back to the broader community.

3. Epistemic Justice and Knowledge Hierarchies

While the above-introduced UNESCO frameworks emphasise participation, participation itself does not guarantee epistemic equality, and the question of whose knowledge is recognised within heritage governance persists. Even when the practising community is present during meetings, this does not necessarily mean their perspective shapes decisions or is incorporated into official heritage narratives. While communities may be formally consulted, their knowledge could still be ignored, translated, or simplified. To allow communities, groups, and individuals to safeguard their own living heritage, ethical participation is required, and therefore, attention must be paid to how various actors articulate what they deem important and culturally significant, as well as how their voices are incorporated into the nomination process.

In my research, attention to epistemic justice is an important part of ethical design. To examine how knowledge is recognised, interpreted, and represented within the *Transhumance* inscription process, I use the theoretical lens of epistemic injustice, a concept first coined by Miranda Fricker (2007).

Fricker's work identifies and analyses a previously under-recognised form of injustice that occurs specifically in our capacity as knowers. She argues that social power and identity shape epistemic practices, and that the ethical and political dimensions of knowledge, understanding, and communication are central to determining whose voices are heard and recognised. This negotiation process is constantly present within heritage governance. Fricker points out how knowledge production is influenced by power relations that shape what counts as legitimate knowledge. She identifies two forms of epistemic injustice that systematically disadvantage individuals or groups as knowers—testimonial and hermeneutical.

Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a listener to assign less credibility to a speaker's words and is often associated with racial, gender, or social prejudice (Fricker, 2007, p. 7). Here, she uses an example of prejudice against African Americans within the law enforcement system. The lack of credibility given to an individual is not random but structural, due to stereotypes that shape their perceived capacity to convey knowledge. According to Fricker, the solution lies in actively monitoring our inherent prejudices (p. 95).

Hermeneutical injustice occurs when gaps in collective interpretive resources disadvantage individuals or groups in making sense of and communicating their experiences (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). It occurs when dominant social groups

have greater influence over the concepts and interpretive frameworks used to make sense of social reality. She points out the case of sexual harassment where women historically lacked the resources to systematically call out workplace abuse. A primary hermeneutical injustice occurs when a subject cannot interpret their own experience, and a secondary one when one struggles to communicate it to others. Fricker illustrates the latter case through postpartum depression, when affected women could examine their distressed state yet could not find a concept to communicate it until its later medical recognition. In both cases, marginalised groups could not contribute to collective resources due to exclusion. To overcome hermeneutical injustice, the dominant majority should facilitate access through dialogue.

Fricker further adds that in knowledge creation shaped by power, legitimacy is gained only through social negotiation (2007, p. 132). Credibility gaps and missing interpretive tools deepen inequalities and silence minorities. Epistemic justice is achieved only through “giving due credit to others’ rationality and intellect” (Fricker, 2007, p. 94). This calls for institutional redesign and deliberation on our own unconscious biases.

Fricker’s concept of epistemic injustice can also be very useful for analysing the governance of living heritage, where the participation of communities in the inscription process does not automatically guarantee equal recognition of their knowledge. While, within the *UNESCO Ethical Principles for Safeguarding ICH*, communities may be formally acknowledged as central actors, their voices could still be marginalised in documentation, interpretation, or decision-making processes. Therefore, the ethical challenge is not that communities are not included, but rather whether they are treated as credible knowers of their own heritage. In the

particular case of Transhumance, I use epistemic injustice to examine how knowledge is negotiated within the UNESCO inscription process and how various stakeholders position themselves as legitimate knowledge holders.

Epistemic injustice was evident from the first days in my fieldwork, since I began my research midway through the nomination process. The initiative to join a multinational nomination of Transhumance came from active members of the pastoral community and relied on their practical experience and long-term knowledge of shepherding; however, from the early stages, the process also depended on the involvement of recognised authorities, including an ethnologist and a regional development representative. While their participation in the process has been seen as valuable by the community, it also illustrates that community knowledge often gains institutional legitimacy through mediation by experts already familiar with bureaucratic procedures. While pastoralists may have been recognised as bearers of tradition, they may not always serve as authorities capable of navigating heritage governance on their own.

Testimonial tension also appears in the way the initial drafting group for nominations to the Representative List of ICH of Slovakia was constructed. Due to time constraints, only those who initiated the nomination, along with several strong advocates of traditional shepherding, participated in the early deliberations. Certain actors were therefore positioned as legitimate speakers for a diverse shepherding community. Later, experts in sheep husbandry, who were initially not involved in the drafting process, criticised the nomination for not reflecting broader knowledge concerning biodiversity or animal welfare, suggesting that the experience of the drafting group could not fully represent the expertise relevant to the element.

Hermeneutical injustice occurs when lived pastoral knowledge is translated into institutional categories. A major issue in the Slovak case concerned terminology: whether the nomination should refer to a broader *shepherd culture in Slovakia* (*ovčiarska kultúra na Slovensku*) or to a narrower and more specific practice. During the assessment of proposals for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Slovakia, the Board of Experts considered the original title too broad and proposed the more precise term *Traditional Sheep Farming* (*tradičné ovčiarstvo*), which was additionally accepted by the drafting group. Titles of nominations are also limited by the 2003 Convention to 200 characters (UNESCO, n.d., Form ICH-02, sec. B.1). Even at the level of terminology, community understandings of pastoral life are negotiated and reformulated through expert knowledge to comply with the requirements of the nomination process.

Hermeneutical injustice, as described by Miranda Fricker, was also evident during my first months in the field, when I attended the filming of video documentation for the multinational nomination. Shepherds were invited to explain their motivations for continuing the practice together with the threats that might endanger it. While discussing wild animals, such as bears and wolves, threatening their flocks, one community member said that he was unable to carry a gun to protect himself and his sheep. This part was intentionally cut from the final video, even though it did not explicitly mention animal welfare. I discuss this topic in greater depth on this topic in the following section. The exclusion of this statement, however, demonstrates that certain elements of practice are difficult to articulate within the acceptable language of international heritage governance. It is therefore possible that some aspects of everyday life

that could be seen as problematic by the international community remain absent from the safeguarding narrative.

The state nomination documentation was directly transferred to the multinational file, and only a small working group remained to draft the final version, which was then submitted to the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Slovak Republic. This created limited opportunities for broader community involvement. The partial exclusion of the community could be reflected in the terminology of *transhumance*, a concept widely used within international heritage discourse but rarely used in everyday practice in Slovakia. Instead, the term *ovčiarstvo* (shepherding) is commonly used to describe the practice, encompassing both the management of the sheep flocks and the broader material culture, knowledge, and social life associated with pastoral communities (Podolák, 1982). Practitioners themselves tend to refer to seasonal movements through expressions tied to routes and destinations, reflecting diverse local understandings across the Carpathian region (UNESCO, n.d.). The nomination form limits the maximum number of characters in the title to 200, and each section of the nomination file has its own character limit. While the subcategories allow for the inclusion of other terminology used, the formal limitations of the nomination form may only partially reflect the complexity and vocabulary through which practitioners understand and describe their own practice.

In my research, epistemic injustice serves as both a methodological tool and a concept, and it also plays an important role in my ethical design. If inequalities are reproduced in heritage governance through unequal recognition of knowledge, research itself risks repeating

similar forms of exclusion. Because of this, I do not treat the community as informants who provide me with data about their practice, but as knowledge holders whose interpretations are essential to my understanding of the heritage process itself. Their perspectives on labour, animals, landscape, and authority should be approached equally as expertise.

This shapes the way I conduct fieldwork. I aim to analyse the plurality of voices within the pastoral community rather than relying only on the most visible representatives, cultural brokers, or institutional intermediaries.

I pay particular attention to who speaks confidently in formal settings, who remains silent, whose knowledge circulates informally, and whose perspectives may be absent from meetings and nomination documents. Instead of adhering to the terminology of the 2003 Convention, such as safeguarding, viability, or representativeness, the research pays particular attention to the words and distinctions used by the community.

Laurent Thévenot's concept of *orders of worth* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) further strengthens this ethical approach by showing how actors justify practices according to different systems of value. In the case of Transhumance, one actor may emphasise the cultural value of the element, another the value of biodiversity, while another may strive for economic survival or international awareness. The research therefore avoids privileging one regime of value in advance and examines how these competing interpretations are negotiated in practice.

4. More-Than-Human Ethics in Living Heritage

In the previous section, I have shown that ethical questions related to living heritage are often contextual, balancing the legal and social expectations of various actors.

However, within certain living practices, the question of ethics extends beyond the human itself, as they depend largely on landscapes, animals, and ecological cycles. Transhumance includes not only pastoral animals (sheep, cattle, horses) but also the animals that protect them (dogs) and those who potentially endanger them (bears, wolves). Any change to the landscape, whether due to human or environmental action, directly affects the routes and spaces around which the practice evolves.

The Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention recognise the connection of intangible cultural heritage with environmental sustainability, yet the framework remains largely anthropocentric. The Directives mention conserving and protecting “those natural spaces whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2024b, para. 189(c)(ii)). Additionally, paragraph 190 acknowledges environmental impacts arising from the possible intensification of heritage practices, creating a tension between safeguarding and sustainability. The Directives also identify pastoral knowledge and practices as relevant to food security, resilience, and agro-biodiversity (UNESCO, 2024b, para. 190). However, no further attention is given to the welfare of animals whose labour sustains these practices.

More-than-human agency is also missing from the Evaluation Body reports, which focus primarily on transmission, awareness-raising, and capacity-building among communities. If animals do appear in the reports, they are primarily mentioned in connection with environmental sustainability or as essential to the practice, but they are not further considered from an ethical perspective (UNESCO, 2015–2024).

Even in cases such as Truffle hunting and extraction in Italy, a traditional knowledge and practice in which dogs

are central, the Evaluation Body does not extend ethical considerations to non-human actors (UNESCO, 2021b). In its decision, however, the Intergovernmental Committee encourages the State Party to place further focus on animal welfare when implementing the safeguarding measures (UNESCO, 2021a).

During a meeting of European focal points for the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH in September 2025, Helena Drobna from UNESCO's Living Heritage Entity noted that animals had been discussed internationally for many years, yet she mentioned the difficulty of taking a position between ethical arguments and the needs of communities (ENFP-ICH, 2025). While human and intellectual rights are addressed directly, animal welfare has not been explicitly considered.

Yet there would be no transhumance to safeguard without animal agency. Animals are active participants in the practice itself. Seasonal mobility is organised around herds' needs and capacities to move, stop, and choose their routes. Weather and water availability further shape the conditions of the practice. Diseases and injuries, as well as the presence of predators, can alter routes or reduce herd sizes. Decisions made by pastoralists are therefore not autonomous from the herd—their presence structures the practice in both material and practical ways. Because transhumance is continually adjusted to more-than-human needs, from an ethical perspective, it is important to see animals as co-creators of the practice. From a post-humanist perspective, humans are not seen as the only centre of value, agency, or knowledge, but heritage can be understood as an interaction between both human and non-human actors (Haraway, 2003).

Furthermore, meadows are where pastoral knowledge, ecological processes, and sensory rhythms intersect (Panáková,

2025). They are considered places that are cared for through memory and skill, where intimate knowledge of these environments emerges from situated bodily experiences, such as smell, touch, or sound (Panáková, 2025). There are ways to document the bonds and non-verbal communication between the human and non-human worlds. Multispecies ethnography recognises animals and the environment as knowledge-bearing subjects, challenging anthropocentric hierarchies and inviting the documentation of these relationships through what David MacDougall (1998) describes as affectionate knowledge. Such knowledge refers to emotional and intuitive insights that develop through empathetic engagement with subjects. Even outside the context of the 2003 ICH Convention, scholars recognise animals and nature as active co-creators, dissolving boundaries between the natural and the cultural (Harrison, 2015). Integrating non-human agency into actor-centred heritage governance further expands epistemic perspectives and enables the inclusion of more intuitive, relational knowledge in heritage policies.

Besides the sheep or cattle themselves, a particularly clear example is shepherds' cooperation with dogs. Herding and guardian dogs are trained to organise and protect the pastoral movements. They guide flocks, detect danger, and respond to non-verbal commands. In many situations, dogs mediate between human control and animal behaviour, translating signals across species through learned routines and embodied interactions (Haraway, 2003). Even though pastoral practice would be difficult to sustain without them, their labour remains largely unacknowledged.

During my pre-fieldwork, the relationship between pastoralists and their dogs raised particular ethical dilemmas. I encountered situations in which dogs were kept chained for extended periods or appeared to be insufficiently

fed. I was aware of the essential role of these animals within the practice and the conditions under which these forms of care were developed. One such case became widely discussed in Slovakia following the theft of six guardian dogs from a sheep farm in Ľubietová in 2026. Public debate revealed contrasting views on the dogs' roles, welfare, and treatment. For shepherds, the dogs were highly trained working partners whose absence directly threatened the flock's protection and the viability of pastoral practice. On the other hand, external observers and people whom shepherds blamed for the theft might have perceived animal abuse and mistreatment. In this situation, I am required to be reflexive, acknowledging the situated realities of the communities and their socio-economic context, while remaining attentive to what these practices mean for the inclusion of animal welfare within heritage discourse.

5. Positionality and Reflexivity in the Field of Living Heritage

Given that the research is taking place during an ongoing heritage nomination process, rather than after its completion, it is particularly important for my research design to reflect my positionality. My presence in the field is not neutral, as I entered a phase of negotiations and relationships already unfolding among various stakeholders. It is also possible, as I discussed in my concept of epistemic injustice, that various actors may understand the purpose of my research differently. While members of the drafting group and experts in the field of heritage governance are aware of my scope of focus, it was evident during my pre-fieldwork that the community itself did not clearly distinguish between a journalist, a photographer, and an academic.

Reflexivity is therefore necessary not only in relation to my background but also in relation to how my presence may influence the field itself and how it might be interpreted by others. My research position changes across several environments. My access to meetings, documents, and formal discussions on the nomination, including those that took place in the past and are now recorded, is possible due to the relationship formed through my supervisor, Ľubica Voľanská, who was the Chair of the Board of Experts during the assessment of *Tradičné ovčiarstvo* (Traditional Sheep Farming) for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Slovakia in 2024 and is also an external collaborator for the Slovak Intangible Heritage Centre and part of the Slovak delegations for the UNESCO 2003 Convention intergovernmental meetings. I have to consider that accessing internal documents and communications during the nomination drafting period would be more challenging for an outsider, creating a knowledge asymmetry. In line with the *Etický kódex Slovenskej akadémie vied* (Code of Ethics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2023), this requires careful consideration of integrity, responsibility, and transparency in the use of such privileged access. When working with the documents and materials provided to me, I distinguish between publicly available information and internal documents, and avoid using or citing internal communications without explicit consent. The dual relationship in my PhD supervision requires constant dialogue between my supervisor and me, as well as awareness of Voľanská's position as an actor within my research.

At the same time, the research subject is a pastoral community with which I had no prior contact. The community is highly informal and geographically diverse, meaning that access to one group does not necessarily

extend to others. My limited prior knowledge of pastoral customs may function as both an advantage and a disadvantage in the field. It also raises the possibility of epistemic injustice within the community itself, particularly given my unfamiliarity with local narratives and everyday customs. As a researcher, I therefore occupy a position between institutional actors and practising communities, each with its own expectations, vocabularies, and understandings of what the nomination process should achieve. In accordance with the *Etický kódex Národopisnej spoločnosti Slovenska* (Code of Ethics of the Ethnographic Society of Slovakia, 2017), particular attention is given to respectful engagement, sensitivity to local contexts, and awareness of asymmetrical power relations in ethnographic research. In practice, this means that I gradually build relationships in the field and carefully communicate my research role. Especially in highly exposed communities, such as pastoralists who are often involved in media activities, it is important to state my research position clearly. I introduce the purpose of my research in accessible terms and remain attentive to how participants understand it, revisiting explanations as needed. I avoid assuming a collective understanding of knowledge and allow participants to define terms and practices in their own words, which is particularly valuable in my research on the terminology used within the practice. This approach allows me to engage with my research partners on their own terms while remaining reflexive about the limits of my understanding.

A further ethical challenge emerges from the possibility of unintentionally becoming an intermediary or knowledge broker. Given my observations of both institutional and community settings, some actors may expect me to explain one side to the other, share information, or clarify

misunderstandings. In line with the principles of professional integrity and non-intervention emphasised in SAV (2023) and NSS (2017), I do not take on any representative or advisory role within the nomination process and remain transparent about the limits of my position as a researcher.

Since the nomination is still in progress, it also raises questions about my influence on the research. Interviews and observations shape how my participants reflect on the process. Some may use the research to validate their own position, while others may fear criticism or exposure. I recognise that my presence can become part of the environment I study. I carefully assess the questions I ask and the ways in which disagreements are handled. Field notes are essential to my methodology, and reflexivity is treated as an ongoing practice that documents both participants' responses and my own uncertainties and interpretations. This approach aligns with the emphasis on responsibility, transparency, and critical self-reflection articulated in both SAV (2023) and NSS (2017).

In community interactions, I aim to use walk-along interviews and site-based conversations where possible. As described by Bibi and Ehgartner (2021), this approach involves mobile conversations through participants' environments, such as pastures and settlements, which shifts the dynamics of formal interviewing and allows participants to feel more at ease in their familiar surroundings. This methodology can also reduce some of the hierarchy that can be associated with formal seated interviews and allow for knowledge forms that are easier to demonstrate than to verbalise. I further use semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to collect data, compare how different actors describe the same processes, and identify where interpretations differ.

Being reflexive also concerns balancing my academic critique. Nominations to the Representative Lists of ICH are complex and require significant commitment from participants. In my dissertation project, it is important for me to analyse power relations, representation, and institutional processes without dismissing the efforts of those involved.

6. Community Sensitivity and Data Ethics

My research revolves around a relatively small pastoral network during an ongoing nomination process. Many actors involved in the nomination know one another personally or professionally. I cannot guarantee anonymity merely by removing names, as individual actors can still be recognised through their role in the nomination, their location, or their specific activities. I therefore need to approach confidentiality more broadly and carefully (SAV, 2023; NSS, 2017).

The actors' positions range from community members and local and institutional experts, enthusiasts, representatives, and public officials, some of whom are already publicly visible through meetings, nomination files, or institutional roles. However, not all information shared with me by these respondents is public. Even those who appear publicly may express doubts, criticism, or sensitive reflections that require protection (SAV, 2023). Information will be treated as public only when it is already formally documented and accessible (e.g., in official nomination files). Statements shared with me in interviews or informal settings will be treated as protected research material unless explicitly agreed upon with the research partner.

Anonymisation is treated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the type of research partner and the information shared. In some cases, names and identifying

details will be removed entirely. In others, the citations may require paraphrasing, omitting locations or generalising actors' positions. For example, referring not to a specific member of a nomination drafting group, but to a group itself. If the actors intentionally operate in public roles, they may be identified as such when referring to public actions. Throughout my dissertation, I aim to balance analytical value with the potential consequences for participants (SAV, 2023; NSS, 2017).

Another challenge concerns internal disagreements within communities and between actors. As shown in the previous chapters, the nomination process may involve tensions regarding terminology, representation, expertise, animal welfare, biodiversity, or the authority to speak on behalf of the community. Publishing disagreements without sensitivity could polarise or damage relationships in the field, where actors continue to collaborate beyond the research period. My aim is therefore not to expose conflict, but to understand what these disagreements reveal about the nomination process and to analyse tensions at a structural and systemic level rather than attributing them to specific individuals.

Consent will not be treated as a one-time event but as an ongoing process. As I have been present from the initial meetings, my research design has also evolved over time; therefore, it is important for me to consistently reintroduce the aims of my research to my research partners. Given my focus on epistemic injustice, it is essential that the actors clearly understand my position and scope of interest. I aim to remain open to revisiting consent throughout the research and clarifying how materials may be used in publications. In research involving multiple stakeholders and power asymmetries, ethical considerations are embedded in the research design itself and evolve together with it (Ondrejka, 2025).

Recordings of interviews, internal documents, field notes, and contact details are stored securely and accessed only for research purposes (SAV, 2023). Data protection and storage are particularly important in cases where identification risks remain high and require continuous attention to confidentiality and access control, with particular focus on the risks of misuse or unintended exposure of sensitive research data in small or vulnerable research settings (Ondrejka, 2025; Slivková, 2024).

7. Conclusion

My intention within this chapter on ethical dilemmas was to demonstrate that research on living heritage within the framework of the UNESCO 2003 Convention on ICH requires more than the application of standard ethics. Consent, confidentiality, secure data storage, and possible anonymisation are essential, but one must first understand the field of intangible heritage, its ethical norms, and its Operational Directives.

There is an evident gap between UNESCO's participatory ideals and the practical realities of heritage governance. The 2003 Convention, as well as its Ethical Principles for Safeguarding ICH, positions communities at its very centre, yet nomination processes also heavily depend on expert language, standardised formats, and criteria limitations. Within this framework, UNESCO as an institution influences how knowledge is articulated and represented. As a result, community perspectives may be translated or selectively fitted into institutional narratives. Participation does not automatically guarantee epistemic equality.

The concept of epistemic injustice is a useful tool for understanding the complex dynamics of heritage governance.

In the case of Transhumance, due to its vast network of actors, the nomination process is filtered through a drafting group that translates knowledge into institutional requirements. This raises questions about representation, the amplification of certain voices over others, and the possible exclusion of narratives. The ethical aim of the dissertation is therefore to remain reflexive about whose knowledge is recognised and how the research itself may amplify or silence particular voices.

This chapter further extends the ethical understanding of heritage beyond human actors. Animals, landscapes, as well as ecological rhythms are co-creators of transhumance, yet UNESCO frameworks remain largely anthropocentric. It highlights the importance of moving beyond viewing non-human actors as mediums through which living heritage is expressed and invites us to engage with animals and nature as equals in practice.

Furthermore, access to the ongoing nomination is subject to my own positionality. Being able to observe institutional settings and ongoing discussions creates both opportunities and responsibilities and requires transparency, careful communication, and ongoing consent.

In my case, ethics is not only a precondition of research but an integral part of how living heritage is created and operates.

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II. MEDZI VÝSKUMOM A PRAXOU: prekarita bývania v perspektíve duálnej pozície výskumníčky

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Úvod

Predkladaná štúdia sa venuje etickým otázkam skúmania bývania v kontexte bytovej núdze a mojej duálnej pozície výskumníčky a profesionálky pôsobiacej v oblasti bytovej politiky a sociálnych služieb. Jej ústredným argumentom je, že etické dilemy nevznikajú až pri aplikácii výskumných postupov, ale sú prítomné už v samotnom spôsobe, akým bytovú núdzu vymedzujeme, interpretujeme a sprostredkujeme. V mojom výskume komerčné ubytovne používam ako ohraničený terén, na ktorom sledujem, ako sa bytová prekarita prejavuje v každodennom živote a tiež do jej skúmania vstupuje pozícia výskumníčky prepojenej s praxou. Otázky zodpovednosti, pozicionality a hraníc medzi intervenciou a skúmaním tak nevystupujú ako doplnok výskumného dizajnu, ale ako jeho integrálna súčasť.

Súčasná diskusia o bývaní sa čoraz častejšie odohráva v rámci tzv. polykríz, teda súbehu ekonomických, environmentálnych a sociálnych otrasov, ktoré zásadne pretvárajú podmienky každodenného života (Tooze, 2022). V kontexte krízy bývania sa bývanie prestáva javiť ako stabilná infraštruktúra a čoraz častejšie predstavuje zdroj neistoty. Nejde pritom len o problém dostupnosti, ale aj o širšie štrukturálne procesy, ako sú financionalizácia bývania, deregulácia nájomného trhu, oslabovanie verejných foriem bývania a rastúca segmentácia bytového trhu. Tieto procesy zároveň menia vzťah medzi bývaním, bezpečím a možnosťou viesť dôstojný život. Aj preto sa otázky bývania nevyhnutne presúvajú do roviny etiky, ako súčasti samotného skúmania. Táto kapitola vychádza z mojej skúsenosti s vyjednávaním duálnej pozície a nesnaží sa ponúknuť univerzálne odpovede, ale ukázať, ako sa etické dilemy formujú v konkrétnych situáciách, vzťahoch a rozhodnutiach.

Medzi opisom a intervenciou – výskum bývania ako etický problém

Diskusie o bývaní sa často sústreďujú na otázky dostupnosti a spravodlivého prerozdelenia zdrojov. Menej pozornosti sa však venuje tomu, že etický rozmer bývania sa neviaže len na tieto normatívne otázky, ale aj na samotný spôsob, akým o bývaní premýšľame, ako ho skúmame a aké poznanie o ňom produkujeme. Ako upozorňuje interdisciplinárna vedkyňa Farhana Sultana (2007), poznanie v sociálnych vedách je situované a vzniká v konkrétnych mocenských a inštitucionálnych kontextoch. Výskum bývania preto nemožno chápať ako neutrálne zrkadlenie reality, ale skôr ako formu intervencie do sveta, ktorý zároveň interpretuje, kategorizuje a miestami aj reguluje. Otázka, čo skúmame, sa tak neoddeliteľne spája s otázkou, ako, prečo a v koho záujme to robíme.

V európskom kontexte sa kríza bývania často spája s procesmi financionalizácie (napr. Aalbers, 2016), deregulácie a postupného oslabovania verejných foriem bývania. Bývanie sa tým mení z verejnej infraštruktúry na investičné aktívum, čo zásadne mení nielen jeho ekonomickú funkciu, ale aj jeho sociálny význam. Stabilné bývanie sa prestáva javiť ako samozrejмый rámec každodenného života a stáva sa podmieneným zdrojom, ku ktorému majú rôzne skupiny obyvateľstva nerovný prístup. V niektorých krajinách nadobudol tento vývoj špecifickú podobu, keďže transformácia po roku 1989 viedla k masívnej privatizácii bytového fondu a k oslabeniu verejného nájomného sektora (Lux & Sunega, 2014). Slovensko má dlhodobo podiel vlastníckeho bývania presahujúci 90 % (Eurostat, 2025), čo zároveň štrukturálne obmedzuje dostupnosť nájomného bývania a prehlbuje nerovnosti v prístupe k bývaniu.

S rastúcimi cenami bývania sa zvyšujú aj náklady na prenájom, čo pre zraniteľné domácnosti znamená kumuláciu znevýhodnenia a zvýšené riziko diskriminácie na trhu s bývaním (Platforma pro sociální bydlení, 2025). Dôsledkom krízy bývania nie je len rast cien, ale aj fragmentácia foriem bývania, ktoré sa čoraz častejšie vymykajú tradičným kategóriám. Bytová núdza tak zahŕňa spektrum medzistavov od pouličného bezdomovectva a preplnených domácností až po rôzne formy neistého a dočasného bývania. Práve tieto rôzne medzipohy ukazujú potrebu širšieho chápania bytovej prekarity. Prekaritu bývania tak nemožno chápať ako individuálne zlyhanie ani ako výnimočnú situáciu, ale ako výsledok konkrétnych politických a inštitucionálnych usporiadaní, v ktorých sa neistota stáva skôr normou než výnimkou (Dotsey & Chiodelli, 2021). V kontexte krízy bývania sa ukazuje, že otázka bývania nie je len otázkou trhu, ale aj otázkou morálnej a politickej predstavivosti: koho bývanie považujeme za legitímny verejný problém a koho neistotu sme ochotní ponechať na individuálnu zodpovednosť?

Ľudia v neistých formách bývania sú v neoliberálnych naratívoch často konštruovaní ako tí, ktorí „nezvládli“ vlastnú životnú situáciu, či už v oblasti práce, finančného hospodárenia alebo osobných rozhodnutí. V extrémnejších podobách sa moralizujúce a individualizujúce predstavy približujú k historicky zaťaženej kategórii lumpenproletariátu, ktorá spája chudobu s morálnym deficitom a sociálnou nehodnotnosťou. Ako upozorňuje historik Michael B. Katz (2013), kategórie chudoby a marginality sú morálne zaťažené a slúžia na rozlišovanie medzi „zaslúžilými“ a „nezaslúžilými“ chudobnými, čím legitimizujú rôzne formy sociálnej kontroly a vylúčenia. Tento moralizujúci rámec nepôsobí len na úrovni verejnej rétoriky, ale preniká aj do inštitucionálnych

prístupov a každodenných interakcií. Spôsob, akým je bytová núdza interpretovaná, zásadne ovplyvňuje aj to, aké riešenia sa javia ako legitímne. Ak je chápaná primárne ako individuálne zlyhanie, systémové intervencie sa môžu javiť ako menej opodstatnené alebo dokonca ako neoprávnené „odmeňovanie“ nesprávneho správania. Aj vo výskumnom procese sa ukazuje, že hranica medzi štrukturálnym vysvetlením a individuálnou zodpovednosťou nie je jednoznačná. Ako vo svojej etnografickej práci ukazuje antropológ Philippe Bourgois (2003), marginalita nie je len ekonomickou alebo priestorovou pozíciou, ale aj morálne zaťaženu kategóriou, prostredníctvom ktorej sú určité skupiny obyvateľstva posudzované ako zlyhávajúce, problematické, ba až nehodné pomoci či podpory. Moralizácia chudoby tak nefunguje len ako jazykový rámec, ale aj ako mechanizmus, ktorý legitimizuje sociálny odstup, disciplináciu a obmedzenú solidaritu.

