

THE RITUAL OF INSTITUTION: FRAGMENTS OF CONTIGUITIES BETWEEN SLOVENIAN AND CROATIAN ETHNOLOGY

INGRID SLAVEC GRADIŠNIK (0000-0001-8281-4638)

ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za slovensko narodopisje /

ZRC SAZU, Institute of Slovenian Ethnology

Novi trg 2, SI – 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija / Slovenia

ingrid.slavec-gradisnik@zrc-sazu.si

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This article draws attention to the importance of comparative research in two neighbouring research traditions and the production of ethnological knowledge. Examining the intersections between Slovenian and Croatian ethnology reveals two types of parallels: the first involves intercultural comparisons in empirical research, while the second deals with patterns of knowledge production and is more focused on the theoretical and methodological issues. They are presented through fragments in a short overview of comparatively informed intersections going back several centuries. Since the institutionalization of Slovenian and Croatian ethnology around 1900, contacts between them became more intense, and were most systematic during joint work on the Slovenian-Croatian Ethnological Parallels conference series, which has lasted for several decades (since 1981). These conferences also offer an appropriate perspective on the paradigmatic transformation of both disciplines: at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s they were marked by the shift from the cultural historical study of folk culture, and from the 1990s onward by expansion and diversification (in terms of subject matter and methodology) of dialogue with anthropological research.

Keywords: *history of ethnology, Slovenia, Croatia, comparative research, ethnological institutions*

INTRODUCTION¹

Ethnologists are familiar with the ritual aspects of anniversaries: we feel close to them as a research topic and a form of special academic ritual

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that celebrates the discipline's roots, growth, and modern fruits. On such occasions, scholarly disciplines or their institutions usually seek to present themselves in the best possible light. However, their daily lives of course share certain characteristics with everyday life in general: they are forward looking and focused on something better,² but the path there is fraught with many obstacles, byways, stops, steps backwards and sideways, better and worse times, peaks, and critical times or even conflicts. Scholarly disciplines usually present themselves to the outside world by preaching their virtues, which is consistent with curricular history, whereas for a long time now critical studies of the history of science have been drawing attention especially to their internal dilemmas, which are connected with all of the intellectual and social elements of their disciplinary identity: ideas, objects, research methods, researchers, institutions, and internal

It is a slightly expanded version of a paper presented at the symposium *Hrvatska i slovenska etnologija i kulturna antropologija: iskustva, dodiri, prožimanja ...* (Croatian and Slovenian Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology: Experiences, Contacts, Permeation, etc.), which the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Arts held on November 8th, 2017 upon the ninetieth anniversary of the university's ethnology program. On this occasion I was especially honored to join in the sincere congratulations expressed to Vitomir Belaj and Aleksandra Muraj. Throughout my professional career, Vitomir Belaj has contributed valuable insights on Croatian and comparative ethnology in various ways, cultivating ties between researchers and instructors on both sides of the Slovenian-Croatian border, which remains politically controversial today, but is culturally and academically undoubtedly open (Pleterski 2017). As long as I have known her, Aleksandra Muraj has worked as a researcher at today's Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies—an institution that I already became familiar with as a student and that has always provided inspiration for our mutual cooperation. After all, Muraj received her PhD in Ljubljana and was among the most regular participants in the initial Slovenian-Croatian Ethnological Parallels conferences.

² The history of science and/or individual disciplines has largely been written as a history of progress; progress is its driver and value. Or, as Bachelard puts it, “the history of science cannot be exactly the same history as others. Because of the very fact that science evolves in terms of obvious progress, science is an urgent definition of the successive values in the progress of scientific thought. History, or an extensive history of decadence of scientific thought, has never been truly written. In contrast, the history of decadence of a given people, nation, state, or civilization has been extensively unveiled” (Bachelard 1982:35).

and external communication; in this sense they combine disciplinary and scholarly history.³

A major question in the history of science is when, where, why, and how science or its individual disciplines even begin. The answers vary. In this regard it seems appropriate—regardless of the relevance of different criteria—to highlight the view that attaches disciplinary beginnings or the boundary between pre-scientific and scientific activity⁴ to institutions. These are places of research, educational, and presentational infrastructure, intellectual communication, and knowledge production and reproduction; they are places where habitual practices of disciplinary culture are cultivated, and places of authority and subsequent supervision, inclusion, and exclusion, with particular canon criteria for what is scientific and what is not (for more, see Slavec Gradišnik 2008). Research institutions are not created just like that; as a rule, they require accumulated knowledge and a critical mass. They are always based on exceptional individuals that can gather a team around them that has the motivation to organize previous insights and create new ones. In this sense, the history of disciplines is also marked by their founding fathers and their groundbreaking contributions. Hence, works on disciplinary history reflect various styles of writing about this type of history (Urry 1996:278) and their combinations. It is also important to draw attention to two basic perspectives that appear to be in conflict, but in reality are not irreconcilable, i.e. presentism and historicism (Stocking 1968:1–12; cf. Kuklick 2008:1). These aspects and of course any others as well, are especially informative if they are reflected upon within a broader and comparative context. Juxtaposing comparable but different elements in interpretation requires paying significantly more attention to the context, which is ultimately connected with the fact that knowledge

³ The terminology is adopted from Alex Golub, who distinguished between three styles in the history of anthropology: curricular, disciplinary, and scholarly history. Curricular history comprises textbooks, anthologies, and syllabuses; disciplinary history circulates informally and relates to narratives that convey the practitioners' personal experiences; scholarly history refers to the detailed level built on historical documents that generally still remains relatively understudied (Golub 2018).

⁴ Understood in the broader sense of the emergence of the first paradigm, epistemological break, explicit disciplinary self-reflection, and so on.

production is always localized and integrated in specific times, places, and interests.

Comparisons between Croatian and Slovenian ethnology⁵ make it possible to understand the special features of their research paths, and they also provide insights into the characteristics of the constitution and functioning of a special field of research interest that is, first and foremost, embedded in the development of European national ethnologies and also other specialist research traditions.⁶ I say “national” ethnologies because from the end of the nineteenth century onward ethnology as a scholarly discipline in both Slovenia and Croatia established itself primarily as a study of its own people or nation or, specifically, folk culture (Belaj 1965; Novak 1986; Čapo 1991); to a certain extent, this continues to be the practice today, albeit in a fundamentally different way.

INTERSECTIONS OF INTERESTS

This article presents several fragments from the distant and recent history of the long-term and intensive contacts between Croatian and Slovenian ethnologists and their predecessors in order to illustrate the intersections where the efforts of past scholars found their place in fruitful dialogues that have continued until today. Thereby, the article also avoids any systematicity that would generally be expected from comparative

⁵ The