Práve v moralizujúcom napätí sa otvára ďalšia rovina etickej reflexie: ako hovoriť o prekarite spôsobom, ktorý neindividualizuje vinu, no zároveň úplne nepopiera agentivitu aktérov?

V prípade môjho výskumu je to prostredníctvom špecifickej pozície, ktorú mám. Popri doktorandskom štúdiu totiž dlhodobo pôsobím v oblasti bytovej politiky a podieľam sa na tvorbe i implementácii nástrojov dostupného bývania na komunálnej úrovni. Dvojitá pozicionalita medzi výskumom a praxou otvára špecifické možnosti prístupu k poznaniu, no zároveň generuje nové etické dilemy. Výskum totiž nevzniká mimo systému, ale priamo v jeho rámci, a preto je otázne, do akej miery je možné alebo vôbec žiaduce tieto aspekty od seba striktne oddeliť. Vynára sa preto otázka, ako tieto formy bývania opísať, ale aj ako o nich hovoriť spôsobom, ktorý je eticky adekvátny a zreflektovaný.

Kontúry bytovej neistoty na Slovensku

Na Slovensku je ohrozených chudobou alebo sociálnym vylúčením viac než 980-tisíc ľudí, čo predstavuje 18,3 % populácie (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 2025). Podľa týchto údajov je chudobou ohrozený približne každý šiesty človek, pričom ich počet medziročne narastá – len za posledný rok o 37-tisíc osôb. Medzi najzraniteľnejšie skupiny patria najmä osamelo žijúce seniorky, jednorodičovské domácnosti a rodiny s tromi a viac deťmi, pričom ako hlavný dôvod sa opakovane uvádza nízky príjem domácnosti (Eurostat, 2025b).

Výskum organizácie Amnesty International Slovensko zároveň poukazuje na pretrvávajúce bariéry v prístupe k bývaniu, ktoré sú často posilnené diskrimináciou, rasizmom a inštitucionálnymi zlyhaniami (Amnesty International Slovensko, 2024). Tieto problémy sú úzko prepojené aj so štruktúrou bytového fondu: podiel vlastníckeho bývania na Slovensku prevyšuje 90 %, zatiaľ čo verejné nájomné bývanie predstavuje menej než 3 % (Eurostat, 2025a). V európskom kontexte ide o výraznú výnimku, keďže podiel obecného bytového fondu sa pohybuje približne medzi 19 % a 62 % (Eurostat, 2025). Ilustratívny je aj príklad Bratislavy, kde sa podľa Sčítania obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2021 (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 2023) nachádzalo 248 199 bytov, z toho len 1 808 nájomných, čo nepredstavuje ani jedno percento obecného bytového fondu. Napriek vysokému podielu vlastníckeho bývania tak mnohé domácnosti čelia preplneným podmienkam, minimálnej dostupnosti sociálneho nájomného bývania a nedostatku cenovo dostupných alternatív. Podľa údajov EU-SILC žije takmer tretina populácie v preplnených obydliach, čo je takmer dvojnásobok priemeru EÚ. Mestská chudoba pritom v slovenskom kontexte zostáva nedostatočne preskúmaným fenoménom a najčastejšie sa objavuje v súvislosti s otázkami priestorovej segregácie (Gerbery & Džambazovič, 2017).

Popri zjavnom bezdomovectve, ktoré predstavuje najviditeľnejšiu a najextrémnejšiu podobu sociálneho vylúčenia, si v urbánnom prostredí zasluhujú pozornosť aj menej viditeľné formy bytovej núdze, najmä prekérne bývanie. Ako upozorňuje analytický komentár Inštitútu pre výskum práce a rodiny (IVPR), pozornosť sa často sústreďuje na dlhodobé pouličné bezdomovectvo, zatiaľ čo významnú skupinu tvoria osoby zažívajúce epizodické, dočasné či opakovane sa vyskytujúce bezdomovectvo (Ondrušová, 2020). V rámci európskej typológie ETHOS ide napríklad o ľudí bývajúcich dočasne u známych alebo o osoby po odchode z inštitucionálnej starostlivosti, ktoré sa nemajú kam vrátiť. Ide teda o situácie neistého bývania bez zmluvy či iného právneho nároku na užívanie obydli. V slovenskom kontexte do tejto kategórie patrí aj bývanie v komerčných ubytovniach, ktoré sa vyznačuje absenciou právnej ochrany, nevyhovujúcimi podmienkami a obmedzeným súkromím (Ondrušová, 2020). Na rozdiel od zariadení sociálnych služieb tieto formy bývania nepodliehajú systematickej regulácii, ani nie sú prepojené so sociálnou podporou. V Českej republike sú pritom ubytovne často viazané na dávkový systém a vnímané ako núdzové až problematické riešenie bezdomovectva (Walach et al., 2023; Kubala et al., 2023).

Rozsah epizodického bezdomovectva na Slovensku nie je presne známy a dostupné údaje sú len čiastkové. Podľa Sčítania obyvateľov, domov a bytov z roku 2021 žije 71 076 ľudí v neistom alebo nestabilnom bývaní, čo predstavuje 1,3 % populácie, pričom toto číslo nezahrňa osoby v pouličnom bezdomovectve. Celkový rozsah bytovej núdze je preto pravdepodobne vyšší. Táto situácia odráža dlhodobý deficit nástrojov verejnej politiky, ktoré by dokázali reagovať na rôzne formy bytovej núdze od obmedzenej ponuky nájomného bývania cez absenciu mechanizmov zmierňujúcich finančnú záťaž domác-

ností až po slabú prevenciu straty bývania. V dôsledku toho majú mnohé domácnosti len obmedzené možnosti stabilného bývania a sú nútené zotrvať v prekérnych formách bývania alebo vstupovať do systému sociálnych služieb (Hlinčíková, 2024). V slovenskom kontexte sa tieto javy koncentrujú najmä vo väčších mestách, pričom v Bratislave, ako hlavnom meste, môžeme vidieť ich najviditeľnejší prejav.

Prečo etnograficky skúmať komerčné ubytovne?

V napätí medzi trhom a absenciou systémových riešení vznikajú alternatívne formy bývania, ktoré síce poskytujú dočasné riešenia, no zároveň vytvárajú nové formy neistoty. Jednou z nich sú komerčné ubytovne nachádzajúce sa na hranici medzi bývaním a nebývaním. Ich existencia odhaľuje ambivalenciu súčasného systému, kde na jednej strane ide o priestory spojené s nízkymi štandardmi, preplnenosťou, absenciou regulácie a vysokou mierou neistoty, na druhej strane však pre mnohých predstavujú jednu z mála dostupných možností bývania. Empirická relevancia ich skúmania je v slovenskom kontexte spojená aj s nedostatkom kvalitatívnych poznatkov o neistých formách bývania a o každodennej skúsenosti ľudí, ktorí v nich dlhodobo žijú. Komerčné ubytovne preto nechápem ako reprezentatívny obraz celej bytovej núdze, ale ako analyticky koncentrovaný terén, na ktorom možno sledovať proces stabilizácie bytovej neistoty. Práve táto dvojznačnosť z nich robí aj eticky komplexný objekt výskumu. Ich skúmanie znamená pohybovať sa medzi kritikou a porozumením, medzi analýzou a intervenciou. Ambivalencia medzi násilím, kontrolou a starostlivosťou predstavuje jednu z hlavných analytických aj etických výziev môjho výskumu. Na jednej strane je potrebné pomenovať

podmienky, ktoré sú často nedôstojné a poškodzujúce, na druhej strane je pre mňa dôležité vyhnúť sa reduktívnym reprezentáciám ich užívateľiek a užívateľov ako pasívnych obetí. Ľudia v podmienkach prekarity svoju situáciu aktívne vyjednávajú, vytvárajú stratégie prežitia a hľadajú spôsoby, ako si zachovať dôstojnosť. Koncept každodennej navigácie prekarity pritom umožňuje uchopiť neistotu nielen ako stav, ale aj ako proces, ktorý sa priebežne zvláda, vyjednáva a reprodukuje (Jaatsi & Kymäläinen, 2023).

To zároveň znamená, že v procese výskumu musím citlivo pristupovať k tomu, aby som neromantizovala chudobu ani neprispievala k senzacionalistickým reprezentáciám, no zároveň neprehliadala štrukturálne násilie, ktoré zasahuje do životov ľudí.

Cieľom môjho dizertačného výskumu je analyzovať prekaritu bývania ako proces vznikajúci na priesečníku každodenných praktík, inštitucionálnych nastavení a politických rozhodnutí. Zároveň reflektujem vlastnú duálnu pozíciu medzi výskumom a praxou a skúmam, ako produkcia poznania vstupuje do týchto vzťahov ako forma moci aj potenciálnej intervencie. Neusilujem sa o jednoznačné odpovede, ale o zachytenie komplexnosti situácie, v ktorej sa prelínajú štruktúry, skúsenosti, etické dilemy a pozicionalita. Komerčné ubytovne chápem ako zariadenia súkromných majiteľov poskytujúce dlhodobejšie ubytovanie bez formálneho zmluvného vzťahu, v podmienkach vysokej neistoty a minimálnej starostlivosti. Napriek tomu predstavujú pre niekoho jednu z mála dostupných možností bývania. Zaujímajú ma ako priestor, v ktorom sa koncentrujú štrukturálne zlyhania systému, každodenné stratégie prežitia a limity verejných politík.

Práve v tomto kontexte nadobúda význam etnografický prístup, ktorý umožňuje zachytiť nielen

štrukturálne podmienky, ale aj každodenné skúsenosti ľudí. Ako ukazujú výskumy urbánnej prekarity, neistota sa prejavuje nielen na úrovni makroštruktúr, ale aj v mikrogeografiách každodenného života v praktikách, vzťahoch a stratégiách, prostredníctvom ktorých ju ľudia navigujú (Jaatsi & Kymäläinen, 2023). Tento prístup zároveň umožňuje narušiť reduktívne reprezentácie marginality a zachytiť komplexnosť žitej skúsenosti. V slovenskom kontexte zostáva kvalitatívne skúmanie bývania relatívne podreprezentované. Existujúce výskumy síce mapujú štrukturálne rozmery bytovej núdze a diskriminácie (Amnesty International Slovensko, 2024; IVPR; Újházyová, Máriássyová, & Mesároš, 2024), no menej priestoru venujú každodennému prežívaniu neistoty a etickým dilemám samotného výskumu (Hlinčíková, 2024). A práve na túto výskumnú medzeru sa snaží reagovať predkladaný text.

Kritika komerčných ubytovní ako nedôstojných a ne-regulovaných priestorov so sebou nesie riziko ich delegitimizácie bez existencie adekvátnych alternatív. Naopak, ich chápanie ako nevyhnutnej infraštruktúry prežitia môže prispievať k normalizácii prekarity. Aj preto je potrebné tieto napätia nielen pomenovať, ale vedome s nimi pracovať.

Paradox stabilizovanej dočasnosti

Komerčné ubytovne sa v kontexte súčasného mestského bývania neukazujú ako okrajový alebo náhodný jav, ale ako stabilizovaná forma bývania vznikajúca na priesečníku štrukturálnych nedostatkov bytového systému a každodenných stratégií prežitia. Ich analytický potenciál spočíva v možnosti sledovať, ako sa prekarita bývania produkuje, udržiava a normalizuje v konkrétnych priestoroch, rytmoch a vzťahoch. Na prvý pohľad sa

ubytovne môžu javiť ako tranzitný priestor medzi stratou bývania a jeho opätovným nadobudnutím. Predbežné terénne pozorovania však naznačujú, že táto predpokladaná dočasnosť sa môže predlžovať a pre časť obyvateľstva nadobúdať charakter dlhodobého bývania. Tento paradox označujem ako „stabilizovanú dočasnosť“. Pojem používam ako pracovný analytický koncept pre situáciu, v ktorej sa dočasný status bývania nemení na stabilné bývanie, ale samotná neistota získava časovú kontinuitu a stáva sa súčasťou každodennosti. Koncept rezonuje s formuláciami „permanent temporality“ (Čanigová & Souralová, 2024) a „permanence of temporariness“ (Ferreri, 2021), no v mojom výskume ho viažem špecificky na označenie procesu, v ktorom nie je narušená iba priestorová stabilita, ale aj schopnosť ľudí plánovať, očakávať a žiť kontinuitu budúcnosti. Bytové trajektórie obyvateľstva komerčných ubytovní tak poukazujú na paradox poskytovania minimálnej infraštruktúry prežitia a reprodukcie dlhobovej neistoty. Pridanú hodnotu tohto pojmu vnímam nielen v zdôraznení dočasnosti ako takej, ale predovšetkým v analytickom zachytení mechanizmu, prostredníctvom ktorého sa provizórium stabilizuje bez toho, aby sa premenilo na bezpečné bývanie.

Komerčné ubytovne možno v tomto zmysle chápať ako lokálne uzly procesov stabilizovanej dočasnosti: ako miesta, kde sa štrukturálne nedostatky systému materializujú v každodennom živote a kde sa zároveň ukazuje ich dlhodobý účinok. Ide o priestory charakterizované nízkym štandardom bývania, absenciou zmluvnej ochrany, nestabilitou nájmu a často aj rôznymi formami infraštruktúrneho zlyhania: nefunkčné výťahy, výpadky teplej vody či elektriny, preplnené izby, prítomnosť hmyzu, hluk, konflikty, ale aj drogy či alkohol. Nevyhovujúce

podmienky nemožno redukovať na „zlý štandard bývania“ v technickom zmysle slova. Bývanie je viac než štyri steny so strechou. Predstavuje základnú sociálnu a psychologickú infraštruktúru každodenného života. Ide o základnú podmienku ontologického bezpečia, pocitu kontinuity a predvídateľnosti, bez ktorého je každodenný život ťažko udržateľný (Giddens, 1991). Prostredie, ktoré systematicky obmedzuje možnosti reprodukcie každodenného života a tým zasahuje aj do schopnosti vytvárať domov v zmysle ontologického bezpečia, udržiavať rutinu, plánovať budúcnosť či zabezpečovať starostlivosť o seba aj o druhých (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). Život pod permanentnou kontrolou zo strany prenajímateľa, často bez právnej ochrany v podobe absencie platnej nájomnej zmluvy, nestabilitou vo výdavkoch za bývanie, netransparentnosťou vyúčtovania a mnohými ďalšími aspektmi sa spája s hlbokým psychosociálnym stresom.

Normalizácia takýchto podmienok však nie je len empirickým faktom, ale aj politickým procesom. Na jeho pochopenie je užitočné rozlíšenie Judith Butler (2004) medzi dvoma kľúčovými pojmami: existenciálnou zraniteľnosťou (*precariousness*) a politicky produkovanou neistotou (*precarity*). Existenciálna zraniteľnosť je pre ňu univerzálny stav ľudskej bytosti, vyplývajúci z našej základnej vzájomnej závislosti a zraniteľnosti tela a života samotného. Táto zraniteľnosť je nevyhnutná a spoločná všetkým ľuďom, pretože nikto nemôže existovať osamote, ale je odkázaný na druhých a na spoločenské podmienky, ktoré podmieňujú možnosť žiť. Naopak, pojem precarity vyjadruje nespravodlivú, nerovnomerne rozloženú neistotu a zraniteľnosť, ktoré sú výsledkom politických a ekonomických štruktúr. „*Precarity*“ alebo „*prekarita*“ sa vzťahuje k tomu, ako určitým skupinám, napríklad

marginalizovaným, chudobným alebo diskriminovaným, je neprávom upieraný sociálny a politický status, bezpečnosť alebo prístup k základným právam, a ako sú vystavené násiliu, neistote a vykorisťovaniu.

Ďalším užitočným teoretickým konceptom pre pochopenie týchto priestorov je liminalita, rozpracovaná Victorom Turnerom (1969), ktorá označuje stavy „medzi“, mimo stabilných sociálnych kategórií. Komerčné ubytovne je možné chápať ako liminálne priestory nachádzajúce sa medzi dlhodobým bývaním a vylúčením z bývania, teda na hranici bezdomovectva. V tomto zmysle je podnetné uvažovať aj o ontologickej liminalite (Giddens, 1984), ktorá poukazuje na hlbšiu existenciálnu neistotu spojenú s dlhodobou nestabilitou životných podmienok. Práve tu nadväzujem na antropológa Philippea Bourgoisa (2003) a jeho analýzu každodenného násilia, ktoré sa v podmienkach marginality neprejavuje ako jednorazový akt, ale ako kontinuálny proces zapísaný do tela, priestoru a sociálnych vzťahov. V prípade komerčných ubytovní sa toto násilie neprejavuje spektakulárne, ale prostredníctvom každodennej neistoty, ktorá formuje rytmus života, a to od otázky, či bude fungovať teplá voda, až po otázku, či bude mať domácnosť bývanie aj nasledujúci mesiac. Ide o formu štrukturálneho a inštitucionálne sprostredkovaného násilia, ktoré je zároveň banalizované a normalizované. A práve popísaná banalita je dôležitá. Nie je to výnimočnosť krízy, ale jej rutinizácia. Bourgoisov dôraz na každodenné násilie je pritom možné produktívne čítať spolu s dôrazom na urbánnu prekaritu ako priestor, v ktorom sa opustenie a minimálna starostlivosť navzájom nevylučujú, ale koexistujú (Lancione, 2019). Komerčné ubytovne tak nefungujú len ako miesta nedostatku, ale aj ako zvláštny typ mestského usporiadania, v ktorom sa prežitie zabezpečuje

za cenu dlhodobej neistoty. Kombinácia násilia, tolerovanej degradácie a minimálnej infraštruktúry starostlivosti robí z ubytovní eticky aj analyticky významný terén.

Na zmienenú rovinu nadväzuje aj sociológ Loïc Wacquant (2008) a jeho analýza pokročilej marginality, ktorá ukazuje, že urbánna chudoba nie je len dôsledkom ekonomických procesov, ale aj výsledkom konkrétnych politík a spôsobov riadenia populácií. Komerčné ubytovne možno v tomto zmysle chápať ako súčasť širších režimov správy chudoby – ako priestory, v ktorých sa marginalita nielen koncentruje, ale aj organizuje, usmerňuje a kontroluje. Prítomnosť rôznych foriem dohľadu, regulácie vstupu, obmedzení návštev či zásahov do každodenného života naznačuje, že nejde len o „bývanie“, ale aj o špecifický režim disciplinácie, ktorý sa dotýka intimity, pohybu aj sociálnych vzťahov. Zároveň by však redukcia ubytovní na priestory kontroly a násilia bola analyticky nedostatočná. Ako ukazujú výskumy urbánnej prekarity, takéto priestory sú zároveň miestami, kde sa formujú formy solidarity, starostlivosti a každodenných stratégií prežitia (Williams & Windebank, 2000). V podmienkach ubytovní sa starostlivosť často realizuje prostredníctvom drobných, takmer neviditeľných praktík, ako zdieľanie potravín či hygienických potrieb, vzájomné stráženie detí, pomoc v krízových situáciách či sprostredkovanie informácií. Tieto praktiky však nevznikajú napriek prekarite, ale sú ňou priamo podmienené. Komerčné ubytovne tak nevystupujú len ako priestor nedostatku, ale aj ako forma infraštruktúry prežitia, ktorá umožňuje zotrvanie „nad hladinou“, a zároveň stabilizuje podmienky neistoty. Ako ukazujú prístupy zamerané na trajektórie bývania (Clapham, 2002), pre mnohé domácnosti ide skôr o pohyb medzi rôznymi formami neistoty než o lineárny prechod k stabilnému bývaniu. Ich analytická významnosť tak

spočíva v tom, že predstavujú komplexný sociálny priestor, v ktorom sa prekarita a starostlivosť navzájom prepletajú, a ktorý nemožno adekvátne zachytiť výlučne konceptom nedostatku.

Uvedené koncepty v texte nechápem ako paralelný súbor teoretických rámcov. Ich funkcie sú rozdielne a hierarchicky usporiadané, v rámci ktorých prekarita predstavuje hlavné analytické východisko, stabilizovaná dočasnosť označuje jej časový mechanizmus v prostredí komerčných ubytovní a koncepty liminality a každodenného násilia používam ako čiastkové optiky na interpretáciu konkrétnych priestorových a vzťahových prejavov tohto procesu. Takéto usporiadanie mi umožňuje sústrediť argument na otázku, ako sa politicky produkovaná bytová neistota premieňa na dlhodobú rutinu každodenného života.

Zároveň sa vynára aj otázka generlačnej reprodukcie chudoby. Prítomnosť rodín s deťmi v ubytovniach poukazuje na to, že tieto priestory nie sú len krátkodobým riešením, ale môžu sa stať súčasťou dlhodobých životných trajektórií. Deti vyrastajúce v takýchto podmienkach sú vystavené kombinácii materiálnej deprivácie, sociálnej stigmatizácie a obmedzených možností mobility, čo môže prispievať k reprodukcii nerovností naprieč generáciami (Quilgars & Pleace, 2023). Ubytovňa tak nie je len priestorom núdzového ubytovania, ale aj prostredím, v ktorom sa nerovnosť usádza a prenáša ďalej. Táto dimenzia býva často prepojená aj s fenoménom zadĺženosti, ktorý predstavuje ďalší mechanizmus stabilizácie prekarity (Hoření Samec & Trlifajová, 2025). Dlhy či už voči štátu, súkromným subjektom alebo samotným prevádzkovateľom ubytovní obmedzujú možnosti odchodu a zvyšujú závislosť obyvateľstva od existujúceho systému. V tomto zmysle možno hovoriť o prepojení medzi finančnou a bytovou

prekaritou, ktoré vytvára komplexný režim neistoty. Človek sa neocitá „len“ v zlej bytovej situácii, ale je zároveň uviaznutý v cykle materiálnych, právnych a sociálnych dôsledkov, ktoré znemožňujú presun inde.

Prepletená pozícia vo výskume zraniteľných skupín

Už počas predchádzajúceho výskumu špecifik ženského bezdomovectva v kombinácii s injekčným užívaním drog (Kováčsová, 2023) som sa stretávala s momentmi, keď sa rozhovor posúval od opisovania skúsenosti k očakávaniu rady, pomoci alebo aspoň stanoviska. V takýchto situáciách sa ukazuje, že ako výskumníčka nie som vnímaná len ako niekto, kto zbiera dáta, ale aj ako potenciálny aktér, ktorý môže do situácie vstúpiť. V rámci diplomového výskumu som trávila mnoho hodín v nízkoprahových službách pre ľudí užívajúcich drogy a veľmi často si ma zamieňali so študentstvom sociálnej práce či psychológie, ktoré sem pravidelne prichádzalo na stáž. V týchto situáciách som musela neustále pripomínať svoju pozíciu výskumníčky čo najjednoduchším jazykom a komunikovať hranice vlastnej roly, no predovšetkým ľuďom neradiť. Z doterajšej terénnej praxe vo výskume sa mi osvedčilo mať vopred dohodnutú stratégiu v prípade emočne vypätého rozhovoru. Moje komunikačné partnerky sa v prípade potreby mohli obrátiť na pracovníčku, najčastejšie psychologičku, v rámci nízkoprahovej služby, kde som realizovala výskum. Citlivo som pripomínala, že na moje otázky odpovedať nemusia, prípadne majú možnosť rozhovor kedykoľvek prerušiť či ukončiť. Toto sa počas výskumných rozhovorov dialo najčastejšie pri téme materstva a detí, ktoré zväčša nemali v starostlivosti. Oceňovali najmä možnosť porozprávať sa s niekým, koho vnímali ako nezaujatú osobu, a nahlas

vyrozprávať svoj životný príbeh, často plný násilia. V závere výskumu som sa rozprávala aj s pracovníčkami sociálnych služieb a viaceré mi povedali, že práve výskumný rozhovor o ich životných skúsenostiach bol moment, keď sa dokázali v rámci sociálneho poradenstva po dlhšom čase aktivizovať a s väčšou dôverou sa obrátiť na pracovníčky centra.

Uvedené dilemy sú ešte výraznejšie v kontexte aplikovaného výskumu, kde poznanie neostáva na úrovni akademického výstupu, ale má potenciál a snahu vstupovať do konkrétnych politík a rozhodnutí. Etický prístup vo výskume nestačí redukovať na procedurálne otázky, ako sú informovaný súhlas, anonymizácia alebo minimalizácia rizika. V praxi sa etický prístup ukazuje skôr ako situovaný proces, ktorý si vyžaduje neustále rozhodovanie v podmienkach neistoty. Takéto chápanie etického prístupu je blízke angažovanej antropológii, ktorá zdôrazňuje, že antropológický výskum môže presahovať deskriptívnu rovinu a vstupovať do verejnej debaty či spoločenskej praxe, no zároveň otvára otázky zodpovednosti, hraníc a rizík prílišnej angažovanosti (Low & Merry, 2010). Zároveň však upozorňujú na riziká angažovanosti, najmä na možnosť, že výskumník alebo výskumníčka prevezme rolu, ktorá presahuje jeho alebo jej kompetencie, alebo sa stane súčasťou politických procesov spôsobom, ktorý nie je dostatočne transparentne reflektovaný.

Angažovaný prístup nie je v mojom výskume riešením, ale skôr priestorom neustáleho napätia medzi rôznymi očakávaniami. Na jednej strane je tu snaha prispieť k zmene, napríklad prostredníctvom empiricky informovaných politík, na druhej strane potreba zachovať analytickú otvorenosť a kritickú reflexiu, ktorá nie je podriadená okamžitej užitočnosti. Výzvou tak zostáva, ako tieto roviny prepájať bez toho, aby jedna pohltila druhú. Neoddeliteľnou

súčasťou opísaného napätia je aj emocionálny rozmer výskumu, ktorý býva v akademických textoch často odsúvaný do úzadia. Premýšľanie nad etickými dilemami v celom procese výskumu sa napokon dotýka aj otázky starostlivosti o seba, schopnosti niesť emocionálnu záťaž, a zároveň zostať analyticky pozornou výskumníčkou. Pozicionalita sa preto neukazuje ako problém, ktorý by bolo možné odstrániť, ale ako podmienka, s ktorou je potrebné priebežne pracovať. Nejde o snahu dosiahnuť objektivitu, ale o schopnosť reflektovať vlastnú prelínajúcu sa pozicionalitu v teréne a jej dôsledky. Práve v tomto napätí sa formuje typ poznania, ktorý nie je ani čisto akademický, ani čisto praktický, ale situovaný, vzťahový a politicky citlivý. Výskum tak nevnímam ako neutrálnu aktivitu, ale ako proces neoddeliteľne spätý s otázkami moci, zodpovednosti a intervencie. Práve preto je potrebné uvažovať aj o limitoch výskumu.

Etika výskumu ako vzťahový proces

Ako som sa vyššie snažila vysvetliť, komerčné ubytovne sa ukazujú nielen ako empirický objekt výskumu, ale aj ako analytické zariadenie, prostredníctvom ktorého možno skúmať prepojenie medzi štrukturálnymi podmienkami, každodennými skúsenosťami a etickými dilemami. Ich skúmanie nevyhnutne znamená vstup do priestoru ambivalencie, kde sa prekarita a starostlivosť, násilie a solidarita, kritika a nevyhnutnosť navzájom prelínajú. V tejto ambivalencii spočíva ich analytická aj etická dôležitosť. Ak predchádzajúce časti ukázali, že komerčné ubytovne predstavujú priestor, v ktorom sa prekarita bývania materializuje a reprodukuje, potom pozícia výskumníčky zásadným spôsobom určuje, ako je možné túto realitu zachytiť, interpretovať a napokon aj sprostredkovať.

V prípade môjho výskumu totiž nejde o klasickú situáciu vstupu do terénu z pozície niekoho zvonka, ale skôr o pohyb v prostredí, ktoré je už súčasťou vlastnej profesionálnej skúsenosti, teda prostredie, do ktorého vstupujem aj v rámci mojej druhej pracovnej pozície. Táto dualita rôl nemení len metodologické možnosti výskumu, ale predovšetkým jeho etické východiská. Výskum sa tu neukazuje ako neutrálna aktivita, ale ako vstup do sveta, ktorého som už istým spôsobom súčasťou. To znamená, že nevystupujem len ako niekto, kto sa snaží porozumieť skúsenostiam ľudí v bytovej núdzi, ale aj ako aktérka, ktorá je súčasťou systému bytovej politiky na lokálnej úrovni, ktorá tieto podmienky do istej miery spoluvytvára. Duálna rola, ktorú nesiem, zásadne komplikuje predstavu výskumu ako neutrálneho či objektívneho výstupu. V antropologickej literatúre býva podobná pozícia výskumníčky opísaná ako „dual positionality“ alebo „insider-outsider“ pozícia (Bell, 2019), teda ako stav, v ktorom výskumníčka nie je ani celkom „vnútri“, ani celkom „mimo“. V mojom prípade však nejde len o vzťah k účasti vo výskume, ale aj o vzťah k inštitucionálnym štruktúram, ktoré sú samy predmetom skúmania. Môj výskum vzniká priamo v jeho rámci a hranica medzi analýzou, participáciou a spoluzodpovednosťou sa stáva nevyhnutne rozmazanou. Opísaná situácia zároveň rezonuje so širšími diskusiami o tom, že súčasná antropológia čoraz častejšie vzniká „zvnútra“ mocenských a ekonomických štruktúr, nie mimo nich a reflexia tejto vnútornej pozície sa stáva jednou z kľúčových metodologických výziev súčasného etnologického výskumu aj v slovenskom kontexte (Wiesner, 2019 in Voľanská & Wiesner eds.). Antropologické poznanie sa dnes formuje aj priamo v podmienkach prekarity, keďže záujem antropologičiek a antropológov o dopady neoliberalizmu

na životy ľudí sa prehlbuje (Muehlebach, 2013). Výskumníci a výskumníčky nie sú len pozorovateľmi sociálnych procesov, ale často sa na nich podieľajú prostredníctvom vlastnej práce, expertízy alebo zapojenia do verejných politík. Poznanie sa tak neukazuje ako externý pohľad na realitu, ale ako jedna z foriem jej produkcie. A práve tu sa otvára jedna z kľúčových etických otázok tohto textu a môjho výskumu: čo znamená skúmať systém, ktorého som sama súčasťou?

Položená otázka presahuje klasické dilemy výskumu so zraniteľnými skupinami a smeruje k reflexii vlastnej pozície v mocenských vzťahoch. V prípade výskumu bývania nejde len o to, ako vstupovať do vzťahu s ľuďmi žijúcimi v prekarite, ale aj o to, ako reflektovať vlastné miesto v inštitucionálnych štruktúrach, ktoré túto prekaritu produkujú, manažujú alebo aspoň rámcujú. Je to pre mňa dôležitý proces práve preto, že posúva reflexiu ďalej než k otázke ochrany výskumného partnerstva. V mojom prípade sa táto dilema konkretizuje v tom, že poznanie získané prostredníctvom výskumu môže vstupovať do procesov tvorby verejných politík. Ambícia prispieť k politikám založeným na dátach sa na prvý pohľad môže javiť ako samozrejme pozitívna a spoločensky žiaduca. Zároveň však vyvoláva otázky o tom, akým spôsobom môže byť poznanie prekladané do politických rozhodnutí, kto rozhoduje o tom, ktoré dáta sú relevantné a aké záujmy pritom vstupujú do hry. Výskum sa tak ukazuje nielen ako nástroj porozumenia, ale aj ako potenciálny nástroj intervencie. V tejto dvojznačnosti sa etická reflexia stáva nevyhnutnou. Jej rozmer je ešte výraznejší v prostredí, kde sú expertné, politické a výskumné pozície úzko prepojené. V kontexte Slovenska, ktoré je charakteristické relatívne úzkou sieťou inštitucionálnych a personálnych väzieb v oblasti verejnej politiky a expertízy, sa predstava úplného

odstupu od skúmaného poľa ukazuje do značnej miery ako iluzórna. V rámci výskumu sa pohybujem v sieti prepojených profesionálnych, inštitucionálnych a osobných vzťahov, ktoré zahŕňajú kolegov, tvorcov politík aj ľudí žijúcich v podmienkach bytovej núdze. Etika sa tu preto viaže nielen na individuálne rozhodnutia, ale aj na štruktúru týchto vzťahov. Otázka nespočíva len v správnosti a nesprávnosti konania, ale aj v tom, v akom poli vzťahov a záväzkov sa toto rozhodnutie odohráva.

Jedným zo spôsobov, ako túto situáciu metodologicky uchopiť, je kontinuálna reflexivita. Biografická reflexivita, ako ju rozpracovali Minna Ruokonen-Engler a Irini Siouti (2013), umožňuje sledovať, ako vlastná skúsenosť, hodnoty a motivácie vstupujú do výskumného procesu. Počas výskumu si preto vediem dva terénne denníky, ktoré sú viazané na moje dve roly. Záznamy budú zachytávať najmä situácie konfliktu rôl, očakávania komunikačných partnerov, rozhodnutia o intervencii alebo neintervencii a momenty, v ktorých profesionálna znalosť ovplyvňuje interpretáciu terénu a naopak. Následné porovnávanie týchto záznamov môže umožniť sledovať pozicionalitu v čase, nie iba ju deklarovať v úvode výskumu. Reflexivitu preto nechápem ako introspekciu, ale ako analytický postup zameraný na mocenské vzťahy a dôsledky výskumných rozhodnutí. V prípade výskumu bývania to znamená, že poznanie môže byť využité rôznymi spôsobmi, od advokácie a podpory inkluzívnejších politík až po legitimizáciu existujúcich riešení. Aj preto je potrebné vytvoriť si „kompas“, ktorý umožňuje orientovať sa v situáciách, kde neexistujú jednoznačné etické pravidlá. Citlivosť voči dôsledkom výskumných rozhodnutí sa neukazuje ako aplikácia univerzálnych princípov, ale ako proces rozhodovania v podmienkach neistoty. Lakmusovým papierikom sa pre

mňa stáva opakované kladenie si otázok, a to najmä, v akej role v danej situácii konám, komu môže moje rozhodnutie prospieť, koho môže poškodiť a akým spôsobom možno získané poznanie použiť ďalej. Nehľadám tým bezchybnú pozíciu, ale spôsob, ako rozhodnutia dokumentovať, kriticky vyhodnocovať a niešť za ne zodpovednosť.

Jedným z najvýraznejších miest, kde sa spomínaná neistota prejavuje, je práca s poznaním o citlivých životných situáciách. V procese výskumu získavam informácie o zadržaní, násilí, rodičovstve, zdravotných problémoch či každodenných stratégiách prežitia. Získané poznanie však nie je neutrálne. Produkcia poznania je zároveň aj produkciou moci. Niečo sa v rozhovoroch a interakciách zviditeľňuje, niečo pomenúva, niečo rámcuje ako problém. Vo svojom výskume preto riešim nielen to, ako informácie získať, ale aj čo s nimi robiť, komu môžu poslúžiť a komu môžu potenciálne uškodiť. V prípade výskumu v prostredí sociálnej zraniteľnosti nejde len o abstraktnú metodologickú otázku, ale o veľmi konkrétnu etickú zodpovednosť.

Načrtnuté etické otázky zároveň formujú spôsob, akým k výskumu metodologicky pristupujem. Voľba výskumných metód tak nie je len technickým rozhodnutím, ale aj spôsobom, ako na dilemy vo výskume reagujem a ako sa snažím minimalizovať ich potenciálne dôsledky. Aby som poskytla čo najväčší priestor pre participáciu samotných obyvateľov a obyvateľiek ubytovní, používam metódu hĺbkových naratívnych rozhovorov, ktoré dávajú ľuďom priestor na vlastné uchopenie ich prežívania (Anderson, 2004). Inšpiráciou pre takéto exponované priestory môžu byť napríklad prechádzky, počas ktorých sa vedú výskumné rozhovory (*walking interviews*). Použitie týchto alebo iných mobilných metód umožňuje zachytiť skúsenosť priestoru v pohybe a prepájať verbálnu reflexiu s bezprostredným

zmyslovým vnímaním prostredia (Evans & Jones, 2011; Pink, 2015). Komunikačné partnerstvo, s ktorým budem v teréne tráviť čas, považujem za „experts by experience“, teda ľudí s jedinečnou expertnou znalosťou vychádzajúcou z každodennej žitej skúsenosti s bytovou prekaritou. Sú to oni, ktorí sa vedia pohybovať po priestore a poznajú nepísané pravidlá. Práve prepojenie rozhovoru s pohybom v priestore mi zároveň umožní zachytiť aj tie aspekty každodennosti, ktoré zostávajú v statickom rozhovore často nevyslovené, no sú prítomné v zmyslovom a telesnom prežívaní miesta (Pink, 2015). V mojom výskume vnímam prístup senzorickej etnografie ako obzvlášť relevantný v kontexte priestorov, ktoré sú zároveň regulované aj čiastočne skryté, takže umožňuje zachytiť aj ich implicitné normy a každodenné praktiky.

Výskum ako nástroj zmeny

Etnografický prístup môže poznatky o bytovej núdzi a vylúčení z bývania nielen doplniť, ale aj problematizovať. Ambíciou môjho výskumu je okrem produkcie poznania aj jeho prepojenie so širšími spoločenskými diskusiami. Táto ambícia je však sama osebe eticky ambivalentná. Snaha o politiky založené na dátach predpokladá, že poznanie môže byť preložené do politických rozhodnutí, no tento proces je vždy selektívny a podmienený mocenskými vzťahmi. Výskum tak môže slúžiť ako nástroj zmeny, ale aj ako legitimizácia existujúceho stavu. V tomto zmysle sa výskum bývania ukazuje ako pole, na ktorom sa stretávajú epistemologické, politické a etické otázky. Výskum v domácnostiach ľudí v bytovej núdzi je spojený s výraznými etickými, bezpečnostnými a vzťahovými dilemami, pretože výskumníčka vstupuje do prostredia, ktoré je už samo osebe

poznačené nerovnosťou a zraniteľnosťou (Bashir, Lewis & Campbell, 2010). V podobných situáciách sa výskumné stretnutie často stáva aj emocionálne náročným priestorom, v ktorom hranica medzi pozorovaním a účastníctvom nie je nikdy úplne pevná. Ako výskumníčka sa pohybujem medzi rolami pozorovateľky a účastníčky, pričom hranice medzi nimi nie sú nikdy úplne stabilné. Etika sa tak neukazuje ako súbor predpísaných pravidiel, ale ako priebežný proces reflexie, vyjednávania a rozhodovania sa v konkrétnych vzťahoch a situáciách. Výskumy zamerané na neistotu, chudobu alebo násilie môžu mať výrazný dopad aj na samotných výskumníkov, najmä prostredníctvom emocionálnej záťaže, etických dilem a vlastnej pozície v teréne. Otázkou preto nie je len to, ako skúmať prekaritu, ale aj to, ako reflektovať vlastnú účasť v nej. Etika výskumu sa tak rozširuje od ochrany účastníkov k reflexii vlastnej pozície a zodpovednosti.

Tento posun od procesnej k vzťahovej etike reflektuje aj kritika inštitucionálnych etických rámcov. Ako upozorňujú vo svojich výskumoch Sabrina Borrelli a Tanya Basok (2025), formálne etické procesy často nedokážu zachytiť komplexitu výskumných vzťahov a môžu dokonca obmedzovať realizáciu inak relevantného výskumu. Etika sa tak presúva od dodržiavania pravidiel k otázkam zodpovednosti, vzťahov a schopnosti reagovať na situácie, ktoré nemožno vždy dokonale predvídať. V tomto kontexte nadobúda skutočne zásadný význam aj pozícia výskumníčky. Výskum nevzniká z externého odstupu, ale z perspektívy, ktorá je už prepletená so skúmaným poľom.

Napokon by som sa rada vrátila k etickej dileme, ktorá je pre môj výskum kľúčová. Ako ukazujú viaceré výskumy urbánnej prekarity a núdzového bývania, komerčné ubytovne predstavujú špecifický typ bývania

charakteristický kombináciou neistoty, subštandardných podmienok a oslabenej ochrany práv obyvateľstva (Walach et al., 2021; Kubala et al., 2023; Lancione, 2019). Problematickosť týchto priestorov nespočíva len v nízkom štandarde bývania, ale aj v samotnej štruktúre vzťahov a neistoty, v ktorých fungujú. Charakteristická je absencia stabilného právneho postavenia obyvateľstva, netransparentnosť podmienok bývania, vysoká miera závislosti od prevádzkovateľov či obmedzené možnosti kontroly a vyjednávania podmienok bývania. Chýbajú v nich regulácia, štandardy, transparentnosť, často aj základná ochrana nájomníctva (Walach, 2021). Prevádzka týchto zariadení sa často pohybuje v nejasnom právnom rámci, v ktorom absentujú jednoznačne definované pravidlá týkajúce sa kvality bývania, minimálnych priestorových podmienok, hygienických štandardov či ochrany práv obyvateľstva. V niektorých prípadoch sú dokonca popisované ako súčasť širšieho „obchodu s chudobou“, v ktorom sa neistota bývania stáva zdrojom ekonomického zisku (Kupka et al., 2021; Walach, 2021). Zároveň však predstavujú infraštruktúru, bez ktorej by ich obyvateľstvo veľmi pravdepodobne čelilo prehĺbeniu bytovej núdze. Potenciálne obmedzenie či zrušenie ich prevádzky v krátkom čase a bez adekvátnej alternatívy by mohlo viesť k ešte väčšej marginalizácii ich obyvateľstva. Napätie medzi kritikou a uznaním funkcie tak nie je len analytické, ale aj politické a napokon aj etické. Práve v tomto liminálnom priestore, ktorý je zároveň problematický aj nevyhnutný, vstupuje do hry výskum ako ďalší aktér. Komerčné ubytovne možno chápať ako symptóm širšieho usporiadania, ktoré produkuje nerovnosti, no zároveň poskytuje minimálne mechanizmy ich manažovania. Ich existencia nehovorí len o zlyhaní systému, ale aj o spôsobe, akým sa systém naučil s týmto

zlyhaním fungovať. Pre výskumníčku to znamená pohybovať sa v priestore, kde nie sú k dispozícii jednoduché normatívne pozície. Kritika týchto priestorov je nevyhnutná, no sama osebe nedostačujúca. Musí byť sprevádzaná reflexiou ich funkcie v systéme a otázkou, aké dôsledky môže mať produkované poznanie. V tomto zmysle sa etika výskumu neobmedzuje na ochranu napríklad obyvateľstva týchto priestorov, ale zahŕňa aj reflexiu širších možných dopadov výskumu. Stojím preto pred otázkami, čo zviditeľňuje, čo reprodukuje a aké politické imaginácie podporuje môj výskum a prečo? A v neposlednom rade je potrebné si uvedomiť, že pole pôsobnosti výskumníčky nespočíva v investigatívne. Etnografický výskum pritom nevstupuje do týchto priestorov ako neutrálne odhaľovanie reality, ale ako proces budovania vzťahov, interpretácie a sprostredkovania skúseností, ktorý má svoje limity aj zodpovednosti.

Diskusia a záver

Predkladaná kapitola vychádza zo snahy uchopiť bývanie nielen ako materiálnu infraštruktúru každodenného života, ale aj ako pole, v ktorom sa štrukturálne nerovnosti premietajú do každodennej neistoty a zároveň do etických podmienok jej skúmania. Hlavnou analytickou líniou textu je prekarita bývania chápaná ako politicky a inštitucionálne produkovaný proces. Komerčné ubytovne v tejto argumentácii predstavujú ohraničený terén, na ktorom možno predbežne sledovať jeden z mechanizmov tohto procesu, konkrétne stabilizáciu dočasnosti. Text netvrdí, že ubytovne reprezentujú celú bytovú núdzu na Slovensku. Ukazuje skôr, prečo je analyticky dôležité skúmať situácie, v ktorých sa provizórne bývanie predlžuje, neistota rutinizuje a minimálna infraštruktúra prežitia zároveň obmedzuje možnosti

prechodu k stabilnejšiemu bývaniu. Vo vybranom teréne môžem sledovať, ako sa neistota bývania nielen produkuje, ale aj stabilizuje a normalizuje a zároveň je sprevádzaná morálnymi interpretáciami. Etická otázka výskumu z tejto argumentácie nevystupuje ako samostatná téma, ale ako dôsledok spôsobu, akým je tento proces vnímaný, interpretovaný a potenciálne prekladaný do praxe.

Súčasne je však potrebné zdôrazniť, že môj text nepredstavuje uzavretú empirickú analýzu, ale skôr moment v procese výskumu. Ide o prácu v jej počiatočnej fáze, ktorá spočíva predovšetkým v teoretickom ukotvení, predbežných empirických vhladoch a formulovaní výskumných predpokladov. Aj samotný vstup do témy bol výsledkom postupného formovania výskumného záujmu, ktorý sa nevyvíjal lineárne, ale v logike serendipity – teda stretnutia náhody s pripravenosťou výskumníčky rozpoznať význam situácie a prepojiť ju s existujúcim poznaním (Rivoal & Salazar, 2013). Nejde teda o čisto náhodný objav, ale o proces, v ktorom náhoda nachádza živnú pôdu v predchádzajúcej skúsenosti a citlivosti voči terénu. V texte popisujem vlastnú schopnosť rozpoznať význam situácií, ktoré pôvodne neboli súčasťou môjho výskumného zámeru. Mnohé z uvedených tvrdení tak majú charakter pracovných predpokladov, ktoré budú v ďalšom priebehu výskumu overované, spresňované a potenciálne aj prehodnocované. Tento otvorený charakter nemusí predstavovať striktne obmedzenie, skôr odráža samotnú povahu etnografického poznania a prítomných etických dilem, ktoré vznikajú postupne, v procese a ktoré je nevyhnutné v čase neustále reflektovať. Kľúčovým momentom procesu reflexie je moja pozicionalita výskumníčky. Výskum nevzniká z neutrálneho odstupu, ale z pozície, ktorá je už vopred prepletená so skúmaným terénom prostredníctvom profesionálnej skúsenosti v oblasti

bytovej politiky. Táto duálna rola medzi výskumom a praxou predstavuje nielen zdroj špecifického poznania, ale aj etickú výzvu. Na jednej strane umožňuje prístup k situáciám a významom, ktoré by inak mohli zostať nedostupné, no na druhej strane znamená, že výskum sa stáva do nejakej miery súčasťou systémov, ktoré analyzuje. Reflexia tejto prepletenosti preto nie je doplnkom, ale podmienkou možnosti takéhoto výskumu a zároveň jedným z jeho ústredných analytických východísk.

Uvedomujem si, že sa v kapitole selektívne zameriavam na komerčné ubytovne a zachytávam tak iba jednu z podôb širšieho spektra bytovej núdze. Text nemožno čítať ako reprezentatívny obraz bytovej núdze na Slovensku. Jeho prínos vidím v analytickom ohraničení konkrétneho terénu a v otvorení otázky, ako sa bytová neistota každodenne prežíva, časovo stabilizuje a skúma z pozície výskumníčky prepojenej s praxou. Ambíciou dizertačného výskumu je týmto spôsobom doplniť existujúce poznatky o kvalitatívnu a etnografickú perspektívu. Osobitnú pozornosť si pritom vyžaduje využitie získaného poznania. Keďže mi je blízky angažovaný výskum, jednou z ambícií je vstupovať do verejných debát a prispievať k tvorbe verejných politík. Zároveň však považujem za nevyhnutné sledovať, ako je poznanie selektované, prekladané a interpretované v konkrétnych mocenských kontextoch. Môže totiž slúžiť ako nástroj zmeny, ale aj ako legitimizácia existujúcich usporiadaní.

Etika výskumu sa pre mňa preto nevyčerpáva ochranou účasti, ale zahŕňa aj reflexiu širších dôsledkov produkovaného poznania a mojej vlastnej úlohy v jeho sprostredkovaní. Záver tejto kapitoly preto nespočíva v uzavretí otázok, ale v ich ďalšom otváraní. Výskum v prostredí exponovaných lokalít a so zraniteľnými skupinami obyvateľstva si vyžaduje nielen analytickú presnosť, ale aj etickú citlivosť voči tomu,

čo zviditeľňuje, čo rámcuje ako problém a aké predstavy o riešeníach tým podporuje. Komplexnosť vstupu a zotrvania v teréne, neoddeliteľná od vlastnej pozicionality či dvojitej roly, tak nepredstavuje prekážku výskumu, ale miesto, z ktorého poznanie nevyhnutne vzniká.

PodĎakovanie

VEGA č. 2/0095/26 (Ne)istoty bývania: Etnologický pohľad na domov, zraniteľnosť a ontologické bezpečie

Autorka pri príprave textu využila generatívne AI nástroje (ChatGPT/OpenAI) ako podporný nástroj pri jazykových, štylistických a formulačných úpravách. Nástroje neboli použité na generovanie empirických dát ani na samostatnú tvorbu analytických záverov. Za obsah, interpretácie, argumentáciu a konečné znenie textu nesie plnú zodpovednosť autorka.

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III. RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY AS AN IMPERATIVE: Addressing Positionality Issues in Critical Ethnographic Research with the Roma Minority in Slovakia

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Introduction

This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion on ethnographic researchers' positionality by thematising and reflecting on some of my social identities that significantly affect my dissertation project. I focus particularly on my identities as a human rights activist and as a non-Roma conducting ethnographic research among Roma communities, both of which are highly salient to my research. However, I also touch upon some other distinctive statuses, such as class background and gender. Within this scope, I raise selected issues related to my positionality as a researcher that stem partly from my initial ethnographic field visits, as well as scattered knowledge gathered from my previous engagement in field monitoring of human rights violations against Roma. To ensure accurate research, it is essential to understand and disclose the positionality and power structures that may underlie it (Dunajeva & Vajda, 2021).

I am writing these reflections early in my PhD studies, during my second semester, and they represent an early stage of my dissertation. As such, they reflect an epistemic endeavour and, at the same time, an ongoing cognitive process that will be fully integrated into my research project at a later stage. Exploring positionality and articulating it in a positionality statement can require "considerable time and much 'soul searching'" from new researchers (Holmes, 2020, p. 4). However, this early stage does not diminish the relevance of these reflections, which are particularly significant for my research project and its ethical considerations. While some non-Roma scholars in Romani Studies have discussed their positionality and reflexivity to varying degrees, there remains an urgent need

for researchers in this field to consider and incorporate these aspects more extensively (Fremlová, 2019).

I position this chapter against the background of codes of ethics that serve as written cornerstones for conducting ethical anthropological research—standards upon which ethnographers must necessarily reflect. Yet, ethics in anthropological research goes beyond “obeying a set of guidelines” (Caplan, 2003, p. 3). Indeed, adhering to institutional ethics protocols “usually isn’t enough to be able to discern how to act sensitively and ethically within the actual real-world settings... especially over long periods of time, where you are not only enacting your own plans but responding to others’ actions and to emergent situations.” (Wardell, 2025, pp. 48–49). Ethnographic fieldwork challenges a researcher’s ethical grounding in many peculiar ways, which arguably widely concern critical anthropology and ethnography involving vulnerable minority groups (see Ryder, 2021)—the very space in which my dissertation project is situated. My ambition here is not to present an exhaustive ethical landscape or to resolve field-based ethical challenges that may only unfold throughout the research process. My dissertation itself will eventually provide such a landscape. Instead, in this chapter, I introduce the theoretical foundations needed to navigate the distinctive ethical dimensions of my critical ethnographic research, discussing those ethical aspects of my positionalities that I find necessary to clarify early in the research process. I hope this text serves as a good starting point for PhD students considering or designing critical ethnographic research with vulnerable groups, particularly those who associate themselves with the same or related identities.

Issues of reflexivity and positionality have been subjects of numerous scholarly contemplations with respect to

individual research efforts. They also appear to be commonly discussed in textbooks and papers on the theory of qualitative research. Setting up my own theoretical foundations has become a starting point in my own iterative process in this area. How can we grasp and embrace the reflexive process of building up researchers’ positionalities? Malterud (2001, p. 484), in her widely cited paper, notes that “reflexivity starts by identifying preconceptions brought into the project by the researcher, representing previous personal and professional experiences, pre-study beliefs about how things are and what is to be investigated, motivation and qualifications for exploration of the field, and perspectives and theoretical foundations related to education and interests.” Though at the current stage of my inner reflections, I still largely move within this definition, my overall thinking about my positionalities is already multifaceted. It results particularly from my relatively rapid entry into the ethnographic field and initial interactions with research participants,¹ which raise various incentives to reflect on. Given that I approach my researcher’s positionality through the comprehensible perspective of Savin-Baden and Major (2013, pp. 71–73), who define three primary ways of its acknowledgement:

Firstly, by locating themselves “in relation to the subject”, researchers must acknowledge their own individual positions towards the subject or issues that may affect the research. For instance, researchers make decisions regarding the focus of their inquiry based on their views, interests, and experiences—all of which requires transparent disclosure. Secondly, by locating themselves “in relation to

1 In this chapter, I use the term ‘research participants’ to maintain coherence with the terminology of the referred perspective of Savin-Baden & Major (2013). However, in my research, I will consider using the terms research ‘collaborators’ or ‘interlocutors’ as they may better reflect dialogical character and co-production of knowledge within my research.

the participants”, researchers should consider “how they view themselves as well as how others view them” (p. 71). In addition, they must consider “how participants’ perspectives of themselves and others shape cultural contexts” (p. 72), which, in turn, may influence the researchers’ own stances and demand reflexive examination. Thirdly, by locating themselves “in relation to the research context and process”, researchers should reflect on how they unavoidably shape the research process at its particular stages, as well as how the research affects them in return. In this context, it is crucial to emphasise that “locating researchers requires that they continually interrogate their biases, beliefs, stances, and perspectives” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71). This framework encompasses my understanding of reflexivity as a structured and ongoing process that helps me define my researcher’s positionalities. Ultimately, I view addressing my positionalities in the research process as a necessary precondition for pursuing engaged research that arguably aligns with critical ethnography and can be defined as “relevant, reflexive, responsible, and responsive” (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2024a, p. 170).

In the first subchapter, I introduce my dissertation project and position it within the roadmap of social anthropology and ethnographic research. In the following section, I discuss some initial elements of my positionality as an ethnographer and knowledge producer that have taken shape during the opening months of my PhD studies and continue to influence the development of my dissertation project. In the third and fourth subchapters, I reflect on my positionalities as a human rights activist and non-Roma researcher in the field of Romani Studies, alongside other selected positionalities, examining their particular implications for my research.

I. Doing Critical Ethnography

In general terms, my dissertation project aims to explore how Roma men and women currently secure work and income in Slovakia, and the social determinants that shape these trajectories in their lives. At this stage, my research goals and questions are still taking shape against the backdrop of previous research in this area and potential research gaps, as well as my initial visits to the two Roma communities preliminarily selected for my ethnographic field research. Currently, I am establishing contacts in these localities and pre-mapping the strategies Roma employ to secure work and income, alongside the perceived struggles or disadvantages they face in this domain due to their ethnic identity and/or other reasons. I observe the situation of Roma women and their ethnic and gender identities as potential markers of their disadvantages. Specifically, I am interested in what they experience when interacting with institutional actors, particularly employers. In doing so, I align with scholarly voices arguing that anthropological research within Roma communities in Slovakia has historically fallen short of exploring non-Roma agency and the widespread societal power structures in everyday life that maintain the disadvantages Roma experience relative to their non-Roma neighbours (Šotola et al., 2018). This scholarly viewpoint remains highly relevant.

In choosing my research focus, I openly articulate the initial layer of my positionality: my relation to the subject. The selection of my research focus mirrors my values, embracing the belief that all people are equal in dignity and their rights, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, social status, and other identities. They all have rights that should be fully exercised without discrimination—a fundamental

principle deeply embedded in both the international human rights system and domestic legislation, and inherent to my own world of values. However, because these ideals are not inherent to the world we live in, they represent goals that must be pursued. Consequently, it is imperative for me to frame my research in a way that potentially contributes to translating these principles into living reality for people. Furthermore, I strongly associate human dignity and equality with the category of justice, given that their protection has a legal nature and is legally binding for state parties to the international human rights treaties, including Slovakia. States are obligated to refrain from violating rights, to protect them, and to fulfil them by taking positive measures to ensure their equal enjoyment by all. Importantly, this includes realising economic and social rights, such as the right to work, an adequate standard of living, the right to education, health care, adequate housing, and others. Against this general background, I view the inequalities and marginalisation of many Roma in Slovakia as a form of systemic injustice. I particularly disregard social exclusion and segregation, and instead value the pursuit of social inclusion, which is closely tied to the realisation of human rights without discrimination.

My research topic and its distinctive value-basis position my research within the field of critical ethnography. Madison notes that the defining features of this ethnographic perspective “begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison, 2020, p. 4). She further adds that “the critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control”

(Madison, 2020, p. 4). Ultimately, my research aims to address these issues of ethical responsibility, social injustice, and power imbalances between the non-Roma majority and the Roma minority within the selected segment of social life and relations. Notably, Madison (2020, p. 24) makes a clear link between critical ethnography and critical theory, providing a crucial theoretical foundation for my research.

II. Scaffolding My Positionality as a Researcher

Before delving into reflections on my specific identities, it is worth mentioning two bodies of scholarly knowledge that are fundamentally interlinked and have shaped my initial thinking regarding my own positionality as a researcher. First, engaging with post-modern perspectives on ethnographic research allowed me to come to terms with notions such as “ethnographic truths are... inherently partial” (Clifford, 1986, p. 7) and that knowledge is “situated” (Haraway, 1988). It was an important cognitive shift for someone with a previous educational background in political science and conducting human rights research. For many years, my primary objective was to gather factual information on wrongdoings faced by Roma in order to gain acknowledgement from public authorities, human rights bodies, and courts. For instance, I previously implemented an experimental method of situational testing, which was essentially designed to capture discriminatory reality *in situ* to provide courts with evidence of unequal treatment to decide fairly. I had long viewed the research process through the lens of scientific ‘post-positivism’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Understanding the post-modern research perspective, which had previously been largely unfamiliar to me, helped me approach knowledge production in my research project in

a more relational and balanced manner. It enabled me to better embrace the importance of positionalities, allowing me to thoroughly address how they ultimately influence the production of knowledge. As the most general rule I set for my dissertation project, I am committed to putting in place a scientifically rigorous ethnographic research design and methodology that thoroughly reflects the emic perspectives of the research participants. This brings me to the second piece of the scholarly knowledge that has informed my positionality, one which carries obvious ethical implications.

It is undeniable that for a researcher positioned within the critical ethnography of the marginalised Roma minority, it is important to fully engage with and reflect on scholarly discussions regarding the decolonisation of Roma scholarly knowledge. Fotta and Gay y Blasco (2024c) discuss recent significant transformative developments in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller research,² characterising them as a “much-needed methodological overhaul” (p. 2). They note that researchers in this scholarly area are “increasingly acknowledging the power dynamics and inequalities that might be (re)produced through research practices” (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2024a, p. 164). While debates in this regard have been underway for years, Fotta and Gay y Blasco argue that the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s intensified these issues, even increasing the necessity to address their methodological implications. This discussion echoes broader scholarly views questioning the production of scholarly knowledge about disadvantaged groups by those who are privileged and hold power. These perspectives highlight how privileged social

groups produce knowledge about subordinated groups while keeping the latter muted (e.g. Ardener, 1975; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988). Such a view is also associated with the Critical Romani Studies scholarly perspective, which articulates the need to bring Romani voices to the forefront of Roma knowledge production (Bogdan et al., 2018). The call for a ‘methodological overhaul’, as framed by Fotta and Gay y Blasco in the referred volume, resonates particularly strongly, implying the need for deep, inevitable revisions in Romani scholarly research. They bring forward the importance of involving Roma as subjects in the co-production of scholarly knowledge, including engaged Romani scholarship. While this ongoing scholarly discussion remains complex and encompasses diverse scholarly viewpoints,³ a close reflection upon it is of paramount importance for early-career researchers conducting value-based, critical anthropology. Ultimately, it has implications for my own dissertation research, which I will expand upon later in this text.

III. Implications of Human Rights Activist's Identity for Critical Ethnographic Research

I have long pursued the equality and human rights of the Roma minority as an activist. In terms of my positionality towards the subject, my identity as a human rights advocate is not particularly salient; rather, it ultimately reflects my values outlined in subchapter I. My human rights engagement has been driven by these values, which now fuel my critical ethnographic research. Although my previous

² In this specific instance, I use the term ‘Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller’ research in line with the referred volume by Fotta and Gay y Blasco. Notably, while this terminology is currently widely used within the UK scholarly environment (Marushiakova, 2025, p. 152), I adopt the more globally used term ‘Romani Studies’ throughout this chapter.

³ For a further overview and scrutiny of these recent debates, see, for example, Ryder (2019), Fremlová (2019), Ort (2023), and Dunajeva (2023).

engagement was more thematically diverse, it intersects with my current ethnographic research, revolving around situations of Roma when seeking work and their subsequent interactions and disadvantages. When designing my project and making methodological considerations, I am inevitably influenced by my past as an activist—shaped by everything I have professionally witnessed and experienced.

I naturally think about what I could reasonably apply from my previous activist experience to my critical ethnographic research. I search for possible linkages and overlaps. Apart from the common value base and thematic focus, I have identified two significant aspects in which my critical ethnographic research intertwines with my previous human rights engagement. The first is the endeavour to ensure that my research is applicable to advancing the human rights of the Roma minority. The second is my commitment to empower research participants and Roma communities.

As for the former aspect, the endeavour to ensure the applicability of my research to advancing Roma minority rights fits well with the very nature of critical ethnography captured by the above definition. I am specifically considering this aspect when narrowing my research focus and formulating research questions. I wish to give my dissertation thesis sufficient space to describe how the results of my ethnographic research can be used in related public policymaking at the government, municipal, or other institutional levels. I find it reasonable to be largely specific and descriptive in this respect, drawing on cross-sectional perspectives that stem from my human rights advocacy experience and my background in political science. However, I also find it important to recognise and set out the boundaries between my position as a human rights activist and that of a critical ethnographer. Being a human

rights activist is definitely still one of my identities. Formally, I concluded my previous engagement with a Slovak grassroots human rights NGO, where I worked for 17 years as a programme coordinator and researcher. When writing this chapter, I am not engaged in any civil society activities related to the protection of human rights. However, I will sooner or later likely return to human rights civil society activism, to a certain extent, in the course of my dissertation research. Ryder (2021) points out a range of dangers that may arise for an ethnographic researcher who is actively engaged in human rights advocacy. Apart from the obvious risks of falling short in the overall research process and duties due to excessive overload, multiple roles may give rise to various tensions and create confusion between the researcher and research participants, as well as among the participants themselves and institutional stakeholders interacting with the researcher. Reflecting on these aspects, I will strive to ensure that my ethnographic research, including my fieldwork and research participants, remains completely separate from any human rights activities in which I may eventually be engaged. Any such human rights engagement would focus on other contexts and locations and involve interaction with different people.

Still, I cannot hide my previous human rights engagement, which can easily be traced, and I will not hide it in communication with research participants either. This previous engagement and related fieldwork made it easier for me to identify Roma communities for ethnographic research and to gain access to them through local Roma activists whom I had previously known. To prevent the risk of blurring my identities among the research participants, I intentionally selected localities where my previous NGO has not been actively addressing human rights issues in recent

years, and where I have not been moving around. Apart from my informants or gatekeepers, research participants essentially do not recognise me as an activist. However, I strongly feel that situating my research interest within the context of my previous human rights engagement in initial communication may contribute to gaining the trust of research participants. As such, I speak with them about my positionality in relation to the participants in a transparent manner. However, I will not engage in addressing any human rights violations that research participants may raise with me. In such cases, I will refer them to relevant human rights bodies or NGOs. Critical ethnography and the critical paradigm that I follow align well with my positionality as a human rights activist. Still, this does not absolve me of the need to continuously reflect on possible biases and stances (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71) stemming from my ‘activist’ self that could unduly influence various stages of the research, particularly data collection and interpretation. Clear methodological grounding and data triangulation are also among the safeguards in this regard.

The second significant aspect intertwined with my previous human rights engagement is my commitment to empowering research participants and the communities where I conduct my research. It is a perspective to which I attach immense value and is deeply rooted in my thinking about my positionality as a researcher. A declared mission of the NGO of which I was long an integral part is “supporting those who suffer human rights violations and empowering them to become active participants in addressing injustice”.⁴ An idea of empowerment also

⁴ Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva): <https://poradna-prava.sk/en/about-us/>

permeates the work of the most established international Roma rights NGO, the European Roma Rights Centre, which has endeavoured to “provide Roma with the tools necessary to combat discrimination...”⁵. Indeed, empowering people facing human rights violations is widely perceived as one of the important elements in the human rights discourse. The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is explicit in stating that “people who are vulnerable must be empowered” (The United Nations General Assembly, para. 23). The commitment to empower vulnerable people also fits well with the very nature of critical ethnography. While making several distinctions between conventional and critical ethnographers, Thomas (1993, p. 4) points to the additional effort of the latter ones “to speak to an audience on behalf of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects’ voice.” Likewise, Madison (2020, p. 5) considers critical ethnographers as those bringing forward the stories of interlocutors who are otherwise unheard, raising their voices and highlighting their experiences. This already provides an approachable theoretical grounding for a human rights activist stepping into ethnographic research. However, speaking on behalf of research participants is arguably a halfway perspective that does not necessarily account for their agency in challenging their disadvantaged positions. Zachar Podolinská (2024) outlines the social and cultural phenomena and discourse of recent decades, particularly the decolonisation of Western anthropology, post-colonialism, ‘woke’ culture, cancel culture, and critical research, pointing to their important influence on the research process in ethnology

⁵ The European Roma Rights Centre: <https://www.errc.org/who-we-are/overview>

and social anthropology in this century. In view of this development, she points out, *inter alia*, that “there is now a stronger emphasis on collaboration and partnership with communities, aiming not only to amplify their voices, but also to empower those ‘we are studying’” (Zachar Podolinská, 2024, p. 32). Promoting the engagement of research participants, who often represent excluded and historically marginalised communities, aligns with the understanding of participatory research and inquiry (Ospina et al., 2021, p. 3). Such a methodological direction also aligns with efforts to decolonise knowledge in Romani Studies, as discussed in the previous subchapter. It has already been followed by a number of researchers who have conducted collaborative research with Roma participants (for examples, see Fotta and Gay y Blasco, 2024b, p. 24–25).

Reflecting on the above scholarly development, the collaborative approach and the use of participatory research methods pose important issues for designing my dissertation project and conducting my research. They bear immensely meaningful ethical implications. Notably, while consulting on my project, I received a suggestion from an anthropologist who, knowing my activist background, proposed that I might consider conducting an ethnography in collaboration with Roma participants who would write their own narratives. My enthusiasm for such an approach and its ethical essence mingles with concerns that I might be unable to address potential challenges related to it, some of which I am not even able to fully recognise or anticipate at this point. It should be emphasised, however, that I do not perceive a straightforward causal relationship between the involvement of research participants in ethnographic research and their empowerment. I assume that whether their involvement empowers them varies across different

stages of the research process and also depends on individual circumstances and the attitudes of the participants. I find it important to reflect thoroughly on whether the specific engagement of research participants does not primarily serve the professional goals of the researcher, and whether research participants are not being pushed into a position in relation to the researcher with which they do not fully identify. This may increasingly happen, particularly in critical ethnography, where participants from a vulnerable community are supposed to address issues of injustice in relation to the dominant majority. The above perception stems from my experience as an activist and my understanding that not everyone wants to be equally involved in, and stand up against, injustice at a given time and place—for various understandable reasons, such as other commitments or perceived risks of victimisation. Nevertheless, they may appreciate a human rights activist from outside, a critical ethnographer or one of a few active members of their community taking responsibility for amplifying others’ voices while pursuing rights and interests on their behalf. Moreover, the efforts of one or a group of committed individuals can arguably encourage and empower other members of a vulnerable group to become involved in the future. As such, my understanding of empowering research participants and communities is associated both with the voluntary engagement of research participants in the research process and post-research advocacy, as well as with my own commitment to expose their lived experience and contribute to addressing inequalities and injustice.

To summarise my own research position in this regard, I keep in mind the notion advanced by Fotta and Gay y Blasco (2024a, p. 165), who avoid specifying parameters

for non-Roma scholars wishing to make efforts towards the decolonisation of Roma scholarly knowledge. Instead, they encourage the researchers to articulate individually how they respond to this scholarly discussion and call through their own methodological approaches, including innovations. At this point, I still perceive the involvement of research participants in my research as existing along a broad spectrum, ranging from conducting the research in a rather conventional way, without particularly pronounced collaboration or with only limited elements, to more intensive collaboration across many stages of the research process. I make an effort to explore participatory research methods and to communicate with research participants in order to reasonably position myself on this spectrum. This issue will be further elaborated in the next subchapter.

IV. Navigating the Identity of a Non-Roma Researcher in Roma Communities and Other Distinctive Outsider Statuses

The identities of qualitative researchers can be the same as, or different from, those of their research participants. As such, they give rise to either researchers' insider or outsider status vis-à-vis participants, and, in any research, these statuses will likely be multiple (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 10). The identities and related statuses of researchers and research participants who interact in the field are arguably highly diverse and interact in various ways. Returning to the theoretical grounding from the introduction, these identities and statuses are arguably a key consideration in locating a researcher in relation to participants. As Gusterson (2008, p. 96) notes, "ethnographers are inevitably marked by their identities, whether it is race, class, gender, educational level, nationality or other characteristics," adding that, in some

contexts, their identities can be beneficial, while in some others they can be detrimental. Although I sense that the background of human rights professionals may be generally well received by research participants and may positively facilitate my fieldwork, there is a range of identities that give me other forms of outsider status and potentially make my ethnographic research increasingly challenging. The most relevant aspect in this regard is definitely my status as a non-Roma researcher. However, class and other statuses also require careful attention, as they may influence my interactions with research participants and my overall positionality in the field. What are the negative implications stemming from my outsider statuses, and how can they be addressed?

Being a non-Roma researcher conducting research in Roma communities comes with particularly pronounced implications. From the perspective of the above-mentioned scholarly views advocating the decolonisation of Romani research, I contribute to the retention of an undesirable status quo. I acknowledge the importance of decolonising the production of Roma scholarly knowledge and the reasons behind it, which prompts me to necessarily address this particular positionality issue in my research. After all, this perspective makes for me a straightforward association with the previous efforts of the NGO of which I was a part to include Roma people in its structures and all its activities. I assume that it is possible to take steps towards alleviating the negative implications of my positionality as a non-Roma outsider and knowledge producer. I can arguably balance this positionality in my ongoing research while striving to make the research process increasingly inclusive for research participants who are Roma. In terms of my fundamental research approach, I am anchored in

the critical paradigm, which articulates that knowledge in qualitative research arises through interaction and dialogue with research participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This paradigmatic grounding necessarily keeps bringing me back to the methodological trajectory of participatory research and its meaning. When designing my project, I am dealing with how the production of knowledge is going to be carried out at every stage of the research process and what concrete avenues are available to make it a process of co-production with research participants.

At the early stage of my dissertation project, when my research questions are still being shaped, there is valuable space to balance my positionality by being mindful of what research participants say about the project's focus and goals. I find it meaningful to listen to what they suggest for my project within the boundaries of the broader specified area of research and the critical approach, so that it contributes to addressing the disadvantages and injustices they experience. The opinions of research participants can be one of the key sources influencing my thinking in this regard and contributing to the finalisation of my project design. Furthermore, involving a research participant or participants in the role of a research assistant can be a particularly meaningful step towards greater participation. From my initial field visits, I sense that the informal role of my initial individual contacts in Roma communities could eventually develop and come closer to that of a person who assists to a significant extent. When involving a research assistant, I find it important to make this relationship transparent while exploring possibilities for remuneration, including financial support from small research grants available through my PhD research placement in the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Furthermore, as a non-Roma man, I strongly reflect on another layer of my outsider position in relation to Roma women. My research considers the situation of Roma women in the labour market an important area to explore. It appears reasonable to consider involving a Roma woman as a research assistant in order to balance my position in relation to female research participants. The same holds true for young Roma people who are completing their education and transitioning to the labour market. Reflecting on my previous experience documenting discrimination against Roma in access to employment—including intersectional discrimination against Roma women in this area—I reasonably suppose that my different gender status will not have a significant impact on research with this particular focus. The NGO of which I was a part has, *inter alia*, monitored and addressed violations of Roma women's reproductive rights, including the occurrence of unlawful sterilisations in the past.⁶ The documentation of these issues has been largely facilitated by women and/or Roma women colleagues, although I was not precluded from discussing these issues with Roma women as well, particularly those who had known me for a long time. Notably, conducting interviews revolving around the situation of Roma women in the labour market does not constitute the same kind of gender-specific theme. Given that I am already in my early forties, it is also reasonable to consider my outsider status in relation to young Roma people. I suppose that this particular age difference of about one generation might potentially pose a greater challenge in engaging and interviewing research participants than the gender difference. It therefore

6 For a comprehensive thematic overview of this work, see Durbáková et al. (2017).

constitutes a positionality issue to be addressed, for instance, by engaging a research assistant from the younger generation.

Another significant aspect of my outsider status lies in the social and economic class difference. For my ethnographic research, I have preliminarily chosen Roma communities other than the severely marginalised and segregated ones in Slovakia. One of them lives in a village jointly with the non-Roma population and is on a fairly comparable socio-economic level. Regardless of how the class statuses of myself and the research participants differ in reality, it is plausible to say that Roma participants might associate me with a higher social class simply by perceiving me as a non-Roma scholarly researcher. Being located in relation to participants in such a way poses a positionality problem comparable to that associated with my non-Roma ethnic identity, as well as obvious practical challenges that may negatively affect the research process. Failing to address these positionality issues might arguably lead to situations in which people in Roma communities do not interact with me or drastically filter their communication and, ultimately, the knowledge they are willing to share with me. As Gusterson (2008, p. 96) points out, ethnographers' own identities influence which aspects of the field environment they can access, to what extent, and whether they can access them at all. For instance, engaging Roma activists in monitoring human rights violations against Roma within the NGO of which I was a part of was, *inter alia*, incredibly beneficial for obvious ethnicity-related positionality reasons, and even more so for establishing initial contact in newly visited communities. I argue that practical challenges associated with ethnic and class-based outsider positions can be alleviated through individual interactions, even

though this may take a longer time. When I was moving within Roma communities as an activist, I naturally tried to remove aspects that might evoke feelings among Roma that I occupied a superior position of any kind (*sic*). I strived to act as an activist, offering selfless support to those who were interested. But what really mattered was how people in the communities actually perceived me and what effects this had. To address these aspects, I paid attention to what I was wearing, how I was acting, and what I was saying. As obvious as it might sound, I learnt that showing genuine interest in the lives of people in marginalised communities often helps break down barriers they might initially feel due to ethnic and class differences. Offering them a sincere handshake is something that some of them might have rarely experienced from non-Roma in Slovak society. Asking how they are doing, listening to them with genuine interest, talking to them respectfully, offering to take off one's shoes when entering their house even if it is not necessary, tasting their food when offered, and other similar—seemingly trivial—details of respectful, non-hierarchical social interaction often make a difference in interactions in Roma communities, and certainly not only there (cf. Marushiakova, 2025, pp. 137–139). I find that this experience is transferable to the position of a critical ethnographer.

I have already mentioned the importance of being mindful of how and to what extent my gatekeepers within Roma communities are involved in supporting my research. In a broader sense, I find it important to keep reflecting on whether my research is non-exploitative not only towards individuals who voluntarily provide me with support, but also towards whole communities (see Dunajeva & Vajda, 2021). As Ryder (2021) implies, ethnographic research may too often be centred solely on extracting data from research

communities in an opportunistic fashion. He writes about the 'hit and run' approach, in which a researcher might be perceived as someone driven by their own research interests, who, after achieving their research goals, simply disappears from the community. Such an approach obviously does not align with how I reflect on and envision my research in Roma communities. One particularly noticeable difference between my current interaction with research participants and my previous human rights engagement might indeed relate to Rider's critical remark on the self-centred ethnographic approach that I genuinely seek to avoid. Notably, I sense that my previous interactions with Roma could arguably have been easier in that I was a part of the NGO that provided Roma with something tangible, which some of them appreciated, particularly free legal assistance in selected human rights issues and free legal representation in various human rights legal proceedings. It was a long-term and steady commitment for an indefinite period of time, which scholarly research does not necessarily presume. Discrimination and other human rights proceedings in Slovakia have usually taken a very long time, often ultimately ending up either before the European Court of Human Rights or other international human rights bodies. Certainly, many Roma did not find the human rights engagement of my NGO beneficial to them for various reasons, such as other personal and social needs or priorities, which was understandable. Analogically, I find it important that I am able to clearly communicate to research participants the practical meaning and potential applicability of my research, so that they find their involvement—regardless of how collaborative it may be—meaningful. At the same time, I acknowledge that many individuals in my ethnographic field will find

my research unmeaningful and will not collaborate with me for various reasons. Decisions of potential research participants both to collaborate and not to collaborate with me on the research hold equal relevance and warrant equal understanding on my part. While reflecting on the motivations of research participants to engage in the research, I also find it reasonable to search for possibilities to balance the outsider position of an ethnographer by 'giving back' to the community during the research process in a way that is mutually meaningful and non-transactional (cf. Marushiakova, 2025, pp. 137–139). Researchers can seek reciprocity and indirect forms of remuneration over a longer time (Wardell, 2025, p. 54). For instance, Černušáková (2020, p. 47), who conducted ethnographic research in a Roma community in Ostrava, partly linked her ethnographic research with providing English language lessons to children from several Roma families in the community. I assume that such a meaningful contribution through sharing knowledge can obviously increase local people's trust and can even be naturally reciprocal in that a non-Roma researcher, including myself, can learn or improve their knowledge of the Romani language in return.

Finally, suffice it to say that relevant public institutions will almost certainly not spontaneously recognise and adopt the results of my research. Likewise, civil society advocates might not push for better public policies and the advancement of Roma rights in Slovakia on this basis alone. A certain post-research advocacy engagement of the critical ethnographer seems almost inevitable to me, either through various forms of cooperation with civil society human rights advocates or individually. In the previous subchapter, I mentioned my caution about not becoming involved in activists' efforts in ways that might interfere with my dissertation research.

However, I reflect that, in case I successfully complete my research, I might transition to the role of an activist, highlighting my dissertation research, encouraging public discussion about its results, and advocating for their consideration in policymaking. I find that the final stages of my research—including the interpretation of research results and their translation into recommendations for policymakers—provide a particularly meaningful foundation for dialogue with research participants. These collaborative stages could subsequently develop into joint post-research awareness-raising and advocacy efforts, which I find particularly reasonable. They could naturally bridge my current scholarly research with my previous NGO experience, which arguably makes a great deal of sense.

The truth is that, in the previous paragraphs where I discussed how to make my research process increasingly inclusive for research participants, I did not touch upon the difficulties and risks of this methodological endeavour. First and foremost, I consider it hardly possible to introduce participatory elements into ethnographic research without having established at least a certain high level of pre-research interaction and cooperation with research participants, and ideally also among them. “Participatory frameworks assume a degree of collective cohesion among research participants” (Ondrejka, 2025, p. 79). I am not entering my ethnographic field with this kind of relational position, which I consider a major obstacle. This may be further exacerbated by the time constraints of PhD research, which are not particularly suited to the long and gradual building of mutual relationships with and among research participants. The risks associated with participatory research are widely discussed and multifaceted (see, e.g. Lenette et al., 2019; Burns et al., 2021). I must necessarily

evaluate them through the scope of the specific details of my research project and ethnographic field. As I have mentioned earlier, a long and well-established relationship with my informants presents potential opportunities for certain forms of narrower, non-group collaboration through their potential involvement as research assistants. However, the impact of local assistants, whether formal or informal, on the ethnographic field and the creation of knowledge must be thoroughly examined (Fotta & Gay y Blasco, 2004b). Notably, Ospina et al. (2021, p. 7) summarise that there is an important scholarly debate about “what represents strong, that is, ‘meaningful’ participation within a participatory research project”, while raising a range of ongoing questions. These scholars specifically consider the engagement of research participants in analysing their own data to be the most critical aspect of the participatory research. I assume that focusing on engaging research participants at this particular research stage could be a restrictive but particularly viable approach. Nevertheless, I am not going to conclude this chapter by setting concrete parameters for the coproduction of scientific knowledge with research participants. I believe that their clarification will arise from further immersion in my ethnographic field throughout the ongoing research process, building and strengthening contacts with research participants and engaging in mutual communication about their possible involvement.

Conclusion

Existing scholarly knowledge makes it clear that addressing researchers’ positionality in ethnographic research is a multilayered and reflective process that explores researchers’ relations to the selected theme, research

participants, and a wide range of other aspects. It is an ongoing and deeply iterative process that arguably does not allow for shortcuts. In this chapter, I outlined my own initial reflexive process, aiming to define my positionalities as a researcher in critical ethnographic research with the Roma minority at an early stage. Establishing positionality holds particular importance for an ethnographer conducting field research with vulnerable communities. I highlighted scholarly views showing that defining the positionalities of ethnographers requires, *inter alia*, making clear their own identities and their relations to the identities of research participants. Ethnographers should thoroughly reflect on what these identity-related relationships entail for their qualitative research process.

By addressing my identity as a human rights activist, I have described the most pronounced intersections between civil society engagement in the protection of minority rights and critical ethnographic research with vulnerable minorities. I have made clear that they both share a distinctive value basis while uncovering and tackling the unfairness and injustice experienced by vulnerable minorities. Both uncover how the power and agency of the dominant majority impact the situation of the minorities and aim for respective social change. In addition, both place importance on empowering members of vulnerable minorities, who are commonly research participants for critical ethnographers. Given these common traits, critical ethnographic research with vulnerable minorities is a particularly appealing research approach for civil society activists, who may either transition to rigorous scholarly research or link it with civil society activism. However, I have also raised scholarly opinions warning that conducting civil society activism alongside scholarly research entails risks that must be thoroughly reflected upon.

I have thematised the issue of the outsider status of non-Roma researchers in Roma communities, which has been subject to ongoing scholarly debate. This includes the pronounced scholarly perspective that stresses the need for increased engagement of Roma researchers in scholarly research concerning the Roma minority. In addition, the non-Roma identity distinctively influences a researcher's positionality within Roma communities and poses various challenges. In response to this, I have discussed possibilities for alleviating the negative implications of the identity of a non-Roma outsider and knowledge producer in my dissertation research project through the increased involvement of research participants at particular stages of the research process. In this regard, I have reflected on power relations in critical ethnographic research between researchers and members of vulnerable minorities. I have particularly highlighted scholarly views stressing that a researcher should, *inter alia*, avoid self-serving and exploitative tendencies in the ethnographic field.

The analysis of the opportunities and risks to involve research participants in my research at particular stages of the research process has brought forward viable options to prioritise. These include particularly meaningful engagement of key informants, involving research participants in the critical research stage of interpreting their own research data, and post-research advocacy towards policymakers. Reflecting on the scholarly discussion on the decolonisation of Romani studies, I have declared my commitment to contribute to this ethically sound perspective by making my research increasingly inclusive for research participants. However, I do not yet specify parameters or benchmarks for these efforts, given the early stage of my research process. In this regard,

further immersion in my ethnographic field, building and strengthening contacts with research participants, and mutual communication about their engagement are needed.

The iterative, reflexive process that I have captured in this chapter will continue to evolve. It will constantly take shape through my presence in the research field and interactions with research participants. This process will be non-linear and recursive, incessantly mirroring my values, the ethical groundings presented, and my research abilities. Here, each and every compromise must be very well justified. I believe that, for critical ethnographers, there is no way to approach this differently. They shall embrace this challenge.

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IV. ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN MY RESEARCH OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS to Access to the Labour Market for Marginalised Roma Groups in a Socio- Anthropological Perspective

Korina
Mitrová

1. Introduction: my research topic, field, and methodology

In this article, I argue that ethical issues are not a side issue in ethnographic research. I do not present this as a novel finding, but rather use it as a foundation to examine how this established principle informs the specific design of my own fieldwork. In my work with marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia, they shape the research from the first contact onward. In Romani studies, this matters especially because research can reproduce, intensify, or challenge structural inequality, anti-Roma racism, and misrepresentation. I see and treat this vulnerability as produced by social conditions and further increased by the ways research, as well as public discourse, represent Roma communities (Škobla et al., 2025; Zachar Podolinská, 2024a, 2024c). Recent scholarship, therefore, calls for context-based, reflexive, and participatory research designs (Condon et al., 2019; De Koning et al., 2019; Miranda et al., 2019; Roman et al., 2013; Zachar Podolinská, 2024a, 2024c). My dissertation examines how local economies, institutions, labour-market policies, and households' everyday strategies intersect in relation to work and income. At first, I considered a larger, multi-local design to make anonymisation easier. Later, however, it became clear to me that ethical and methodological questions cannot be neatly separated. Choices about locality, access, and depth also distribute risk and visibility. For that reason, I narrowed the design toward deeper, more sustained work in one relatively populous locality, with an emphasis on emic understanding and on difficult ethical questions of access, trust, and institutional risk.

This article was prepared as part of the methodological and ethical preparation of my dissertation research. I therefore do not treat methodology as a separate technical

background, but as the place where ethical questions appear most clearly. The methodological details included here are selected because they have ethical consequences for access, sampling, consent, anonymity, interpretation, and publication.

My current methodology is based on repeated visits, participant observation, informal conversations, and, later, more focused semi-structured interviews with individuals or small groups. The core fieldwork takes place in one relatively populous locality and centres on several households and working-age adults, later with a narrower focus on a smaller group. Rather than beginning with a few chosen respondents, I am planning to work with a more layered sample, which gradually narrows down into closer engagement with fewer respondents. This is important for me methodologically because I want to follow how labour barriers are lived and narrated across a wider set of people, while still leaving room for closer attention to particular stories and biographies in the later phase. My aim is to understand how people talk about work, unemployment, income strategies, debt, migration, childcare, contact with the labour office, and the pressure to appear employable. I will also conduct additional interviews with NGO workers, local officials, social workers, labour office staff, and employers to bring in different perspectives. Since these actors occupy different positions of power, that asymmetry shapes my approach, the consent process, and my practical steps in the fieldwork. In that sense, the design is relational and multi-perspectival from the very beginning.

For clarity, the final research strategy is conceived as a staged design: first, mapping the locality and institutional field; second, broader exploratory contact with several households and working-age adults; third, repeated conversations with a narrower group of respondents; and fourth, complementary interviews with institutional and

local actors. The material will be analysed through thematic coding of labour barriers, income strategies, and institutional encounters; positional coding of who produces particular accounts and from what position in the local field; and a reflexive coding layer based on fieldnotes about access, consent, discomfort, risk, and anonymisation.

My pilot research highlighted the value of methodological triangulation. In the pilot phase, I conducted unstructured interviews with mayors, including one from the selected locality, and with labour office employees. These interviews revealed varied labour barriers linked to regional inequalities. Barriers, among others, stem from the limited impact of some activation programmes, employers' fears and prejudices, local authority brokerage, and anti-Roma stereotypes in institutions. The pilot also showed that these barriers are not only due to institutional failure. They are shaped by cumulative poverty, care burdens, interrupted schooling, transport limits, debt, health constraints, distrust, and the strategies Roma households use to secure basic needs (Škobla, Mušinka, and Majo, 2025).

Beyond its substantive findings, the pilot highlighted ethical tensions directly relevant to the main fieldwork. It became clear to me that the local labour field is determined by unequal distributions of institutional, symbolic, and relational power, and that this affects not only how data is gathered but also how it is later consumed. I therefore have to pay attention not only to what is said, but also to who says it, from which position, about whom, in what language, and with what stake in the local distribution of work, respectability, and legitimacy. Access through powerful actors can shape later trust. Some respondents may worry that speaking about employment practices could expose their undeclared work, while discriminatory discourse

might appear in institutional interviews, so I need to be careful not to simply normalise or recycle in my analysis and interpretation. In the pilot, the group of mayors did not appear as neutral respondents. They acted more as local selectors, recommenders, and mediators of opportunity. This is why questions of gatekeeping and brokerage became central for me very early on. Questions such as what I can offer respondents, how I approach sensitive topics, how I respond to anti-Roma and anti-Gadze discourse, and what I do when respondents fear exposure are not only questions of topic. They are also questions of method. In other words, ethical problems arise already in access and interpretation, not only after the main fieldwork begins.

My master's research with asylum seekers in legal settings also shapes the ethics of this fieldwork. Some respondents saw me as a legal adviser despite my clarifications. That showed me that even small acts of help can shift the relationship between researcher and participant. Although the contexts differ, the lesson remains relevant. I learned that qualitative research ethics go far beyond approval forms, encompassing participants' perceptions and expectations, as well as the risks associated with sharing information (Mitrová, 2019). Zachar Podolinská, in the conclusion to the first volume of *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology*, makes a similar point: morally responsible research depends on listening, negotiation, good-faith consensus, retaining participant trust, and preventing institutional carelessness with collected data (Zachar Podolinská, 2024b).

For me, ethics is not an external control measure but an integral part of the research project's structure. The main argument of this article is that, particularly when working with marginalised or vulnerable groups, ethical reflection is embedded in every methodological choice and interpretive

step. Longer engagements and sensitive topics require ongoing ethical negotiation throughout the whole research process. This article addresses six main clusters of ethical problems in my field: (1) ongoing ethical negotiation; (2) voluntariness under gatekeeper-mediated access; (3) role confusion and reciprocity; (4) confidentiality and risky disclosures; (5) visibility of interview settings and uneven voice; and (6) positionality and representation. I first outline the primary ethical codes, then discuss the specific challenges stemming from my research design, and finally offer practical responses for fieldwork, analysis, and publication.

2. Ethical codes relevant to my research and their evaluation

Rather than relying on a single ready-made code, I drew on several and built a working ethical framework for this project. The main discipline-specific anchors are the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (AAA, 2012) and the Etický kódex Národopisnej spoločnosti Slovenska (NSS, 2017). I use them not because my project is a typical example of long-term stationary immersion in a strict sense, but because they set out the most relevant general principles for anthropological, ethnographic, and qualitative fieldwork more broadly. The AAA code is especially useful to me because it frames ethics as professional responsibility rather than a checklist and treats informed consent as an ongoing, reflexive process (AAA, 2012).

The NSS code is the closest Slovak discipline-specific framework for my work. It links key principles—dignity, privacy, anonymity, and voluntary participation—to ethnographic realities. It covers long-term contact, power asymmetries, publication risks, and ongoing field obligations (NSS, 2017). The Czech Association for Social Anthropology

(CASA) offers an important supplementary framework. Its code addresses anthropological specifics more directly than many institutional documents. It emphasises that researchers' responsibilities to participants may outweigh research goals, especially in small, risky, or unequal settings (CASA n.d.-a; CASA n.d.-b).

The Etický kódex FSEV UK is also important procedurally. Its main strengths are its clear definition of informed consent and its explicit statement that consent is not a one-time act. It also allows non-written consent if written consent is impractical or ethically problematic (FSEV UK, 2014).

Wider national and European integrity documents are also relevant, although they are more general in scope. The Slovak and European Codes of Conduct and the Code of Ethics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences provide a basic framework for honesty, transparency, confidentiality, fairness, and careful data stewardship (Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Ethics in Slovakia, 2025; SAV, 2023; ALLEA, 2023). Their strength lies mainly in integrity and procedure. They are less developed in relationships, gatekeeping, stigma, and everyday field obligations. This distinction matters because research integrity codes tell me how a responsible researcher should act in general, whereas data protection law tells me what I must do with personal data in practice.

Once that broader integrity baseline is in place, another layer concerns data law. GDPR and Act No. 18/2018 Coll. require lawful handling of personal data and urge researchers to be careful about minimisation, purpose limitation, storage, access, and security (GDPR, 2016; Act No. 18/2018 Coll.). The data-protection layer matters because ethnography in a single locality or a single project inevitably generates both direct and indirect identifiers, even when no names are recorded. At the same time, data protection law

addresses only one part of the ethical problem. The General Data Protection Regulation and Act No. 18/2018 Coll. provide guidance on how to protect personal data once the data is collected; these legal frameworks do not decide whether I should ask a risky question in the first place or whether publishing a particular detail may later cause harm.

I also considered other documents listed in my ethics materials, such as the code of the Slovak Association of Social Anthropology (SASA) and internet-specific ethical protocols, especially the recommendations of the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). In this article, however, I treat them as supplementary rather than central, because the main fieldwork is locality-based and mostly offline, even if digital traces and later online circulation remain ethically relevant.

My overall evaluation is therefore double. On the one hand, the available codes are necessary. They give a strong framework for non-harm, informed consent, confidentiality, transparency, data protection, and accountability. For the substantive ethics of my project, NSS and AAA are the most important; CASA sharpens the anthropological dimension in small and unequal settings; FSEV UK is especially useful for consent procedure; and the Slovak 2025 code, SAV, ALLEA, GDPR, and Act No. 18/2018 provide wider standards for integrity and data administration. On the other hand, these documents become thinner exactly where my field becomes most demanding: when voluntariness is determined by gatekeepers; when reciprocity, trust, and role confusion blur the line between research and help; when one locality is so socially dense that anonymisation becomes unstable; when anti-Roma discourse becomes part of the data itself; and when the same piece of information may expose respondents, the researcher, and the host institution at the same time.

For my project, the ethical situation is therefore triangular rather than simply dyadic. I have to think about protecting participants, about my own responsibilities and exposure as a fieldworker, and about the institution under whose name the research is carried out. This is why I treat codes as necessary starting points, but not as complete solutions. As recent debates in Slovak ethnology and Romani studies also suggest, the most difficult decisions still depend on context-specific judgement, negotiation, and good-faith agreement rather than mechanical rule-following (Zachar Podolinská, 2024a, 2024b).

3. Ethical problems in my research and their practical solutions

The following section is organised around methodological decisions that generate ethical consequences. I do not aim to list all possible methodological details of the dissertation; rather, I focus on those parts of the design where ethics becomes a practical problem in the field, in analysis, or in writing.

3.1 Ethics as an ongoing process rather than a one-time approval

The first ethical problem is a basic one: in my field of social anthropology, ethics cannot be treated as something completed at the moment of formal approval. My route into the field unfolds in phases, each with a slightly different risk. By risk, I mean not only physical safety, but also legal, social, emotional, reputational, and institutional forms of possible harm. Entry through an institutional route prompts questions of dependence and filtered visibility; early presence in the locality prompts questions of how I am read

and whether people can actually refuse me; repeated visits bring questions of trust, over-familiarity, and cumulative obligation; and later, more focused interviewing brings questions of what should be recorded, what should remain background knowledge, and what should never appear in print. These risks concern not only respondents but also me, as the fieldworker, and the institution responsible for the project. My main fieldwork does not rest on one interview encounter. It depends on gradual entry into one locality, repeated contact with several households, then a narrower subset of respondents, informal conversations, observation, and later, more focused interviewing.

Trust-building in this kind of research is not simply about being “nice” or spending time in the field. For me, it means being clear about who I am, returning when I said I would, not promising what I cannot do, respecting refusals and silences, and showing in practice that I do not treat every disclosure as material to be extracted. I will deduce signals of trust not only from the fact that people tell me more, but also from the fact that they correct me, set limits, postpone a meeting, or tell me openly that a topic is not for today. It is important to note that the ethical intensity of the research may increase rather than decrease over time. As trust grows, people may disclose more; topics that initially appear ordinary may later prove sensitive; and the line between background knowledge and quotable material becomes less stable in long-term fieldwork.

At the same time, I do not assume that truth simply deepens with duration. A first encounter may also have its own epistemic value precisely because my outsider position is still sharper than it will be later. The point is not that later interviews are always better, but that different moments reveal different things and therefore call for different

ethical judgements. The AAA code speaks directly to this by treating consent as a continuing discussion, and the FSEV code likewise makes clear that informed consent is not a one-time act (AAA, 2012; FSEV UK, 2014). Akuffo's discussion of confidentiality is useful here as well, as it shows that confidentiality cannot always be fixed in advance and may need to be renegotiated as field relations develop (Akuffo, 2023).

My pilot work already pointed to this problem. One interview did not remain as private and bounded as I had expected, because another colleague of my respondent joined the situation, and the conditions of speech changed. Analytically, what matters is not only that the interruption happened, but that it changed the ethical status of the material. Once another person entered, the encounter was no longer a clearly delimited individual interview and moved closer to a situational small-group interview. In such moments, the practical question is immediate: do I continue, narrow the topic, pause the recording, or treat what follows only as background rather than as quotable data? That moment matters because it shows how quickly the ethical status of an encounter can shift. A conversation that seems safe at one point may become much less so a moment later. In my planned fieldwork, such changes may be even more common. Partners, children, neighbours, social workers, or project staff may move in and out of the conversation. In settlement research, these are not exceptional accidents but part of ordinary social life. The ethical question is therefore not simply whether I obtained consent once, but whether the conditions under which that consent made sense still hold.

For this reason, I want to treat ethics as an iterative practice rather than as a fixed protocol. In the field, this

means separating distinct layers of consent rather than collapsing them into a single moment. Consent to my presence, consent to conversation, consent to audio recording, consent to returning to sensitive topics, and consent to later quotation are not the same thing. I therefore want to return to these questions repeatedly, especially once trust deepens, topics shift, or the setting changes. Some informal conversations may remain only background understanding and may never be quoted. I consider that kind of restraint part of responsible ethnography.

I also want to keep reflexive fieldnotes not only about what I learned, but about whether the circumstances under which I learned it were still ethically acceptable. These notes should not remain loose impressions; I want them to follow a working structure. After each visit, I want to record at least where the encounter took place, who was present or entered later, how access was arranged, what form of consent was in place, whether pressure, interruption, or power asymmetry emerged, how I interpreted the respondent's comfort or discomfort, what I myself felt unsure about, and which parts of the interaction already seem collectable, background-only, or too risky for later use. I want to write these notes as soon as possible after the encounter in a secure digital file, and later treat them as a coded reflexive layer in the examination rather than as private memory alone. If the relation between what was collectable and what is publishable changes later, I will prioritise later ethical judgement over earlier enthusiasm for interesting material. This approach aligns with the dynamic understanding of consent and harm in AAA and FSEV UK, and it responds to Akuffo's point that confidentiality and participants' wishes may require contextual renegotiation (AAA, 2012; FSEV UK, 2014; Akuffo, 2023).

3.2 Voluntariness, access, and the problem of gatekeepers

The second major area concerns access. My plan is to enter the field through an NGO-linked project and families already connected to it. Methodologically, this is reasonable because without some local mediation, it would be difficult to begin longer-term research. At the same time, this type of entry also produces what ethnographic literature describes as gatekeeping: the ability of specific actors to enable, channel, slow down, or block access to the field and to particular people's everyday lives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Gatekeepers do not only open doors. They also shape who becomes visible, who feels able to speak, and whose perspective remains filtered out. In my case, participation may not feel fully voluntary if people connect me with services, opportunities, moral legitimacy, or future support. They may speak because they do not want to damage their relationship with the project, not because they freely want to take part in research. I therefore need to acknowledge openly that entry through an institutional actor is not a neutral solution. It lowers some risks of random entry, but it introduces other limits that cannot be fully removed.

My pilot phase showed a related version of the same issue. Entry through a mayor seemed practical, but it also revealed how the mayor functioned as a broker in the local labour field. By broker, I mean an intermediary who connects otherwise separated actors and mediates access to resources, opportunities, or reputations that he or she does not fully control (Lindquist, 2015). The mayor recommended names, evaluated reputations, and mediated contact with employers. In other words, access through such an actor was never socially neutral. More precisely,

it was not neutral within the local architecture of power. It reproduced a hierarchy in which some people were considered speakable, employable, or respectable through that mediation, while others became less visible or less legitimate before I had even met them. The ethical challenge is therefore larger and also concerns sampling, visibility, and the invisibility of those whom gatekeepers treat as unsuitable. It also affects interpretation, because I cannot read all statements as equivalent; I have to consider how each account is positioned within the field and in relation to Roma households that are already objects of local policy and local judgement. CASA is especially useful here because it explicitly recognises that responsibility is different in small and unequal settings, while NSS and AAA both insist that participant interests must take priority over research goals (AAA, 2012; NSS, 2017; CASA, n.d.-b).

My reply here is to protect voluntariness outside formal consent. I want to treat gatekeepers only as routes of introduction, not as selectors of who should participate or validators of participation. At the first real opportunity, discussion of the research should move directly from the gatekeeper to the potential respondent, ideally in a setting where refusal is easy and socially less costly. I will explain repeatedly that I am not part of service provision, that participation or refusal has no consequences for project involvement or access to benefits, and that the NGO or municipal route is only a means of access, not the interpretive frame through which I understand the locality. Where possible, I will also try to make the first substantial conversations happen without the gatekeeper physically present.

I also want to diversify my contact routes as soon as field conditions allow. By field conditions, I mean, above all, the point at which I know the setting well enough to

approach additional households or interlocutors without giving the impression that the NGO is monitoring, recommending, or endorsing their participation. It also means practical conditions in which refusal can occur without embarrassment or consequence. If I rely too heavily on one gatekeeper, I risk hearing only voices that are already institutionally visible, cooperative, or seen as appropriate. Ethically, this matters because silence and lack of access are not random. They may reflect fear, fatigue, distrust, conflict, or over-exposure to institutions. For that reason, my sampling has to remain precise: I expect broader exploratory contact with several households and actors, but deeper repeated follow-up with a smaller subset likely amounting to around twenty to thirty interviews across the whole field. The point is not to rely on only a few voices from the outset, but to move from a wider relational map to a more focused set of stories and biographies that can be followed in greater depth over time.

The ethical task is not to simulate a breadth I do not have, but to be clear about how wider access narrows into a more focused relational sample. I do not want to treat refusal merely as a practical inconvenience. In some cases, repeated refusal is itself a sign that my route of access is producing pressure or distrust and that my approach needs to change.

A second layer of voluntariness becomes visible only in longer fieldwork. Because I plan repeated contact with a number of families, I must not treat initial openness as standing permission for future access. A respondent may agree to meet once and later feel tired, over-observed, busy, or simply unwilling to continue at the same intensity. In a locality already saturated by institutional demands, programmes, and evaluation, a researcher can easily become one more person asking for time, explanation, and

emotional energy. I do not want to read postponements, shorter conversations, cancellations, or silence as failure. Postponements, shorter conversations, cancellations, or silence may instead be participants' attempts to regain control over the research interaction. My position is to treat voluntariness as something renewable rather than something exhausted at the moment of first consent. In practical terms, renewable voluntariness means repeatedly checking whether the timing is suitable, steering clear of any expectation of constant availability, and accepting partial attendance without demanding an explanation. If someone no longer wants to speak with me, I will treat that decision as final for that stage of fieldwork and will not search for moral explanations. If expectations arise that I am supposed to provide symbolic, practical, or even financial help that I cannot reasonably offer, I will name that limit clearly and, where appropriate, redirect the person to existing services rather than allowing reciprocity to become covert pressure. Ethically, the right to withdraw has to remain socially possible even after familiarity has been established. Treating voluntariness as renewable in long-term field relations is consistent with ethical codes that insist voluntariness must remain real rather than merely formal (AAA, 2012; NSS, 2017; CASA, n.d.-b).

3.3 Role confusion, reciprocity, and anti-extractive expectations

A third area arises from the relational nature of the chosen research methods themselves. In long-term fieldwork, I might be perceived as a researcher only rarely. Respondents may see me as connected to an NGO, as institutionally informed, as potentially helpful, or as useful in some other way. In fact, role ambiguity starts already with the first

introduction, because my position is read through my accent, education, route of access, age, gender, and the simple fact that I arrive from outside but not from nowhere. This ambivalence is not necessarily the result of deception. More often, it is produced by the field itself: by the route of access, by ordinary conversation, by my background, and by the fact that I enter relations that already exist. This is also why reciprocity is both ethically necessary and ethically difficult.

My earlier master's research made this especially clear. In legal settings with asylum seekers, some respondents addressed me as if I had legal competence or institutional influence, even though I repeatedly clarified that I did not. I also offered my help to them in limited ways, for instance, through translation or support in Slovak, and that practical help changed the relationship (Mitrová, 2019). That lesson is highly relevant to the current project. In a locality identified by marginalisation, unemployment, housing insecurity, dense institutional relations, and social deprivation, even minor actions can be read as promises or as signs that I am connected to resources. At the same time, a purely extractive position would be ethically unacceptable. I cannot expect people to keep sharing time, trust, and difficult experiences while pretending that reciprocity is unnecessary. The real dilemma, then, is not whether reciprocity should exist, but how to keep it from turning into indebtedness, pressure, or misplaced expectations. Respondents may seek not only practical help, but also recognition, pity, understanding, or a clear evaluative stance toward their situation. That possibility also belongs to the ethical field. CASA is particularly useful here because it emphasises responsibility, reciprocity, and ongoing obligations after fieldwork, while AAA and NSS are helpful for thinking about honesty and respectful relationships (AAA, 2012; NSS, 2017; CASA, n.d.-b).

My answer here is to combine careful role clarification with what I call bounded reciprocity. By this I mean a form of reciprocity that is real, transparent, and limited: it recognises that repeated research encounters should not be purely extractive, but it does not allow help, gifts, or advocacy to become implicit conditions of participation. I want to introduce myself consistently as a researcher and student, not as a project worker, mediator, or institutional representative. If people ask me for help that exceeds my competence or would distort my role, I will redirect them as clearly as I can to the relevant actor rather than pretending to have expertise I do not have. My earlier research showed me that even well-meant ambiguity can mislead respondents about what I can actually offer (Mitrová, 2019). I also think doctoral training is very beneficial here. Concrete ethical case discussions and simulations of expected reciprocity would prepare researchers better than abstract warnings alone.

At the same time, I do not think the ethical answer is emotional distance or pure extraction. Reciprocity matters. In my case, however, it has to remain modest, transparent, and non-coercive. It may take the form of respecting respondents' time, explaining the research purpose in an accessible language, offering later feedback on findings in a form understandable outside academia, and sometimes helping with small practical matters that do not create dependence and are not tied to participation. Here, dependence needs to be understood broadly. It can be practical, but it can also be emotional or psychological: respondents may seek reassurance or the sense that I have moved from analytic listening to personal alignment. I cannot entirely eliminate that possibility, but I can remain reflexive about it and avoid making it the basis of the relationship. The ethical aim is therefore not to erase reciprocity, but to keep it from becoming leverage.

Reciprocity also has to be bounded in time. In long-term fieldwork, even small forms of help can accumulate symbolic meaning. What looks like ordinary politeness at one moment may later be read as a stronger obligation, a guarantee of advocacy, or a sign that I will “do something” with the information I receive. I therefore need to reflect not only on what kind of help I offer, but also on how regularly I offer it and what expectations it may create. If reciprocity becomes too personalised or too tightly tied to research encounters, it can weaken participants’ freedom to say no. My aim is to keep reciprocity real but low-pressure: present enough not to be extractive, limited enough not to become an implicit contract.

3.4 Confidentiality, anonymity, and risky disclosures

The fourth ethical challenge concerns confidentiality, but in my project, confidentiality cannot be reduced to replacing real names with pseudonyms. Basic anonymisation is only the first step: removing direct identifiers such as names, exact addresses, phone numbers, or explicit institutional labels. In my field, however, that is clearly not enough. The research is moving towards a primary locality, repeated visits to several households, and themes such as unemployment, debt, informal income, migration, family strategies, and contact with labour-market institutions. In such a setting, deductive identification becomes a serious issue. A person may be recognisable not because I state their name, but because I reproduce a specific combination of role, household composition, project involvement, employment trajectory, and local event. By a socially dense field, I mean a field in which many actors know one another’s households, trajectories, conflicts, project roles, and biographies well enough that a distinctive combination of details may identify someone even when names are absent. My pilot work

already showed that this risk is real. It was already clear that undeclared labour, public institutional roles, and distinctive life situations might remain recognisable even after basic anonymisation.

This problem becomes sharper once sensitive or potentially incriminating information gets into the collected material. Research on marginalisation may easily encounter stories about undeclared work, debt arrangements, welfare strategies, informal exchange, or conflict with authorities. Ruzicka’s reflection on ethnographic work with poor Roma families is important here: he shows that some knowledge may be necessary to understand everyday survival under conditions of exclusion, yet politically dangerous to expose (Ruzicka, 2016). Surmiak’s work on confidentiality and disclosures of law violations or harm sharpens the dilemma further by showing that researchers repeatedly face a real conflict between epistemic interest, participant trust, and likely harm when confidentiality is broken, or when risky material is overcollected in the first place (Surmiak, 2020). In my project, the central issue extends beyond deciding how to respond if I encounter sensitive information or whether to pose a particular follow-up question during interviews. Following the pilot phase, I recognise that the research topic itself is inherently ethically sensitive, as labour barriers are closely intertwined with undeclared work, debt, welfare arrangements, and everyday survival strategies. Consequently, the primary concern is how to structure the entire research design to address this anticipated sensitivity from the outset.

My answer here is to practise contextual anonymisation rather than rely on simple name replacement. Changing the name of the locality and the names of respondents is not enough if the story still contains a unique combination

of household composition, project role, employment path, migration episode, debt history, and some locally known event. In other words, locality anonymisation and the use of personal pseudonyms do not automatically prevent deductive identification.

At the same time, I do not want to decide in advance that the locality must remain unnamed in every version of the dissertation. The field site is a relatively heavily inhabited and internally differentiated locality, and if the final corpus proves broad enough and no combination of details makes participants readily identifiable, I may later decide that naming the locality is ethically defensible. That critical judgement, however, can only be made at the end, once I see which interviews, stories, biographies, and quotations actually remain in the text. I would not make this decision on intuition alone. I plan to assess identifiability after data analysis in consultation with my supervisor and, if needed, with the relevant ethics committee. The criteria will include the size and internal differentiation of the final sample, the density of local knowledge, the uniqueness of biographies, the combination of institutional roles and household details, and the likelihood that a reader from the locality could recognise a person, family, or conflict. In a socially dense locality, anonymisation must involve blurring or omitting combinations of features that, together, make a person recognisable. This may mean generalising occupations, broadening time markers, adjusting the order of some biographical details where that does not distort the analysis, avoiding exact references to project roles, and, where necessary, withholding the name of the locality or the route of access. In other cases where the cumulative risk is lower, it may be sufficient to retain ordinary pseudonymisation and remove only direct identifiers, rather than substantially

rewriting the story itself. This kind of contextual anonymisation is a common ethnographic strategy, but it also has costs. If used too strictly, it can distort trajectories, weaken verifiability, and separate the case from the structural conditions that give it meaning (Van den Hoonaard, 2003; Marushiakova, 2025; Zachar Podolinská, 2024b). My aim is therefore not maximal rewriting, but the minimum transformation necessary to protect people without compromising the analysis. In my notes and transcripts, identifying information will be stored separately from substantive data, and access to these files will remain restricted. Audio files and transcripts will be kept in secure digital folders, and I will collect only the personal data necessary for the research purpose, in line with GDPR and Act No. 18/2018 (GDPR, 2016; Act No. 18/2018 Coll.).

Operationally, anonymisation will proceed in stages. Direct identifiers will be removed during transcription; combinations of indirect identifiers will be checked during coding; and every quotation or case description will be reassessed before publication to decide whether ordinary pseudonymisation, contextual blurring, paraphrase, or omission is the safest and most analytically responsible option.

This strategy also applies to institutional respondents. A public position does not automatically remove ethical responsibility. In a one-locality design, I cannot treat institutional actors as if they stood outside the same problem of recognisability. Even a mayor, project worker, or labour officer, may be identifiable through a combination of locality, function, quoted wording, and known events. For that reason, my default will be a consistent high-level anonymisation across the whole field, with only limited differentiation by role. I may preserve somewhat more contextual detail for public actors when it is scientifically

necessary, but never in a way that carelessly exposes families, local conflicts, or grey-zone practices. The fact that someone speaks in an official capacity may appear to justify somewhat less anonymity than in the case of families, but it does not imply less protection or weaker security measures.

3.5 Interview setting, visibility, and uneven voice

A fifth ethical problem concerns the setting of speech. People do not speak in a social vacuum. In a small locality, simply being seen speaking with me may carry meaning. An interview with a family can quickly become a semi-public event. Someone else may enter the room, sit nearby, listen, translate informally, or later ask what was discussed. In practice, this can turn an intended individual interview into a *de facto* family or small-group interview. This matters especially when topics involve employers, debt, discrimination, welfare, migration, or tensions inside the household. It also matters for uneven voices. Men and women, older and younger family members, or respondents with different relations to institutions may not have the same room to speak when others are present. What I hear is therefore always formed by where the conversation takes place, who is present, and how visible the encounter is.

Again, the pilot phase already made this visible. The workplace interview I conducted was interrupted and joined by another colleague, which showed that privacy is not an abstract requirement. It is part of the conditions under which something can be said safely. In the main fieldwork, this issue may become even more delicate because home, neighbourhood, and project space are not neutral interview settings. At the same time, I do not assume that privacy issues emerge only later in the research. Even an early encounter,

when I am still clearly an outsider, can produce observations that are unusually clear. That is why I need to protect not only the data that comes with deeper trust, but also the data that surfaces in first meetings. The European Commission's guidance on ethnography is useful here because it recognises that ethnographic research regularly raises difficult decisions precisely because it studies social life in natural rather than artificially regulated settings (European Commission, 2013). The ethical problem is therefore not only how to record speech, but how to create conditions in which speech can remain genuinely voluntary and safe.

In response, I want to practise what I call ethical restraint. By this, I mean a deliberate limit on what I pursue, record, and later quote, even when the material would be analytically attractive. My aim is not to gather as much risky knowledge as possible, but to understand mechanisms, meanings, and strategies without unnecessarily creating danger. For that reason, I want to avoid pressing for names, exact amounts, detailed descriptions of undeclared employment arrangements, or other specifics whose analytic value would be outweighed by the risk they create. If a participant moves toward material that seems too dangerous to record in detail, I want to prioritise their safety rather than the completeness of the transcript. In practice, this may mean not recording part of a conversation, not asking a follow-up question, or deciding later not to cite a revealing passage. At the end of more sensitive interviews, I also want to briefly return to what was just discussed and ask whether anything should remain off the record or not be used later.

The interview setting forms part of the same solution. I will try to conduct more sensitive interviews in settings that are as private and as free of interruptions as possible. If additional people become present, I will reassess whether

the topic can continue safely. If not, I will reschedule, redirect, or stop. Children or other relatives may also be present, even when they are not intended respondents. In such cases, I have to ask again who is actually part of the interaction and whether the topic is appropriate for that situation. This also means that I should not romanticise trust-building as the only route to good knowledge. Some of the most analytically valuable material may appear in a first conversation, before my presence gets normalised. My task is therefore not to privilege either the first or the later interview in advance, but to stay attentive to what each setting makes possible and what it puts at risk. The standard cannot be a perfectly controlled setting, but I need to be attentive to how the setting shapes risk and voice.

3.6 Positionality, anti-Roma discourse, and the ethics of representation

The sixth ethical problem concerns my own position and the form of knowledge I will eventually produce. I want to work from an emic perspective. I want to understand how people themselves interpret work, failure, obligation, and respectability. Yet that aim does not remove the problem of my own positionality. I am the one who formulates questions, selects material, decides what becomes a theme, and turns lived relations into text. Nencel's work on reflexivity is important here because it argues against the illusion of a simple fit between social reality and ethnographic representation (Nencel, 2014). Sultana, and later Soedirgo and Glas, also stress that fieldwork is always situated in power relations and that reflexivity has to include not only who I am, but also how my position might be perceived by others and how that itself shapes the data I get to collect (Sultana, 2007; Soedirgo and Glas, 2018). Pugh

and Mosseri add another important point that trustworthy ethnography does not come from naive transparency or extraction, but from slow trust-building, reflexive judgement, and a kind of quality that does justice to contradiction and plurality (Pugh and Mosseri 2023).

This problem becomes especially relevant in research with a stigmatised population. My pilot interviews with institutional actors were saturated with anti-Roma stereotypes. Some respondents explained unemployment in terms of familiar moral categories, such as laziness, welfare dependence, lack of discipline, or unwillingness to work. For me, such statements are not irrelevant noise. They are themselves part of the research object because they show how labour barriers are narrated and justified from different institutional positions. The immediate fieldwork challenge is therefore not whether I hold the correct moral opinion, but how to register these discourses without endorsing them and without closing the encounter too quickly. At times, direct confrontation may be ethically necessary. In many cases, however, a more analytically useful response is asking who is being described, under what conditions, with what evidence, and from what institutional position. In writing, I will not treat such statements as self-evident explanations of Roma unemployment. I want to code them both thematically and positionally, that is, by who says them, from which place in the hierarchy, and with what consequences for the people being spoken about. Luxardo is useful here because she shows that fieldwork with structurally vulnerable groups always risks excluding particular narratives, stereotyping communities, or producing harm after the research is over if reflexive and situated ethics are not carried through into writing and circulation (Luxardo, 2022). In my project, then, the ethical challenge is not only how to collect data ethically,

but how to avoid turning a study of labour barriers into another deficit narrative about problematic Roma families.

My stance is to treat interpretation and distribution as ethical challenges in their own right. When I encounter anti-Roma discourse in the field, I do not plan to affirm it. At the same time, I do not think one rigid formula can govern every situation. Sometimes a neutral probe asking the speaker to clarify what they mean may be the most productive response; in other cases, a brief sign of distance may be necessary. What matters most is that I explicitly reflect on these moments in fieldnotes and later in analysis, rather than treating them as neutral information. Where relevant, I want to work with two linked languages in the text: an analytical language that interprets recurring patterns, and a reflexive, first-person language grounded in fieldnotes that records my hesitation, discomfort, or situational judgement. Discriminatory statements will therefore be analysed as discourse produced in a specific institutional and moral context, and not used as unscrutinised explanations of Roma unemployment.

The same principle applies to writing. I want to quote selectively, contextualise heavily, and keep structural and historical conditions in view when discussing income strategies. I do not want the research to grow into a list of deficits, nor do I want variation within the locality to disappear behind a single community portrait. This concern also follows Marushiakova's warning that research may reinforce anti-Roma stereotypes when Roma are represented mainly through marginalisation (Marushiakova, 2025). Luxardo's warning about stereotyping and exclusion, together with Ruzicka's warning about the political consequences of exposing hidden survival practices, are important here (Luxardo, 2022; Ruzicka, 2016). Not

everything that is true has to become fully publishable text. If a detail adds little analytic value but increases the risk of stigma, identification, or harm, then omission, paraphrase, or broader generalisation may be the more ethical choice.

Balance also requires me to remain alert to generalised stereotypes about non-Roma people that may surface among Roma respondents. In a field formed by repeated experiences of humiliation, exclusion, and unequal treatment, some respondents may speak of gadze as a morally uniform, external world that neither understands nor wants to help them, or as hostile. I do not want to erase such statements simply because they are uncomfortable, but I also do not want to reproduce them as if they were neutral descriptions of non-Roma society. Analytically, I will treat them as interpretations formed within concrete histories of discrimination, mistrust, and unequal encounters. This matters for balance, but not in the sense of creating a false symmetry between anti-Roma racism and anti-gadze stereotyping, because the power relations in which these discourses circulate are not equivalent. In writing, I therefore need to register such statements when they matter, distinguish between specific experiences with employers, officials, neighbours, or service providers and broader generalisations about non-Roma people as such, and show how stereotypes may circulate in more than one direction within an unequal social field (Zachar Podolinská, 2024b; Marushiakova, 2025; Škobla et al., 2025).

A related risk concerns the selection of material. Even where each description is empirically accurate, the overall picture may still become biased if I emphasise only the most dramatic cases. By cumulative narrative, I mean the wider image that is formed not by a single quotation, but by the accumulation of many individually accurate selections. A

text can therefore become ethically distorting, although none of its separate parts is false. Poverty, conflict, debt, or undeclared work may seem analytically attractive, but an exclusive focus on these aspects risks reinforcing a narrow and fabricated portrayal of Roma marginality. It has the potential to underestimate the ordinary strategies through which households secure food, clothing, warmth, childcare, and day-to-day continuity. I therefore need to consider not only the truth of individual statements, but also the cumulative narrative they create. One practical response is to preserve heterogeneity in my writing and make my approach to interpretations as explicit as possible. Where possible, I also want to consult respondents about broader interpretive claims, not just as a form of validation, but as a way of checking whether my language distorts the meanings I am trying to understand (Nencel, 2014; Sultana, 2007; Pugh and Mosseri, 2023).

I also want to treat distribution as part of the ethical process. Ethical codes remind researchers that their obligations do not end when data collection stops (AAA, 2012; NSS, 2017; CASA n.d.b). This means thinking not only about an academic audience, but also about how findings may be distributed locally or institutionally. If it is possible and safe, I would like to share selected findings in an accessible language with respondents or organisations involved in the field. However, even this kind of feedback has to be handled carefully. Giving results back is not automatically beneficial if it exposes respondents, risks conflict, or circulates stigmatising interpretations back to the field.

Related to this is the ethics of exit. Because my design depends on repeated presence, the research relationship will not end the moment I finish the interviews. If people become used to my visits, conversation, or small practical

help, a disappearance may feel extractive. By small, practical help, I mean only low-stakes assistance that stays within my competence and is not contingent on participation, for example, sharing publicly available contact information, explaining when or where an office is open, or reading aloud a short notice or form when asked. Even these minor acts have to remain limited, because over time they can accumulate symbolic value. I therefore need to think in advance about how to responsibly close a phase of fieldwork, for example, by explaining when visits will become less frequent, clarifying what will happen to the material, and not allowing respondents to assume that ongoing contact or intervention will simply continue. This matters because the text's afterlife reaches beyond my own departure from the locality. Once findings circulate through articles, presentations, or institutional discussions, I can no longer fully control how they are reused. For the same reason, restraint in writing also means deciding in advance not to publish certain kinds of material at all: exact descriptions of undeclared work arrangements, distinctive combinations of household details, identifying accounts of debt or benefits, private conflicts with little analytic value, and quotations that would make a respondent, family, or institutional dispute locally recognisable. This is why I do not see restraint in writing as a loss of data, but as part of ethical responsibility.

4. Conclusion

The main scientific contribution of this article is not the proposal of a new ethical code, but a situated explanation of how ethical dilemmas become part of methodological design in research on labour-market barriers among marginalised Roma groups. I show that access, sampling, coding,

anonymisation, reciprocity, and representation cannot be treated as separate technical steps, because each of them also distributes visibility, trust, and possible harm.

Taken together, these six areas of difficulty also show why I find it more useful to connect each ethical issue directly with the practical way I want to handle it. In my field, dilemmas do not appear one at a time. A single encounter may involve gatekeeper-shaped access, role expectations, confidentiality risks, and later representational consequences simultaneously. For that reason, the ethical adequacy of the research depends less on abstract principles alone and more on judgement in the particular situations. Taken together, the preceding sections show why this article cannot be reduced to a simple contrast between “good ethics” and “bad fieldwork.” In my project, ethics is not an administrative step that comes before research begins, but a continuous practice that frames the work at every stage: access, interaction, analysis, writing, and later circulation. This becomes especially clear as the design moves toward a single primary locality, several households, a narrower number of repeated contacts, and themes such as unemployment, informal work, debt, discrimination, and institutional contact. The more contextual and relational the research becomes, the less convincing it is to imagine that one signed form, one institutional approval, or one general principle could settle all ethical questions in advance.

The ethical codes available to me remain necessary. They provide a strong normative basis for non-harm, informed consent, confidentiality, transparency, data protection, and organisational accountability. For my project, the most useful core is AAA and NSS, with CASA as an important anthropological supplement, FSEV UK as a strong procedural guide for consent, and the GDPR,

together with Act No. 18/2018, as essential legal provisions for data administration. Yet the most ethnographically specific dilemmas in my field are only partly covered by these documents. Gatekeeper-shaped voluntariness, role confusion, reciprocity, risky disclosures, positionality, anti-Roma discourse, and the danger of stigmatising publication all require situated judgement that no code can entirely replace. This is especially true when participant interests, researcher safety, and institutional responsibility all meet in a single encounter.

In this narrower sense, concepts such as bounded reciprocity and ethical restraint are not only moral attitudes, but also methodological tools. They help me decide how far to follow a topic, when to stop asking, what not to record, and how to transform field knowledge into a publishable academic argument without exposing people unnecessarily.

For that reason, the ethical strength of my research will depend on making my ethical judgements transparent and accountable at each stage. I need to be able to explain why I entered the field in a particular way, why I asked or did not ask certain questions, why I recorded some things and left others unrecorded, why I anonymised one detail and not another, and why I decided that some material is ethically suitable to collect and some I evaluated as not publishable. That accountability also requires me to distinguish between what the field makes knowable and what scholarship makes publishable. In research with marginalised Roma communities, not every insight should be fully disclosed in analytical form. Some materials are valuable precisely because they reveal the distribution of trust, vulnerability, and social risk. However, responsible use of such material may involve paraphrasing, summarising, or deliberately omitting rather than full exposition. This also applies to

the later decision about whether the dissertation will keep the locality anonymous or identify it by name. Because the field site is relatively populous, I do not want to decide that too early. I would rather assess the identifiability of the accumulated material at the later stages of fieldwork, when I know which interviews, biographies, and quotations actually remain in the dissertation. At the level of the dissertation, I therefore expect to make this visible in two linked ways. First, in a methodological section that states the overall ethical design. And second, in shorter reflexive passages within empirical chapters, whenever access, consent, anonymisation, quotation, or the non-use of material directly influence my interpretations. From this perspective, methodological restraint is not a limitation of the project, but part of the measures and strategies I want to apply to make my research as ethical as possible.

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Project title: Employment Opportunities and Barriers to Labour Market Access for Members of Marginalised Roma Groups from a Socio-Anthropological Perspective

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V. „TERRA INCOGNITA, TERRA NON GRATA (?)“. *Chobotnicové afiliácie v publikačnej etike – európske normatívne trendy*

**Tatiana Zachar
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Úvod

V posledných rokoch sa v medzinárodnom akademickom prostredí zintenzívnila diskusia o tom, ako výskumníctvo vykazuje svoje inštitucionálne afiliácie vo vedeckých publikáciách a projektových výstupoch. Hodnotiace systémy, rankingy a mechanizmy financovania nadviazané na bibliometrické indikátory vytvárajú tlak na zvyšovanie publikačnej produktivity nielen na úrovni jednotlivcov, ale aj vedecko-výskumných a univerzitných pracovísk (ďalej len „inštitúcie“). Na tento tlak reagujú niektorí výskumníci/výskumníčky, ale aj samotné inštitúcie praktikami, ktoré sú predmetom kritických diskusií.

Kapitola čerpá z odporúčaní kľúčových medzinárodných inštitúcií: *All European Academies* (ALLEA), *Committee on Publication Ethics* (COPE), *International Committee of Medical Journal Editors* (ICMJE), *European Network of Research Integrity Offices* (ENRIO) a *European Research Council* (ERC) – ktoré spoločne vytvárajú európsky normatívny rámec pre vedecko-výskumnú integritu a publikačnú etiku.

Text kapitoly otvára pálčivú tému publikačnej etiky, ktorá patrí v súčasnosti k etickým výzvam, o ktorých sa čoraz častejšie diskutuje. Čelí im nielen autorstvo a výskumníctvo, ale aj samotné inštitúcie realizujúce a podporujúce vedecký výskum, a napokon aj inštitúcie, ktoré hodnotia ich výkon. Text sa sústreďuje na neželaný jav „viacnásobných nezaslúžených“, tzv. *chobotnicových afiliácií* (Moustafa, 2020) – a na súvisiace etické a systémové problémy, vrátane viacnásobného vykazovania a plného započítavania tých istých výstupov viacerým inštitúciám súčasne (tzv. „multiple counting“). Do diskusie je zahrnutý aj sprievodný jav (umelého) *nafukovania* („boosting“), keď si inštitúcie prostredníctvom nezaslúžených afiliácií vykazujú výstupy,

ku ktorých vzniku podstatne neprispeli, a budujú tak neoprávnený symbolický, reputačný aj ekonomický kapitál.

Názov kapitoly – „Terra incognita, terra non grata (?)“ – metaforicky vystihuje dvojité povahu skúmaného fenoménu viacnásobných nezaslúžených afiliácií: ide o územie, ktoré zostáva v normatívnom diskurze z veľkej časti nepreskúmané a nepomenované, a zároveň o prax, ktorá sa stáva čoraz menej prijateľná v širšom európskom/medzinárodnom akademickom priestore. V čase, keď inštitucionálna zodpovednosť za vedecko-výskumnú integritu nadobúda konkrétne garančné, finančné a reputačné dôsledky – na čo reagujú aj sprísňujúce sa podmienky získavania európskych grantov – si akademické a univerzitné prostredie nemôže dovoliť túto tému ignorovať. Vzhľadom na potrebu cieleného scitlivovania akademického prostredia a precizovania pravidiel dobrej praxe a publikačnej etiky je potrebné problematické prípady typologicky jasne pomenovať, diskutovať o nich a optimálne aj normatívne uchopiť.

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Druhá etapa formovania pravidiel etického publikovania siaha do začiatku 21. storočia. Na 2. svetovej konferencii o výskumnej integrite v Singapore (júl 2010) vypracovali Elizabeth Wager a Sabine Kleinert v rámci *Výboru pre publikačnú etiku* (COPE) vyhlásenie, ktoré zodpovednosť za publikáciu jednoznačne rozšírilo aj za hranice samotného redakčného/publikačného procesu: publikácia je až záverečnou fázou výskumu; zodpovednosť autorky alebo autora sa začína už pri jeho koncipovaní (Wager & Kleinert, 2011). S tým priamo súvisí aj povinnosť transparentne deklarovať všetky konflikty záujmov – finančné, inštitucionálne aj osobné – pričom absencia takejto deklarácie sa začala považovať za závažné etické pochybenie v procese vedeckého publikovania (Wager & Kleinert, 2011; COPE, 2011a).²

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³ K fenoménu „darovaného autorstva“ pozri napr. Smith, 1994.

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Táto línia bola v roku 2025 ďalej rozvinutá v ďalšom diskusnom príspevku *Declaring funding sources for research* (COPE, 2025), ktorý odporúča uvádzať zdroje financovania v sekcii „Acknowledgements“ (Poďakovanie) alebo v samostatnej sekcii „Funding“ (Finančné zdroje) – pričom prevládajúcim trendom je ich uvádzanie v samostatnej sekcii – a to *oddelene* od inštitucionálnych afiliácií aj od vyhlásení o konfliktoch záujmov.

Z oboch diskusií tak vyplýva, že afiliácia je formou *inštitucionálneho autorstva*. Afiliácia tak indikuje nielen zamestnanecké, pracovno-právne, zmluvné a iné vzťahy výskumníctva/autorstva a afiliovanych inštitúcií, ale aj z afiliácie plynúce garančné záväzky všetkých zmluvných strán podieľajúcich sa na diele, vrátane symbolických a reputačných benefitov, ako aj (potenciálne) priamych finančných ziskov, licencií a podobne. Z diskusie COPE (2025) tiež vyplynulo, že spolufinancovanie projektu či poskytnutie infraštruktúry

⁴ V európskom kontexte je afiliácia úzko previazaná s princípmi zakotvenými v Európskom kódexe správania pre výskumnú integritu (ďalej Európsky kódex; ALLEA, 2023), ktorý zdôrazňuje transparentnosť, zodpovednosť a čestnosť vo všetkých fázach výskumného procesu vrátane publikovania a reportovania výsledkov (platné aj pre projekty financované Európskou úniou, pozri European Commission, 2023). Európsky kódex explicitne spomína, že výskumníctvo má povinnosť korektne priznať príspevok inštitúcií a uvádzať len také príslušnosti, ktoré zodpovedajú skutočnej účasti organizácie na výskume.

samo osebe *automaticky nezakladá inštitúcii nárok na afiliáciu* – korektným miestom pre také uznanie sú sekcie poďakovania alebo vyhlásenia o zdrojoch financovania.

Medzi legitímnou pluralitou a „nezaslúženou“ chobotnicovou afiliáciou

V prostredí globalizovanej vedy je legitímne, že výskumník/-čka môže mať viac než jednu pracovnú afiliáciu. Môže ísť o kombináciu hlavného pracovného pomeru a čiastočného úväzku, o dvojité zamestnaneckú pozíciu medzi univerzitou a výskumnou inštitúciou, o kombináciu akademickej a súkromnej či neziskovej inštitúcie, alebo (najmä v prípade prírodných vied) o kombináciu akademickej afiliácie a klinickej praxe. Rovnako môže ísť o pracovnú tranzíciu, dlhodobý výskumný pobyt alebo krátkodobú mobilitu. *Európsky kódex* takéto legitímne viacnásobné inštitucionálne prepojenia, vyjadrené aj vo forme inštitucionálnych afiliácií vo vedeckých výstupoch a projektoch, akceptuje – pokiaľ sú transparentné, zodpovedajú reálnemu podielu práce a vkladov inštitúcií na výskume a výstupoch a pokiaľ sa nezneužívajú na umelé navyšovanie výkonu (ALLEA, 2023).

Na opačnom póle stojí prax označovaná ako *chobotnicová afiliácia* („octopus affiliation“; v skratenej verzii aj ako *oktafiliácia*, „octaffiliation“). Uvedený termín zaviedol Khaled Moustafa (2020) v štúdiu o viacnásobných inštitucionálnych afiliáciách v časopise *Scientometrics*.

Chobotnicová (t.j. rozvetvená, viacnásobná, mnohopočetná) *afiliácia*, priraduje jeden výstup k viacerým inštitúciám na základe nerovnakého a často nesprávneho či eticky nekorektného princípu (pozri aj COPE, 2023). Uvedené afiliácie pritom nezodpovedajú skutočným

podielom vedeckých inštitúcií na publikovanom výstupe alebo projekte a nie sú výsledkom reálnych spoluprác. Ich uvedenie za menom autora/-ky vedeckého výstupu tak môže byť prejavom nevedomého pochybenia či neznalosti správnych spôsobov uvádzania afiliácií, ale rovnako môže skrývať aj nekorektnú zámernú stratégiu autora či samotných inštitúcií, ako lepšie obstať v hodnotení vedecko-výskumnej činnosti a získať finančné či reputačné benefity.

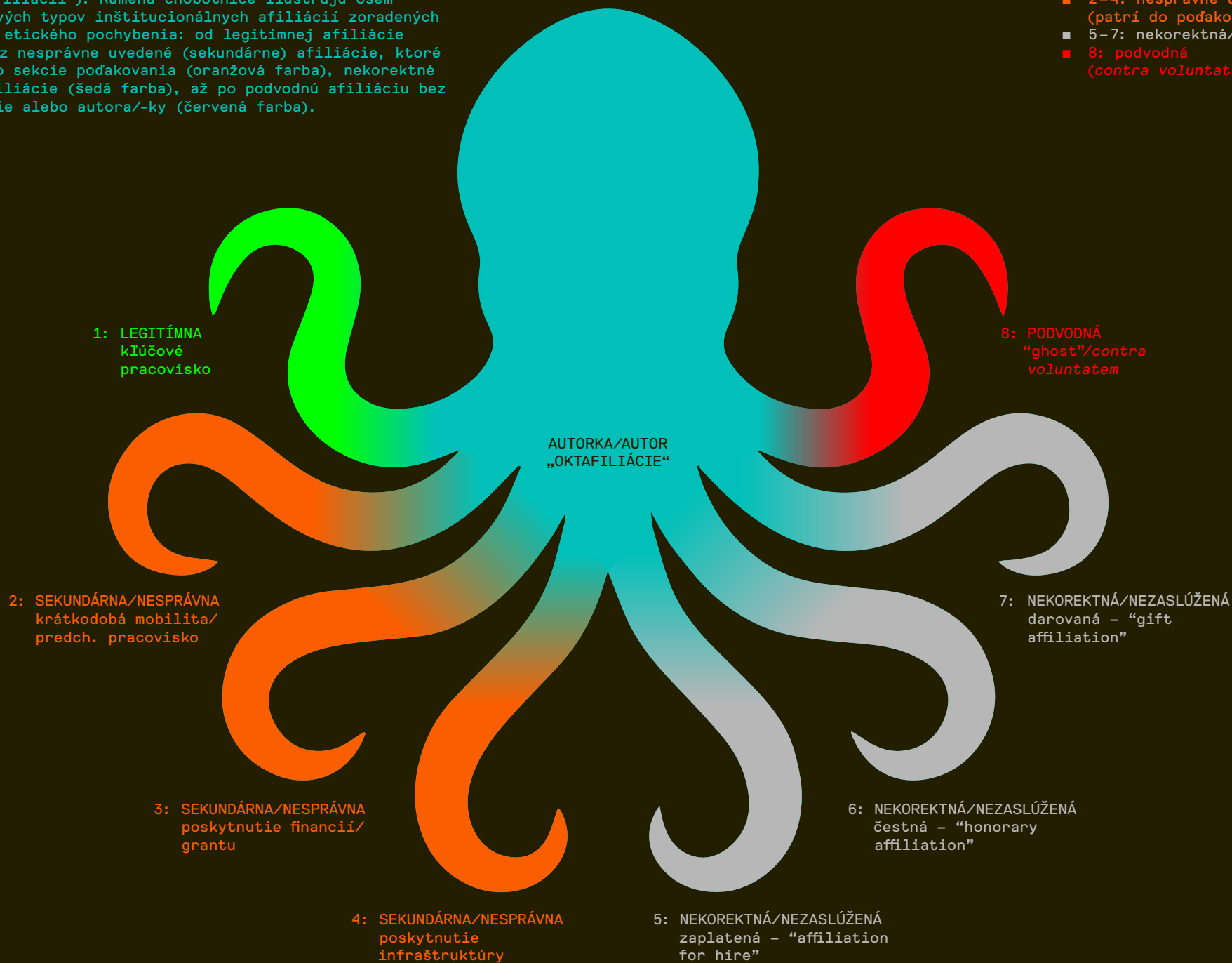
Typológiu vybraných modelových prípadov uvádzania inštitucionálnych afiliácií zachytáva Obrázok 1. Metaforicky zobrazuje autora/-ku s mnohými „chápadlami“ smerujúcimi k rôznym inštitúciám, ktorými udeľuje mnohopočetné inštitucionálne afiliácie, avšak vo väčšine prípadov nesprávne a nekorektne (t.j. bez toho, aby tieto inštitúcie podstatne alebo skutočne participovali na výskume/výstupe).

Na analytické účely možno na základe typológie znázornenej v Obrázku 1 presnejšie rozlíšiť osem vybraných Prípadov (1)–(8)⁵ uvádzania inštitucionálnych afiliácií. Typológiu a terminológiu vytvorila autorka kapitoly na základe analýzy normatívnych dokumentov (Bachelet et al., 2019; Moustafa, 2020; COPE, 2023, 2025; CIR-CAT, 2023a, b).

⁵ Ide o vybraný počet modelových prípadov *chobotnicových afiliácií*. Spektrum prípadov nesprávnej publikačnej praxe je omnoho početnejšie.

Obrázok 1: Schematické znázornenie typológie *chobotnicových afiliácií* („oktafiliácií“). Ramená chobotnice ilustrujú osem vybraných modelových typov inštitucionálnych afiliácií zoradených podľa závažnosti etického pochybenia: od legitímnej afiliácie (zelená farba) cez nesprávne uvedené (sekundárne) afiliácie, ktoré správne patria do sekcie poďakovania (oranžová farba), nekorektné a nezaslúžené afiliácie (šedá farba), až po podvodnú afiliáciu bez vedomia inštitúcie alebo autora/-ky (červená farba).

- 1: **zaslúžená**
- 2–4: **nesprávne uvedená** (patrí do poďakovania)
- 5–7: **nekorektná/nezaslúžená**
- 8: **podvodná** (*contra voluntatem*)



Terminológiu nekorektne uvedených afiliačných typov v Prípadoch (5)–(8) autorka odvodila od zaužívanej typológie nesprávne uvádzaných autorstiev, t.j. *zaplatené/kúpené autorstvo* („paid“/„purchased authorship“; napr. Teixeira da Silva, 2021) slúžilo ako vzor pre → Prípad (5) – Zaplatená afiliácia; *čestné autorstvo* („honorary authorship“; napr. Harvey, 2018) ako vzor pre → Prípad (6) – Čestná afiliácia; *darované autorstvo* („gift authorship“; napr. Smith, 1994) ako vzor pre → Prípad (7) – Darovaná afiliácia; *prízračné autorstvo* („ghost authorship“; napr. Mowatt et al., 2002) v jeho dvoch analogických podobách – neoprávnené pripísanie identity bez súhlasu a neoprávnené zamlčanie skutočného prispievateľa – ako vzor pre → Prípad (8) – Podvodná afiliácia.⁶ Typológia afiliácií je zoradená vzostupne podľa narastajúcej závažnosti etického pochybenia:

- (1) Legitímna afiliácia – autor/-ka uvedie afiliáciu kľúčového pracoviska, na ktorom prebehol výskum a kde bol pripravený samotný výstup;
- (2) Sekundárna/Nesprávna afiliácia – *Transferová/Mobilitná afiliácia* – autor/-ka sa nachádza v situácii prechodu z jedného pracoviska na druhé: finálny výstup vznikol až po príchode na nové pracovisko, ale výskum sa realizoval na predchádzajúcom pracovisku. Súčasné pracovisko alebo (krátkodobá) stáž či mobilita

⁶ Predložená typológia nie je vyčerpávajúca. Medzi ďalšie, tu explicitne neuvádzané, no v literatúre dokumentované nekorektné formy patrí napríklad tzv. *vynútená/nátlaková afiliácia* („coerced affiliation“; porov. Fong & Wilhite, 2017), analogická ku „coercive authorship“: mocensky nadradený aktér (školiteľ/-ka, vedúci/-a pracoviska) núti autora/-ku uviesť jeho/jej inštitúciu ako afiliáciu napriek absencii reálneho výskumného vkladu, pod hrozbou kariérnych alebo hodnotiacich dôsledkov. Na rozdiel od *darovanej* (dobrovoľnej) a *čestnej* (zvykovej/pozičnej) afiliácie ide o priamy mocenský nátlak. Podobne stojí za zmienku aj tzv. *reciprocčná/citačná afiliácia* (porov. Ansele, 2024), pri ktorej je uvedenie afiliácie súčasťou širšej výmennej dohody za vzájomné citovanie alebo iné (publikačné) výhody – mechanizmus príbuzný tzv. *citačným kruhom* opísaným v texte nižšie.

bez podstatného výskumného vkladu hostovskej inštitúcie *nezakladá nárok na afiliáciu* (COPE, 2025). Ak sa afiliácia súčasného pracoviska alebo hostujúceho pracoviska mobility uvádza akoby automaticky, avšak bez podstatného inštitucionálneho vkladu, ide o nesprávne uvádzanie inštitucionálnej afiliácie. „Primárnu afiliáciu“ (t.j. uvedené ako prvé v poradí) má mať to pracovisko, kde prebehla kľúčová časť výskumu; aktuálna inštitúcia môže byť uvedená ako „sekundárna afiliácia“ (t.j. ako druhá v poradí) len vtedy, ak sa na nej realizovala podstatná časť práce. Ak bol vklad podstatný, ide o regulárny prípad sekundárnej afiliácie; inak sa vklad inštitúcie má vyjadriť v sekcii „Poďakovanie“ alebo v poznámke k autorovi/autorke (APA, 2020; HRK, 2018);

- (3) Sekundárna/Nesprávna afiliácia – *Finančná/Grantová afiliácia* – organizácia poskytla financovanie alebo grant. Ak išlo o podstatný vklad a ide o zmluvnú spoluprácu, afiliácia sa uvedie ako druhá v poradí, v takom prípade ide o regulárny prípad sekundárnej afiliácie. Ak sa však organizácia nepodieľala kľúčovou formou na uskutočnení výskumu a poskytla „len financie“ (nezávisle na ich objeme) bez intelektuálneho alebo personálneho vkladu, *nezakladá to jej nárok na afiliáciu*; správnym miestom pre uznanie tohto druhu inštitucionálneho vkladu je sekcia „Deklarácia o poskytnutí finančných/grantových prostriedkov“ (COPE, 2025), ev. „Poďakovanie“;

- (4) Sekundárna/Nesprávna afiliácia – *Infraštruktúrna afiliácia* – organizácia poskytla infraštruktúru (priestory, prístroje, dáta). Ak išlo o podstatný vklad a ide o zmluvnú spoluprácu, afiliácia sa uvedie ako druhá v poradí, v takom prípade ide o regulárny prípad sekundárnej afiliácie. Ak však bola infraštruktúra inštitúciou poskytnutá bez podstatného intelektuálneho alebo personálneho príspevku; *nezakladá to jej nárok na afiliáciu*. Poskytnutie infraštruktúry (odplatné aj bezodplatné) sa má správne uvádzať v sekcii „Poďakovanie“ alebo iným vysvetľujúcim komentárom v texte (COPE, 2025);
- (5) Nekorektná/„Nezaslúžená“ afiliácia – *Zaplatená afiliácia* – inštitúcia ponúkla autorovi/-ke finančnú odmenu alebo minimálny úväzok výlučne za uvedenie svojho mena v afiliácii, bez reálneho výskumného vzťahu (tzv. „affiliation for hire“);
- (6) Nekorektná/„Nezaslúžená“ afiliácia – *Čestná afiliácia* – inštitúcia je uvedená z titulu „čestnej pozície“ bez reálnej/podstatnej výskumnej participácie (tzv. „honorary affiliation“);
- (7) Nekorektná/„Nezaslúžená“ afiliácia – *Darovaná afiliácia* – afiliácia je udelená ako gesto vďačnosti a prejav uznania za mentorstvo, poradenstvo alebo prístup k zdrojom, nie za podstatný príspevok k danému výstupu (tzv. „gift affiliation“);
- (8) Podvodná afiliácia – (typovo najčastejší prípad): autor/-ka uvádza organizáciu bez

jej vedomia a súhlasu (*contra voluntatem*, alebo „without consent“), alebo s ktorou nemá žiadny právny vzťah, s cieľom osobného profitu. Typovo rovnakým prípadom je multiplikácia afiliácií bez vedomia a súhlasu materskej/kľúčovej inštitúcie, resp. dotknutých strán.

Korektné modelové riešenie situácií v Prípadoch (1), (2), (3) a (4) – Legitímna afiliácia + regulárne sekundárne afiliácie. Odporúča sa uvádzať maximálne dve pracovné afiliácie so súhlasom oboch zúčastnených strán (CIR-CAT, 2023b; COPE, 2023); vklady ostatných organizácií sa priznávajú v sekcii „Poďakovanie“. Ak počas vzniku výstupu dôjde ku zmene pracoviska, vhodným riešením je tzv. *transferová afiliácia* – uvedenie oboch inštitúcií s ich vzájomnou dohodou o poradí; ešte vhodnejšie je pracovisko s menším vkladom uviesť len v poznámke k autorovi/-ke (COPE, 2023; 2025).

Nesprávne riešenie Prípadu (2) – Transferová/Mobilitná afiliácia – nastáva, keď sa afiliácia aktuálneho alebo hosťovského pracoviska uvádza automaticky, hoci na ňom nebola realizovaná podstatná časť výskumu. Tu sa opäť uplatňuje základné pravidlo (APA, 2020): afiliácia identifikuje kľúčové pracovisko výskumu, *nie aktuálne zamestnávateľské miesto*. Krátkodobý pobyt bez podstatného výskumného príspevku hosťovskej inštitúcie *nezakladá nárok na afiliáciu* – taký vzťah patrí do sekcii „Poďakovanie“ (COPE, 2025; HRK, 2018).

Nesprávne riešenie situácií v Prípade (3) a (4) – nesprávna Finančná/Grantová afiliácia nesprávna *Infraštruktúrna afiliácia* – predstavujú situácie, keď inštitúcia síce reálne prispela k výskumu – finančne (grant, dotácia) alebo infraštruktúrne (priestory, prístroje, dáta), avšak nie spôsobom,

ktorý by zakladal nárok na afiliáciu. COPE autorov a autorky, ale aj redaktorov a redaktorky v tejto súvislosti odkazuje na kritérium „substantial contribution“ z *Publication Manual* Americkej psychologickéj asociácie (APA, 2020) – na afiliáciu má nárok výlučne organizácia s *podstatným príspevkom* k realizácii výskumu. Spolufinancovanie projektu, poskytnutie laboratória či prístrojového vybavenia toto kritérium bez pridruženého intelektuálneho alebo personálneho vstupu nespĺňa. Správnym miestom pre takéto uznanie je sekcia „Poďakovanie“ alebo „Prehlásenie o zdrojoch financovania“ (COPE, 2023; 2025; CIR-CAT, 2023a). Porušenie tohto rozlíšenia – teda uvedenie financujúcej alebo infraštruktúrne prispievajúcej inštitúcie ako afiliácie – predstavuje ďalšiu formu nesprávneho alebo dokonca nekorektného či podvodného narábania s afiliáciami.

Eticky nekorektné riešenie situácií – Prípad (5) – Zaplatená afiliácia („affiliation for hire“) – predstavuje priamy „predaj/kúpu“ inštitucionálnej príslušnosti: výskumníčka alebo výskumník uvádza inštitúciu v afilácii výmenou za finančnú odmenu alebo formálny úväzok, pričom reálny výskumný vklad pripísaných inštitúcií je nulový alebo zanedbateľný. COPE (2023) kvalifikuje *zaplatené afiliácie* ako eticky problematickú prax nezlučiteľnú so zásadami korektného uvádzania autorstva a afiliácií.⁷

Eticky nekorektné riešenie – Prípad (6) – Čestná afiliácia („honorary affiliation“) – nastáva, keď je výskumník/-čka uvedený/-á ako afiliovaný/-á člen/-ka inštitúcie na základe čestného titulu alebo symbolickej pozície, nie na základe reálneho výskumného zapojenia. V literatúre o výskumnej

7 Na rozdiel od čestného a darovaného autorstva má „zaplatené autorstvo“ v literatúre kratšiu, no rýchlo rastúcu dokumentáciu, spojenú najmä s fenoménom tzv. *paper mills* a komerčného predaja spoluautorstva (Seifert, 2021; Teixeira da Silva, 2021, 2025; Abalkina, 2023; Abalkina & Kleiner, 2025). Rovnaký mechanizmus – odmena výmenou za formálne pripísanie mena bez reálneho vkladu – sa na úrovni afiliácie prejavuje ako *zaplatená afiliácia* (tzv. „affiliation for hire“).

integrite sa pojem „honorary authorship“ (a s ním analogicky pojem „honorary affiliation“) používa na opísanie situácie, keď je osoba zaradená do zoznamu autorov alebo afiliácií bez toho, aby naplnila kritériá podstatného príspevku (Harvey, 2018; Khezzr & Mohan, 2022; Gasparyan et al., 2013).⁸

Eticky nekorektné riešenie – Prípad (7) – Darovaná afiliácia („gift affiliation“) – je analogická s „darovaným autorstvom“: afiliácia je udelená ako gesto vďačnosti – napríklad za mentorstvo, poradenstvo, prístup k dátam alebo zorganizovanie výskumnej príležitosti –, no nie za podstatný príspevok k danému výstupu. Pojmy „gift“ a „honorary“ sa v časti literatúry používajú zameniteľne (Khezzr & Mohan, 2022), iní autori a autorky ich však analyticky rozlišujú (Gasparyan et al., 2013): kým *čestná afiliácia* vyplýva z pozičného/hierarchického nároku, *darovaná afiliácia* je prejavom individuálnej reciprocity bez takéhoto nároku. Táto kapitola sa pridrža druhého, analyticky jemnejšieho rozlíšenia. COPE (2023) upozorňuje, že takéto afiliácie predstavujú formu „nezaslúženého“ *inštitucionálneho autorstva*; korektným miestom na ich uvedenie je sekcia „Poďakovanie“, nie afiliačná hlavička práce.⁹

Prípad (8) – Podvodná afiliácia¹⁰ – predstavuje najproblematickejšiu formu *chobotnicovej afiliácie* s najzávažnejšou mierou etického pochybenia – afiliáciu bez vedomia a súhlasu dotknutých strán. Základný prípad – afiliácia *contra voluntatem* – nastáva, keď autor/-ka uvádza

8 Výskum Pruschaka a Hoppa (2022) na vzorke 2 222 sociálnych vedcov a vedkýň z celého sveta preukázal, že „čestné autorstvo“ je bežnou praxou a často vyplýva z nepochopenia kritérií, nie z úmyselného podvodu – čo však jeho dopad na integritu vedeckého záznamu neznižuje. Mowatt et al. (2002) v analýze *Cochrane reviews* zistili, že až 39 % článkov obsahovalo „čestné autorstvo“. (*Cochrane reviews* sú systematické prehľady a meta-analýzy klinických štúdií. Vznikajú v prostredí, kde by sa dalo očakávať prísne dodržiavanie etických štandardov.)

9 V akademickom prostredí je táto prax rozšírenejšia, ako sa zvykne pripúšťať: prieskum medzi viac ako 12 000 výskumníkmi a výskumníčkami v USA ukázal, že viac ako 35 % respondentov priznalo zaradenie minimálne tzv. „prispievajúceho spoluautora“ do svojich publikácií (Fong & Wilhite, 2017).

10 „Podvodná“ afiliácia je každá afiliácia, pri ktorej sa preukáže *zámerná manipulácia s afiliáciou* za účelom nezaslúženého prospechu zúčastnených strán.

organizáciu bez jej vedomia a súhlasu, alebo organizáciu, s ktorou v danom období nemá žiadny právny vzťah, s cieľom osobného (symbolického, kariérneho alebo finančného) zisku. Typovo rovnakým prípadom je nezaslúžené vetvenie alebo rozširovanie inštitucionálnych afiliácií bez vedomia a súhlasu materskej/kľúčovej inštitúcie, mimo legítimne prebiehajúcich a zmluvne ukotvených inštitucionálnych spoluprác. Toto konanie predstavuje vážny konflikt záujmov: autor/-ka zamlčuje alebo obchádza informovanosť svojho hlavného zamestnávateľa a bez oprávnenia narába s menom inštitúcie, resp. viacerých inštitúcií (CIR-CAT, 2023a; COPE, 2023).^{11,12} V kontexte autorstva sa rozlišujú dva analogické prípady tzv. „ghost authorship“: (a) osoba je uvedená ako autor/-ka bez svojho vedomia a súhlasu, pričom jej je bez jej vedomia pripísaná aj inštitucionálna afiliácia – čo je priama paralela k *contra voluntatem* afiliácii; (b) osoba, ktorá reálne vykonala výskum, nie je v publikácii uvedená vôbec – tzv. „ghost author“ v užšom zmysle, typický pri publikáciách financovaných priemyslovými alebo inými korporáciami, kde skutočný autor/-ka zostáva skrytý/-á za menom akademika/-čky, opäť pod hlavičkou vedeckej inštitúcie, ktorá si za výstup následne pripisuje kredit (Mowatt et al., 2002; Pruschak & Hopp, 2022). Oba prípady porušujú princíp transparentnosti a zodpovednosti, no z opačných strán:

11 Odporúčanie CIR-CAT 2/2023 sa priamo zameriava na tieto situácie a odporúča, aby inštitúcie zaviedli mechanizmy na nahlasovanie a riešenie takéhoto konania (CIR-CAT, 2023b).

12 Autorka kapitoly v rokoch 2012–2026 pôsobila ako riaditeľka Ústavu etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, v. v. i. Za svoju zamestnávateľskú prax sa stretla s viacerými prípadmi porušení publikačnej etiky, ktoré mali v rámci inštitúcie precedenčný charakter a podnietili vznik a novelizáciu Internej smernice o vykazovaní a registrovaní publikačnej činnosti a ohlasov (2012, 2026). Typologicky išlo o prípady opakovaného uvádzania viacnásobných afiliácií bez vedomia a súhlasu hlavného (kľúčového) pracoviska) i sekundárneho zamestnávateľa a bez ošetrovania konfliktu záujmov dotknutých inštitúcií za súčasného vykazovania identických publikačných výstupov pre dvoch zamestnávateľov v akademickom okruhu (Obrázok 1, typologicky Prípád 8). Taktiež sa v jednom takomto prípade súběžne preukázalo etické pochybenie v podobe zámerného a opakovaného vykazovania nespravodlivo vysokého autorského podielu v prípade multi-autorských publikácií v kombinácii s odlišným vykazovaním autorského podielu v domácej a zahraničnej registračnej databáze na evidovanie výstupov a ohlasov.

prvý neoprávnene identitu pripisuje, druhý ju neoprávnene zamlčuje, pričom v oboch prípadoch dochádza k manipulácii alebo podvodnému narábaniu s inštitucionálnou afiliáciou.¹³

Kľúčovým problémom nesprávnych, nekorektných a podvodných typov *chobotnicových afiliácií* (viď konkrétne situácie opísané v Prípadoch (2)–(8)) je, že „rozmazávajú“ hranicu medzi zodpovednosťou a zásluhami: inštitúcia môže zbierať bibliometrické body bez toho, aby niesla zodpovednosť za etiku výskumu, za jeho financovanie či za následné riešenie prípadných pochybení. Z perspektívy výskumnej integrity ide o narušenie základného princípu, že inštitucionálna afiliácia, ktorá so sebou prináša inštitucionálne zásluhy, má reflektovať podstatné vklady a adresnú zodpovednosť, nielen formálnu príslušnosť (Bachelet, 2019; Bachelet et al., 2019; ENRIO, 2019; CIR-CAT, 2023a, b).

COPE (2023) vo svojej diskusii rámcuje uvádzanie nekorektnej inštitucionálnej afiliácie ako analogické nekorektnému uvádzaniu autorstva: kým nesprávne autorstvo skresľuje, kto vykonal výskum a napísal publikáciu na individuálnej úrovni, nesprávna afiliácia skresľuje to isté na úrovni inštitucionálnej – z etického hľadiska tak možno hovoriť o *rovnako závažných* porušeníach vedeckej integrity a publikačnej etiky.

13 Najznámejším zdokumentovaným prípadom tohto druhého typu je kauza Wyeth/Prempro: farmaceutická spoločnosť Wyeth platila prizračných autorov („ghostwriterov“) za prípravu vedeckých článkov o hormonálnej terapii, ktoré boli následne publikované pod menami prominentných akademikov, čím zavádzajúco priradila výstupy k akademickým inštitúciám, ktoré so skutočnou prípravou nemali nič spoločné (Ross et al., 2008).

Medzinárodné precedensy podvodných afiliácií – od individuálneho oportunizmu k organizovanej praxi

Manipulatívne a podvodné uvádzanie afiliácií vo výskumných výstupoch predstavuje jav, ktorý sa v poslednom desaťročí z ojedinelých prípadov individuálneho kariérneho oportunizmu pretransformoval na systematickú, inštitucionálne tolerovanú a miestami dokonca systematicky organizovanú prax s priamym komerčným využitím.

Správa konzultačnej agentúry SIRIS Academic (2023) ukázala, že počet tzv. „vysoko citovaných výskumníkov“ vedených v zozname *Highly Cited Researchers* (HCR) s primárnou afiliáciou k saudskoarabským inštitúciám vzrástol z 27 (v roku 2014) na 109 (v roku 2022); značná časť z týchto vedcov a vedkýň pritom pôsobila ako kmeňové zamestnanectvo univerzít v Európe alebo Severnej Amerike. Systémový rozmer tejto praxe bol plne odkrytý v roku 2023, keď po odhalení viacerých káuz afiliačnej manipulácie (Catanzaro, 2023; SIRIS Academic, 2023) Clarivate zaznamenal v rebríčku HCR historicky bezprecedentný pokles: počet HCR výskumníctva s primárnou saudskoarabskou afiliáciou klesol zo 109 na 76, teda o viac ako 30 % (Ansede, 2024; Clarivate, 2024).

Najvýraznejším disciplinárnym precedensom v rámci španielskej akademickej obce sa stal prípad chemika Rafaela Luqueho, ktorého Univerzita v Córdobe v roku 2023 suspendovala bez práva na mzdu na 13 rokov za to, že napriek plnému pracovnému úväzku ako verejný zamestnanec dlhodobo pôsobil aj na King Saud University v Rijáde a RUDN University v Moskve a vo vedeckých publikáciách uvádzal tieto zahraničné inštitúcie ako primárne afiliácie – čo, okrem praktiky afiliačnej manipulácie, predstavovalo aj porušenie pravidiel nezlučiteľnosti funkcií zakotvených v španielskom právnom poriadku pre verejných zamestnancov (Catanzaro, 2023; SIRIS Academic, 2023).

Podobne Bachelet et al. (2019) v pilotnej štúdii chilských inštitúcií v zdravotníckych a prírodovedných disciplínach upozornili na vysoký výskyt potenciálne nezaslúžených afiliácií k univerzitám (38 %), ktoré nezohrali preukázateľnú úlohu pri realizácii výskumu, pričom v súkromnom sektore odhadli ich podiel približne na 40 %.

Osobitnou kapitolou sú prípady, v ktorých je uvádzanie afiliácie prostriedkom zatajenia zahraničných finančných väzieb s dôsledkami pre národnú bezpečnosť. Konkrétnym príkladom uvádzania podvodnej inštitucionálnej afiliácie s vážnymi právnymi následkami sú prípady výskumníctva zapojeného do čínskeho programu *Thousand Talents Plan* (TTP): podľa zistení amerických federálnych orgánov výskumníci v rámci tohto programu systematicky zatajovali zahraničné financovanie a afiliačné vzťahy k čínskym inštitúciám, čo viedlo ku klamlivej reprezentácii v grantových žiadostiach financovaných z prostriedkov NIH.¹⁴ Najznámejším prípadom je Song Guo Zheng, výskumník z Ohio State University, ktorý sa v roku 2020 priznal k falošným vyhláseniam vo vzťahu k NIH grantom v celkovej výške 4,1 milióna USD a bol odsúdený na 37 mesiacov väzenia (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). Tieto prípady ukazujú, že afiliačná manipulácia neslúži výlučne na umelé zvyšovanie inštitucionálnych bibliometrických ukazovateľov, ale môže byť aj nástrojom zastierania konfliktov záujmov s právne definovateľnými trestnými dôsledkami.

Osobitne znepokojivým vývojom posledných rokov je vznik organizovanej infraštruktúry umožňujúcej afiliačnú podvodnú prax vo veľkom meradle. J. A. Teixeira da Silva

¹⁴ *National Institutes of Health (NIH)* – hlavná federálna agentúra USA pre financovanie biomedicínskeho výskumu. Financuje výskum na univerzitách, nemocniciach a výskumných pracoviskách v USA aj v zahraničí. Je najväčším verejným poskytovateľom grantov pre biomedicínsky výskum na svete.

(2025) dokumentuje retrakcie¹⁵ spojené s kazachstanskými inštitúciami: za obdobie január 2024 – apríl 2025 identifikoval 19 retrakcií v časopisoch vydavateľstiev Springer Nature, Wiley a PLOS ONE, pričom sedem z nich malo afiliáciu Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. Dominantným dôvodom retrakcií (89 %) bol zmanipulovaný recenzný proces; 73 % korešpondenčných autorov/-iek pritom nepoužívalo inštitucionálne e-mailové adresy, čo je štandardný indikátor prepojenia s „paper mill“ sieťami¹⁶ (Teixeira da Silva, 2025).

Systematický prehľad výskumu „paper mill“ sietí v európskom priestore poskytujú štúdie A. Abalkiny. Roku 2023 analyzovala činnosť ruskej spoločnosti „International Publisher“ LLC prostredníctvom 1 063 ponúk na kúpu spoluautorstva zverejnených v rokoch 2019–2022 na webe 123mi.ru pričom identifikovala najmenej 451 článkov pravdepodobne pochádzajúcich z tejto siete – odhadovaná hodnota predaných spoluautorstiev za roky 2019–2021 dosiahla 6,5 milióna dolárov (Abalkina, 2023). Druhá analýza, ktorú uskutočnila spoločne so S. Kleiner sa zamerala na sieť Tanu.pro, odhalila ešte rozsiahlejší záber: autorky identifikovali 1 517 publikácií uverejnených v rokoch 2017–2025 v 380 časopisoch, na ktorých vzniku sa podieľalo viac ako 4 500 výskumníkov zo 46 krajín a viac ako 460 univerzít (Abalkina & Kleiner, 2025). Spoločným menovateľom oboch analyzovaných sietí je mechanizmus

komerčného predaja spoluautorstva spojeného s manipuláciou recenzného procesu – pričom e-mailové domény korešpondenčných autorov/-iek systematicky nezodpovedali uvádzaným inštitucionálnym afiliáciám, čo sieťam umožňovalo dlhodobo fungovať v šedej zóne štandardných redakčných postupov.

Zneužívanie inštitucionálneho statusu neprebíha len prostredníctvom externých „paper mills“ – prípady citačnej manipulácie prepojené s prestížnou afiliáciou ukazujú, že eticky nekorektné praktiky sa dejú aj vo vnútri renomovaných inštitúcií. V októbri 2024 Springer Nature stiahol 75 konferenčných príspevkov spojených s rektorom Univerzity Salamanca Juanom Manuelom Corchadom – väčšinu napísali jeho spolupracovníci z tej istej inštitúcie, pričom 14 z nich bol Corchado priamym spoluautorom. Dôvodom retrakcií bolo odhalenie mechanizmu *citačných kruhov*¹⁷: interným vyšetrovaním sa preukázalo, že Corchado systematicky žiadal svojich spolupracovníkov, aby vo svojich prácach citovali jeho výstupy, čím umelo budoval ilúziu svojej výnimočnej citovanosti (Ansede, 2024). V tomto prípade slúžila afiliácia k prestížnej inštitúcii primárne ako ochranný faktor – editori sú menej naklonení spochybňovať práce autorov s renomovanou inštitucionálnou príslušnosťou – a zároveň ako nástroj organizovania citačnej siete v rámci pracoviska (Ansede, 2024). Tento prípad ilustruje, že metrická logika rankingových systémov vytvára motiváciu na manipuláciu nielen afiliačných, ale aj citačných údajov – a to nezávisle od veľkosti alebo prestíže inštitúcie.

¹⁵ Retrakcia (angl. „retraction“) je formálne stiahnutie vedeckej publikácie z odborného časopisu alebo databázy, ku ktorému pristupuje vydavateľ, inštitúcia alebo samotné autorstvo po zistení závažných pochybení. Podľa usmernení COPE je retrakcia opodstatnená v prípadoch preukázaného vedeckého podvodu (falšovanie, fabrikácia dát), plagiátorstva, závažných metodologických chýb znehodnocujúcich závery, ako aj pri zistení neoprávneného autorstva či podvodného recenzného konania (COPE, 2019). Retrahovaná práca zostáva v databázach viditeľná, je však označená upozornením a považuje sa za neplatnú na ďalšie citovanie.

¹⁶ „Paper mill“ (angl., doslova „továreň na články“) je komerčná organizácia, ktorá na objednávku vytvára a predáva vedecké rukopisy alebo autorstvo v existujúcich publikáciách, pričom zákazníkom poskytuje celý servis vrátane komunikácie s redakciami (Seifert, 2021; Teixeira da Silva, 2021).

¹⁷ Fenomén tzv. „citation rings“ – *citačné kruhy* alebo *citačné bratrstvá* – komunity vzájomne sa citujúcich autorov a autoriek stojace na princípe reciprocit, nie vedeckej rigoróznosti.

Spoločným menovateľom opísaných prípadov – od individuálnych porušení pravidiel vedeckej integrity a *citačných kruhov* cez saudskoarabské afiliačné schémy až po organizované „paper mills“ – je štrukturálne nastavenie: tlak na bibliometrické ukazovatele a rankingové pozície vytvára prostredie, v ktorom afiliačné manipulácie, vrátane rôznych foriem podvodnej praxe, nachádzajú živnú pôdu.

Rastúci počet disciplinárnych konaní, retrakcií a trestnoprávných stíhaní však naznačuje, že vydavatelia, inštitúcie a regulačné orgány začínajú reagovať systematickejšie; precedentálne (národné) prípady následne pôsobia veľmi účinne na prevenciu a autoreguláciu neželanej a podvodnej praxe – nielen na úrovni jednotlivých výskumníkov a samotných inštitúcií; majú dopad aj na úrovni systematickej organizovanej praxe, čo ozdravuje celý ekosystém vedy a výskumu v medzinárodnom rozmere.

Ako vzniká nafukovací efekt („boosting“) – možné riešenia na reguláciu

Keď si inštitúcia pod svoju hlavičku, na základe nezaslúžených (nespravodlivo) pripísaných afiliácií vykáže publikácie, na ktorých sa reálne podieľala len marginálne alebo dokonca vôbec, umelo zvyšuje svoje výkonové skóre.

Z hľadiska systémovej etiky sa tento jav označuje ako (umelé) *nafukovanie* („boosting“). Prostredníctvom inflačnej afiliačnej politiky sa tak významne deformuje súťaž o finančné zdroje.

Efekt nafukovania je osobitne výrazný na pracoviskách, ktoré získavajú renomovaných výskumníkov a výskumníčky na čiastočné alebo čestné úväzky („honorary appointments“) predovšetkým s cieľom pripisovať si ich publikačný výkon. Clarivate vo svojom programe *Highly Cited Researcher* (HCR)

deklaruje, že *čestné a štipendijné afiliácie* (tzv. „fellowship-based affiliations“) vytvárajú stimuly na umelé nafukovanie inštitucionálneho citačného skóre a z tohto dôvodu ich zo svojich hodnotiacich procesov systematicky vylučuje (Clarivate, 2024, 2025).

V tomto kontexte je dôležité si uvedomiť, že umelé nafukovanie výkonu spôsobuje každá publikácia, ktorá obsahuje nezaslúžené inštitucionálne afiliácie. Najvýraznejšie nafukovanie výkonu totiž vzniká na úrovni medzinárodných scientometrických databáz, ktoré pracujú metódou automatizovaných zberov a *plného započítavania kreditu* za publikáciu a citáciu *na každú uvedenú afiliáciu*. Dominantnou metodológiou pri pripisovaní inštitucionálnych kreditov – napr. v databázach Web of Science (Clarivate) a Scopus (Elsevier) – je totiž metóda *celého počítania* („whole counting“): *každá inštitúcia uvedená v afiliácii získava za danú publikáciu plný kredit bez ohľadu na to, koľko ďalších inštitúcií je v tej istej štúdii uvedených* (Clarivate, b.d.; Lin et al., 2025). Dôsledkom toho sa publikácia, napr. s dvoma afiliáciami v rebríčkoch a hodnotiacich systémoch počíta dvakrát – raz pre každú inštitúciu – bez akéhokoľvek krátenia. V tomto zmysle databázy vôbec nerozlišujú tzv. primárne a sekundárne afiliácie. Je potrebné si uvedomiť, že týmto spôsobom všetky viacnásobné afiliácie¹⁸ (zaslúžené aj nezaslúžené) generujú nafukovací efekt, čím sa extrémne skresľuje obraz o vedeckom výkone inštitúcií a spochybňuje spoľahlivosť hodnotení vedy a výskumu a rankingových rebríčkov postavených na bibliometrických mierach (Hottenrott et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2025).

¹⁸ Toto je silný argument buď pre výraznú reguláciu afiliácií, optimálne na jedno, maximálne dve pracoviská (keďže každá afiliácia aj regulárna sekundárna generuje nafukovací efekt), alebo podielový rozpis (podielové/zlomkové počítanie) inštitucionálneho autorstva, tak ako pri autorských podieloch.

Čiastočnou výnimkou sú rebríčky *Quacquarelli Symonds Rankings* (QS),¹⁹ ktoré aplikujú premennú hornú hranicu pre maximálny počet inštitucionálnych afiliácií na publikáciu a štúdie s extrémne vysokým počtom afiliácií z bibliometrickej analýzy vylučujú. *Afiličný strop* je premenný podľa vedného odboru a je nastavený tak, aby z analýzy vylučoval nie viac ako 0,1 % výskumu v danom poli (QS, b.d.) – ide teda o okrajové technické riešenie, nie o systémovú odpoveď na problém viacnásobných afiliácií. *Times Higher Education Rankings* (THE)²⁰ zase od roku 2017 používajú pri tzv. *kilo-autorských* (resp. *hyperautorských*)²¹ publikáciách *zlomkové/podielové počítanie* („fractional counting“). Na bežné viacnásobné afiliácie s dvoma či troma inštitúciami sa však toto riešenie nevzťahuje (THE, 2026).

Ani jeden z týchto mechanizmov však systematicky nerieši efekt nafukovania v bežných viacnásobne afiliovanych publikáciách. Systémovým riešením by bolo *zlomkové/podielové počítanie*, pri ktorom by sa kredit za publikáciu delil medzi všetky uvedené inštitúcie proporcionálne – čo by inflačný efekt viacnásobných afiliácií zásadne tlmilo (Waltman & Van Eck, 2015). Napriek dlhoročnej odbornej diskusii o tejto metóde však žiadna z hlavných databáz ani rankingových systémov zlomkové počítanie štandardne neimplementovali (Clarivate, b.d.).

- 19 QS Rankings (QS World University Rankings) sú ročne publikované rebríčky vysokoškolských inštitúcií, ktoré zostavuje britská súkromná analytická spoločnosť Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) so sídlom v Londýne (založená v roku 1990). Bibliometrický komponent (citácie na člena/-ku fakulty) tvorí 20 % celkového skóre a je vypočítaný z dát databázy Scopus (Elsevier) (QS, b.d.).
- 20 Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE Rankings) sú ročne publikované rebríčky, ktoré zostavuje britský odborný magazín Times Higher Education v spolupráci s Elsevier, ktorý poskytuje bibliometrické dáta zo Scopusu. Bibliometrický komponent tvorí v THE Rankings 40 % celkového skóre. Na rozdiel od QS Rankings používajú THE Rankings pri výpočte citačného dopadu normalizovanú metriku FWCI (Field-Weighted Citation Impact), ktorá zohľadňuje rozdiely v citačných praktikách medzi vednými odbormi (THE, 2026).
- 21 Termín *hyperautorstvo* („hyper-authorship“) zaviedol B. Cronin (2001) pre vedecké publikácie s viac ako 50 spoluautormi. Extrémnu podobu – publikácie s viac ako 1 000 autormi – označuje termín *kilo-autorstvo* („kiloauthorship“), ktorý do odborného diskurzu uviedol Ch. Faulkes v komentári pre Times Higher Education (2015).

Politika multiplikácie afiliácií tak zostáva, z pohľadu prevládajúcich metrík, *de facto* racionálnou *optimalizačnou stratégiou* pre každú inštitúciu, ktorá chce zlepšiť, resp. udržať svoju bibliometrickú (výkonovú) pozíciu (!).

Keď je tá istá publikácia (formálne) vykázaná ako výstup v hodnotiacom a finančnom systéme dvoch či viacerých inštitúcií, pričom každá ju zahrnie do svojich akreditačných a rankingových hodnotení, dochádza zároveň k efektu *viacnásobného započítavania* („multiple counting“) – každá inštitúcia na započítanú publikáciu totiž následne načerpá financie a získa reputačný kredit. Takáto prax je eticky problematická, keďže vedie k multiplikácii finančného a zásluhového prínosu z jediného intelektuálneho výkonu. Pri absencii transparentnej dohody medzi inštitúciami predstavuje navyše inštitucionálny konflikt záujmov (CIR-CAT, 2023b; ENRIO, 2019).

Na rozdiel od automatizovaného zarátavania scientometrickými databázami, vykazovacou entitou v takýchto prípadoch je väčšinou autor/-ka, ktorý/-á vypublikovaný výstup s inštitucionálnou afiliáciou vykazuje v internej evidencii konkrétnej inštitúcie ako výstup na základe zamestnaneckého pomeru alebo inej zmluvnej či projektovej bázy. V prípade neexistencie zmluvnej dohody medzi inštitúciami je vykázanie toho istého výstupu viacerým zamestnávateľom „vykazovacou duplicitou“, ktorá môže, okrem stratégie osobného symbolického kariérneho alebo ekonomického profitu autora/-ky, byť dokonca priamym konfliktom záujmov, porušením zmluvných vzťahov a podvodným konaním voči hlavnému zamestnávateľovi – Prípad (8) (CIR-CAT, 2023b), ale aj prípady vyššie opísaných afiličných a iných podvodných konaní a korešpondujúcich sankcií.

Výrazný impulz k normatívnemu uchopeniu neželaného fenoménu *chobotnicových afiliácií* prišiel z Katalánska, kde *Výbor pre integritu výskumu v Katalánsku* („Comitè per a la Integritat de la Recerca a Catalunya“, CIR-CAT)²² prijal v roku 2023 dve odporúčania týkajúce sa viacnásobných afiliácií. Tieto odporúčania vznikli v reakcii na konkrétne prípady, keď výskumníčky a výskumníci akceptovali finančné odmeny²³ výmenou za uvedenie saudskoarabských univerzít ako svojej primárnej afiliácie, čím týmto inštitúciám pomáhali zlepšovať pozíciu v medzinárodných rebríčkoch. CIR-CAT takéto praktiky kvalifikoval ako potenciálne porušenie zmluvných povinností až podvod voči primárnemu zamestnávateľovi a nesprávne narábanie s verejnými prostriedkami.

Prvé odporúčanie, CIR-CAT 1/2023 (zo dňa 16. 5. 2023), sa sústreďuje na samotný fenomén viacnásobných afiliácií a snaží sa jasne vymedziť podmienky ich legitimity. Kľúčovou požiadavkou je, aby každá uvedená inštitúcia zohrala *podstatnú úlohu* pri výskume – poskytnutím podstatnej infraštruktúry, personálu, finančných zdrojov alebo zásadnou intelektuálnou participáciou a aby afiliované inštitúcie „o sebe vedeli“. Odporúčanie zároveň zdôrazňuje, že inštitúcie majú právo a povinnosť regulovať uvádzanie svojej afiliácie prostredníctvom interných smerníc a zmluvných ustanovení, pričom afiliácia by mala byť previazaná s pracovným pomerom, zmluvnou spoluprácou alebo grantom a s dodržiavaním interných pravidiel výskumnej integrity (CIR-CAT, 2023a).

²² Web stránka organizácie: <https://web.gencat.cat/en/generalitat/com-ens-organitzem/departaments/recerca-universitats/CIR-CAT> [navštívené: 10/04/2026].

²³ Podľa M. Ansedeho sa finančné odmeny za uvádzanie afiliácií pohybovali v rozpätí od niekoľkých tisíc eur ročne až po desiatky tisíc eur ročne (Ansedeh, 2024).

Druhé odporúčanie, CIR-CAT 2/2023 (zo dňa 17. 10. 2023), sa zameriava na inštitucionálne autorstvo a na situácie, keď sú organizácie uvádzané ako afiliácia bez podstatného podielu na výskume alebo priamo bez ich vedomia a súhlasu. Dokument odporúča, aby inštitúcie monitorovali, kde a ako sú uvádzané v publikáciách, zaviedli mechanizmy na nahlasovanie a riešenie nesprávneho uvádzania afiliácie a aktívne komunikovali s vydavateľmi v prípadoch, keď je potrebné spornú príslušnosť opraviť, doplniť alebo odstrániť. Ako všeobecné kritérium sa odporúča uvádzať najviac dve inštitucionálne afiliácie na autorku alebo autora, pričom primárna afiliácia musí byť dedikovaná inštitúcii, v ktorej sa uskutočnila väčšina práce (CIR-CAT, 2023b).

Katalánske odporúčania explicitne spájajú otázku afiliácie s rámcom výskumnej integrity, nielen s bibliometrickou evidenciou. Ukazujú, že problematiku *viacnásobnej afiliácie* (vrátane nezaslúženej *chobotnicovej afiliácie*) možno regulovať bez popierania medzinárodnej mobility výskumníctva: kľúčom je súhlas dotknutých strán, transparentnosť a inštitucionálne dohody. Zároveň predstavujú praktický model, ako môžu kompetentné regionálne či národné normotvorné orgány konkrétnymi odporúčaniami podporiť inštitúcie pri tvorbe koherentných politík na monitorovanie, odhaľovanie a reguláciu nezaslúžených viacnásobných afiliácií. Hoci CIR-CAT má výlučne poradnú funkciu – jeho odporúčania sú nezáväzné, čo limituje ich bezprostredný normatívny dosah – ich analytická hodnota ako referenčného rámca pre iné krajiny však zostáva nezmenená (CIR-CAT, 2023a, b; ENRIO, 2019).

ERC – afiliácie v kontexte grantových mechanizmov (nový rozmer zodpovednosti)

Problematika *chobotnicových afiliácií* nadobúda osobitný rozmer v kontexte prestížnych európskych grantov, najmä grantov *Európskej výskumnej rady* („European Research Council“, ERC). ERC dlhodobo kladie dôraz na vysoké štandardy vedeckej integrity a transparentnosti. Pracovný program ERC na rok 2026 explicitne stanovuje, že prípady vedeckého pochybenia – vrátane fabrikácie, falzifikácie, plagiátorstva alebo skresľovania údajov – budú dôrazne riešené počas celého životného cyklu projektu, pričom akékoľvek porušenie výskumnej integrity zo strany hlavného riešiteľa/-ky, člena/-ky tímu alebo hosťujúcej inštitúcie môže viesť k zamietnutiu návrhu, kráteniu grantu, pozastaveniu alebo ukončeniu grantovej zmluvy, ako aj k uplatneniu ďalších opatrení a postihov voči hosťiteľskej inštitúcii (European Commission, 2025). Hoci dokument ERC explicitne nemenuje zavádzajúce afiliácie ako samostatnú kategóriu pochybenia, možno argumentovať, že spadajú pod širší pojem skresľovania údajov a metadát výskumného výstupu – čo je kategória, ktorú Pracovný program ERC na rok 2026 explicitne pokrýva. Tento výklad je v súlade s požiadavkami transparentnosti afiliácií zakotvenými aj v iných normatívnych dokumentoch (CIR-CAT, 2023a; ICMJE, 2026).

Afiliácia v tomto kontexte zohráva dôležitú úlohu v dvoch rovinách. Po prvé, grant sa viaže na *konkrétnu hosťiteľskú inštitúciu*, ktorá nesie zodpovednosť za výskumné prostredie, infraštruktúru a podporu pre riešiteľku alebo riešiteľa. Hosťiteľská inštitúcia má primárnu *zodpovednosť* za odhaľovanie, vyšetrovanie a rozhodovanie v zistených prípadoch porušenia výskumnej integrity a ERC od nej očakáva funkčné štruktúry a mechanizmy na zabezpečenie

tejto zodpovednosti. Ak sa ukáže, že inštitúcia nedostatočne zabezpečila dohľad nad integritou výskumu alebo tolerovala pochybenia, môže čeliť reputačným dôsledkom a v krajnom prípade aj finančným sankciám (European Commission, 2025). Po druhé, prípady zavádzajúcich afiliácií, afiliácie za odmenu alebo uvádzanie inštitúcií, ktoré sa na výskume podstatne nepodieľali, môžu, v kombinácii s inými pochybeniami, viesť k záveru, že žiadateľ alebo žiadateľka konal/-a v rozpore s princípmi čestnosti a transparentnosti (ENRIO, 2019; European Commission, 2025).

ERC pristupuje k tejto problematike z perspektívy zodpovednosti za výskum financovaný z verejných európskych zdrojov. Kľúčovým preventívnym mechanizmom je pritom požiadavka ERC, aby hosťiteľská inštitúcia mala funkčné štruktúry a mechanizmy na zabezpečenie výskumnej integrity ešte *pred* uzatvorením grantovej zmluvy – čím sa zodpovednosť za prevenciu porušení vedeckej integrity, vrátane nafukovania afiliácií, rozširuje z jednotlivca na inštitúciu ako celok. Primárna zodpovednosť za odhaľovanie a vyšetrovanie porušení leží na hosťiteľskej inštitúcii²⁴ – tá je však zároveň potenciálnym príjemcom výhod plynúcich z nafukovania afiliácií, čo vytvára štrukturálny konflikt záujmov. ERC preto robí aj vlastné nezávislé zisťovania, či došlo k porušeniam ovplyvňujúcim zmluvné podmienky získania a realizácie grantu (European Commission, 2025). Osoby a organizácie, voči ktorým boli na základe zistení uplatnené administratívne sankcie, sú vedené v systéme EDES („Early

24 Systém EDES („Early Detection and Exclusion System“) je centrálny register Európskej komisie, v ktorom sú evidované subjekty vylúčené z účasti na projektoch financovaných z európskych fondov. Zápis do EDES môže byť dôsledkom závažného porušenia zmluvných podmienok, vrátane vedeckého pochybenia. Viac na: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-fraud/investigations/edes_en [navštívené 05/05/2026].

Detection and Exclusion System“)²⁵ Európskej komisie, čo *de facto* znamená vylúčenie z budúcich programových výziev (European Commission, 2025; ale aj UKRIO, 2023).

Dôležitým posunom je, že niektoré sankcie môžu postihnúť nielen jednotlivého vedca/-kyňu, ale aj hostiteľskú alebo partnerskú inštitúciu. Tým sa mení motivácia inštitúcií: prestáva byť výhodné „zbierať afiliácie“ bez toho, aby inštitúcie reálne investovali aj do dohľadu nad integritou hostujúceho výskumu a afiliováných výstupov. Afiliácia uvedená vo výstupoch tak priamo *prepája* afiliované *inštitúcie so zodpovednosťou* voči *európskym grantovým agentúram*.

Tento mechanizmus mení motivačnú štruktúru inštitúcií: tolerovanie alebo aktívne podporovanie „nafukovania“ afiliácií *prestáva byť bezrizikovým kalkúlom* a stáva sa potenciálne existenčným ohrozením prístupu k európskym finančným zdrojom.

Záver: z neznámeho územia na (želanú) mapu etických noriem

V druhej dekáde 21. storočia afiliácia jednoznačne prestala byť len formálnou zložkou publikácií. Stala sa položkou rovnocennou autorstvu, miestom, kde sa stretávajú individuálne stratégie, inštitucionálne záujmy, bibliometrické mechanizmy započítavania zásluh a politické priority financovania vedy. V európskom priestore sa táto premena postupne odráža v sprísňovaní regulačných rámcov – od katalánskych odporúčaní cez nové mechanizmy disciplinárnych opatrení ERC až po aktualizované diskusie COPE a odporúčania ICMJE.

²⁵ Povinnosť hostiteľskej inštitúcie mať etablované štruktúry na zabezpečenie výskumnej integrity je podmienkou účasti v schémach ERC a musí byť potvrdená v záväznom „Host Institution Support Letter“ pred uzatvorením grantovej zmluvy (European Commission, 2025, sekcia 1.3).

Hlavným apelom kapitoly bolo upozorniť, že problematika *chobotnicových afiliácií* je úzko spojená s *inštitucionálnym autorstvom*, a preto jej treba v normatívnej rovine venovať aspoň toľko pozornosti ako problematike individuálneho autorstva. Podobne bolo cieľom upozorniť na sprievodné javy nafukovania výkonu a neoprávneného pripisovania zásluh.

Táto téma zostáva z veľkej časti neznámym územím (*terra incognita*): nepomenovaná, neregulovaná a z hľadiska väčšiny národných etických kódexov prakticky neviditeľná. Text tejto kapitoly poukázal na to, že dôsledky tohto vákua nie sú len abstraktne etické. Majú priamu aplikačnú dimenziu: inštitúcie, ktoré systematicky nafukujú svoju afiliačnú prítomnosť v publikáciách, získavajú nezaslúžené výhody v súťaži o verejné zdroje a prestížne granty. Zároveň deformujú hodnotenie vedy, čo má dlhodobé negatívne dôsledky pre celý výskumný ekosystém.

Táto kapitola sa pokúsila urobiť krok z *terrae incognitae* do známeho a želaného územia. Okrem pomenovaní a definícií, kapitola prináša originálnu typológiu *chobotnicových afiliácií*, ktorá systematicky rozlišuje legitímne viacnásobné afiliácie od nekorektných a podvodných foriem – pričom každý typ zakotvuje v najaktuálnejších normatívnych odporúčaníach. Táto typológia môže slúžiť ako praktický základ pre tvorbu etických kódexov, inštitucionálnych smerníc, redakčných politík aj vzdelávacích a iných praktických manuálov.

Riešenie si vyžaduje koordinovaný postup viacerých aktérov. Normotvorné orgány (napr. etické komisie, vedecké spoločnosti) by mali v etických kódexoch jasne definovať pravidlá legitímnej afiliácie, regulovať nezaslúžené afiliácie, zaviesť mechanizmy ich odhaľovania a zabrániť viacnásobnému vykazovaniu identických výstupov. Univerzity a výskumné pracoviská by mali aktualizovať interné smernice

tak, aby pokrývali inštitucionálne autorstvo a afiliačné konflikty záujmov; vypracovať manuály dobrej praxe; monitorovania a zisťovania pochybení. Vydavatelia a redakcie by mali implementovať odporúčania COPE do svojich interných redakčných procesov. Grantové agentúry by mali trvať na medzinárodných štandardoch pri realizácii projektov a vykazovaní inštitucionálnych afiliácií a vyžadovať od prijímateľov funkčné mechanizmy na ich dodržiavanie.

V tejto súvislosti stojí za pozornosť aj jeden – technicky nenáročný, no dosiaľ nie konzekventne uplatňovaný nástroj: systém ROR (*Research Organization Registry*). Ide o globálny register výskumných organizácií, ktorý každej inštitúcii priradí trvalý, strojovo čitateľný a otvorene dostupný identifikátor – analogický k ORCID pre fyzické osoby. Kým ORCID rieši jednoznačnú identifikáciu autora/-ky ako fyzickej osoby, ROR rieši ten istý problém na inštitucionálnej úrovni – t.j. jednoznačnú identifikáciu inštitúcie ako právnej entity a nositeľa inštitucionálneho autorstva.²⁶ Integrácia ROR do metadát publikácií, grantových žiadostí či hodnotiacich systémov by umožnila automatizovane priradiť každý výstup konkrétnym inštitúciám, zabrániť duplicitnému vykazovaniu a sledovať skutočný inštitucionálny podiel na výskume naprieč databázami v medzinárodnom priestore. Zahrnutie ROR identifikátorov do národných reportingových štandardov, grantových formulárov, regulatívov pre inštitúcie a smerníc pre autorstvo by tak predstavovalo konkrétny – a, medzinárodne kompatibilný – krok k transparentnému a overiteľnému deleniu inštitucionálneho autorského podielu (pozri aj Fenner & Aryani, 2019; Lammey, 2020).

26 PID Graf („PID Graph“) je prepojená sieť trvalých identifikátorov („persistent identifiers“, PID) – ako sú DOI, ORCID a ROR – ktorá vzájomne spája výskumné výstupy, výskumníčky a výskumníkov, inštitúcie a grantové agentúry/donorov.

Medzinárodná akademická komunita má pred sebou konkrétnu cestu, ktorej trendy sú načrtnuté: pomenovať, čo sa doteraz nemenovalo, regulovať, čo sa doteraz prehliadalo, a pripisovať si len také zásluhy, ktoré sú skutočne zaslúžené. *Terra incognita* sa tak môže stať známym a bezpečným územím s jasnými navigačnými mapami, ktoré jednotlivcov aj inštitúcie dovedú k vedecky a eticky korektným cieľom.

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Konflikt záujmov

Autorka vyhlasuje, že nemá žiadny konflikt záujmov. Poskytovatelia financovania nemali žiadnu úlohu pri navrhovaní štúdie, pri zbere, analýze či interpretácii údajov, pri písaní rukopisu ani pri rozhodovaní o publikovaní výsledkov.

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CONCLUSION

Ethical Perspectives: From Access to Accountability



Paulína
Blahová

Ethical dilemmas are not exceptional situations occurring in particularly sensitive research environments. They form a fundamental part of anthropological inquiry itself, arising at the very beginning of the research design and accompanying the researcher throughout the research process and even after its completion. Ethics evolves with every change in the context in which knowledge is produced. This third edition of the thematic series *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology* is yet another demonstration that each research project comes with its own set of ethical questions, for which institutional ethical frameworks and professional codes of conduct are often insufficient. Building on the discussions initiated in *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology I* (Kinczer & Zachar Podolinská, 2024) and further developed in *Ethical Dilemmas in Current Ethnology II* (Marushiakova & Štefanovičová, 2025), this third volume adds another layer to the discussion of ethical dilemmas related to positionality, reciprocity, access, and the production of knowledge, among others.

While institutional ethical frameworks and codes of conduct provide a foundation for ethical research, they are incapable of capturing the complexity of situations that emerge in practice. Ethics is shifting from simply following formal procedures towards questions of responsibility, relationships, and the capacity to respond to circumstances that cannot always be anticipated. Anthropological research does not emerge from a position of external detachment but rather from a perspective already entangled with the field itself, its actors, and the relationships through which knowledge is produced (Kováčsová, 2026).

Across the contributions in this volume, authors engage with ethical dilemmas even before formally entering the field and are expected to provide a kind of ‘after-care’ long

after data collection has been completed. As trust develops and relationships deepen, ethical complexity often increases rather than diminishes (Mitrová, 2026). Questions that initially appear to be methodological become ethical, and, as circumstances change, seemingly straightforward ethical principles require reinterpretation. Research ethics is therefore no longer seen as a set of isolated dilemmas but rather as an ever-evolving negotiation between responsibility, uncertainty, and human relationships.

A recurring insight throughout this third volume is that ethical dilemmas are shaped not only by researchers and their interactions with research participants but also by the institutional, social, and political environments in which research is conducted. These environments have a direct influence on access to the field and the distribution of authority. As with the previous volumes, our contributions seek to demonstrate to those only beginning to explore the complex world of research ethics that it is not about offering universal solutions but rather about demonstrating that ethical decision-making remains fundamentally contextual, requiring reflexivity, sensitivity, and an awareness that responsibilities often extend beyond the requirements established by formal ethical procedures.

Instead of discussing each contribution individually, I have identified several recurring themes that connect four of the five contributions in this volume: access, reciprocity, positionality, and the ethical dilemmas that arise when research has the potential to become applied. As the fifth contribution concerns the ethics of publishing and institutional affiliations rather than ethical dilemmas in anthropological research, I devote a separate section to it.

Gaining *access* is the first practical step in planning an ethnographic research project. The contributions in

this volume, however, demonstrate that access itself is as much an ethical process as a methodological one (Kara et al., 2023; Nepali et al., 2023). The researchers reflect on who enables entry into the field and under what conditions, and consequently whose perspectives become available to the research. Given that some of the authors have prior professional or activist experience in their respective fields, they also question their own positionality within the spaces in which they now appear as researchers.

In their broader focus on Roma communities and the labour market, both Korina Mitrová and Štefan Ivanco reflect on who facilitates entry into the field. While K. Mitrová gains access through institutional actors such as local mayors or a local NGO, Ivanco critically examines how his previous work in the NGO sector shapes both access to the field and relationships with research participants. Aware of the potential influence of his activist identity on the field, he deliberately conducts his research in localities where he has not previously been professionally engaged. Laura Kováčsová further complicates this discussion as an academic specialising in precarious housing while being employed in a municipal agency that seeks to manage the housing crisis. She describes this oscillation between professional and research roles as dual positionality or, more specifically, an insider-outsider position. The very focus of my own research on UNESCO heritage governance is on access to decision-making processes that shape the future of safeguarded living heritage. Here, the ethical challenge extends beyond gaining entry into the field itself to the mechanisms through which particular forms of knowledge become recognised as legitimate.

All of the above demonstrates that access is never neutral and often depends on existing institutional

relationships, as well as social and professional identities. Researchers must be aware not only of those who enable access but also of their own positionality in relation to the people they study (American Anthropological Association, 2012). Across this volume, *positionality* is no longer presented as a simple distinction between insider and outsider. Instead, the authors portray it as an ongoing process of negotiating professional, institutional, and even personal identities throughout the research process.

Ivanco sees his position as an intersection between academic research and his previous human rights activism. Advocacy is an important part of his personal identity. In his research, he had to establish boundaries between his previous activities and his current research focus and fieldwork. Ivanco does not conceal his previous experience but chooses to communicate it openly when he considers that it contributes to building trust with participants (Ivanco, 2026). Kováčsová's positionality arises from the dual roles she occupies as an academic and a professional at the municipal housing agency. Her professional engagement provides valuable insight into the institutional processes she studies, yet it also raises questions concerning responsibility and intervention. Kováčsová does not strive for unattainable objectivity but argues that her positionality requires constant critical reflection. Knowledge emerges not outside the system being studied, but from within it (Kováčsová, 2026).

Researching UNESCO ICH heritage governance in my dissertation requires navigating relationships with communities, experts, public institutions, and governance structures. Access to internal meetings, documentation, and decision-making processes provides me with important research insights while also creating ethical responsibilities related to privileged access and institutional proximity.

In my own research, positionality, similarly to Kováčsová's case, extends beyond relationships with participants to include access to institutional environments through which knowledge is recognised and legitimised (Blahová, 2026).

Mitrová's contribution further enriches these perspectives by demonstrating that positionality is also relational and develops through long-term engagement in the field, as trust and relationships grow. Over the course of fieldwork, researchers become part of participants' everyday lives, requiring reassessment of boundaries and ethical responsibilities. Mitrová illustrates that positionality is not only determined by researchers' prior identities but also evolves through relationships established during fieldwork (Mitrová, 2026).

Another concern shared by the authors, particularly in relation to the highly sensitive topics such as economic and social instability, is the tension between meaningful engagement in research and voluntary participation. The authors seek to avoid merely extracting data from fieldwork and instead explore ways to improve their participants' quality of life, while remaining aware of the limitations of their positions as researchers. K. Mitrová argues that research participants may often associate researchers with access to institutional support and services. This creates unintentional pressure and can transform an act of care, assistance, or advocacy into an exchange commodity. Mitrová advocates for *bounded reciprocity*, in which she, as a researcher, remains transparent and clearly distinguishes herself from institutional assistance while referring participants to relevant bodies when needed (Mitrová, 2026). Ivanco further discusses the role of participation and knowledge co-production with research participants. Stemming from his own beliefs in equal labour conditions, he actively seeks

to 'give back' to the community during the research process in a way that is mutually meaningful and transactional (Ivanco, 2026). Ivanco also argues that a certain form of reciprocity may become an important part of long-term ethnographic engagement. However, he also recognises that some of his participants may not find his research meaningful and may choose not to collaborate. Choosing not to participate is a legitimate expression of agency.

Kováčsová encounters reciprocity in a different yet similarly demanding form. During interviews conducted as part of her previous study, conversations frequently shifted towards expectations of advice, support, or intervention. Similarly to Mitrová, she also needed to continuously clarify the limits of her involvement. In these cases, reciprocity is negotiated not through material exchange but also through expectations placed on the researcher, who is perceived as capable of influencing participants' circumstances. Maintaining boundaries is essential to avoid commitments that extend beyond the researcher's competence.

While addressing the dilemma of reciprocity, all four contributions demonstrate that ethical responsibility does not end with the completion of fieldwork or the publication of dissertations. The authors strive for their research to become, at least to some extent, *applied*, and for their post-research advocacy to continue. Some of the authors collaborate directly with public institutions, NGOs, or municipalities within the scope of their research. Their ethical dilemmas, therefore, extend beyond relationships with research participants to encompass the role that the knowledge produced will play within society. The authors acknowledge that their work may influence public debates and even contribute to institutional practices and policies.

Mitrová's work on Roma in the labour market directly addresses questions relevant to employment policies and institutional interventions. Within the context of housing policies, Kováčsová's professional role in the field creates opportunities to translate her ethnographic insights into public practice while reflecting on the boundaries between research and institutional responsibility (Mitrová, 2026; Kováčsová, 2026).

Ivanco engages with this question explicitly through his reflection on advocacy. He recognises the importance of maintaining analytical independence during fieldwork; however, he argues that certain forms of post-research engagement may become difficult to avoid, particularly in research addressing structural inequalities and human rights. At the same time, he warns that advocacy should not predetermine the research process itself or place participants in positions they do not wish to occupy. Engaging with one's research in the public sphere is not an ethical obligation but a responsibility that requires continual assessment of its limits and consequences.

My own contribution is closely related to UNESCO's policy development, the governance of living heritage, and decision-making at regional, state, and international levels. My research also shapes my potential future professional agenda. Through my findings, I aim to contribute to broader debates concerning participation, representation, and the recognition of knowledge within the safeguarding of living heritage (Blahová, 2026).

All four of us argue that applied research is a continuous negotiation between public responsibility and research ethics. I find it promising that we all consider how the knowledge we produce enters public institutions, informs decision-making, and affects the future of the communities with whom we work.

The four contributions discussed above address ethical dilemmas arising from the research process. The final contribution by Tatiana Zachar Podolinská (2026) shifts the focus from the ethics of conducting research to the ethics of the academic institutions within which research is produced. *Terra Incognita, Terra Non Grata (?) "Octopus Affiliations" in Publication Ethics: European Normative Trends and Slovak Practice* is written from the perspective of an experienced researcher, Tatiana Zachar Podolinská. The article emphasises that an author's institutional affiliation represents more than an indication of the institution or project within which a scientific output was produced. Affiliation serves as an indicator of research integrity and of a culture of responsible academic publishing. It examines the responsibilities of institutions and the ethical implications of institutional affiliation, authorship, and research evaluation. It reminds us that research ethics cannot be understood solely through individual decision-making but must also address the systemic structures that shape contemporary scientific and scholarly practices.

Taken together, the contributions in this volume demonstrate that ethical dilemmas in anthropology cannot be confined to a single phase of research or solely to interactions between researchers and participants. They emerge across multiple levels of anthropological practice, from negotiating access and relationships in the field, through researchers' own positionality and public engagement, to the institutional environments within which anthropological knowledge is ultimately produced and communicated.

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The series of publications by the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, devoted exclusively to questions of research ethics, is not only important but, above all, innovative, inspiring, socially significant, and responsible. It is becoming increasingly clear to all social scientists that the conditions under which research in the social sciences and humanities is conducted have changed considerably over the past two decades. This publication, comprising a series of chapters written by doctoral researchers and a staff member of the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, is another significant contribution to the debate on research ethics in the social sciences, primarily in ethnology and social anthropology.

Alexandra Bitušíková

All of the studies address topics that are highly relevant to contemporary academic debate—from housing precarity and marginalised forms of housing, through the ethics of ethnographic research in vulnerable communities, to issues of publication ethics and institutional affiliations, as well as ethical dilemmas in cultural heritage governance. I particularly appreciate the authors' ability to connect theoretical concepts with specific empirical or institutional situations. As a result, the individual contributions do not remain confined to an abstract theoretical level but engage directly with real-world challenges in contemporary academic and societal practice.

Martina Bocánová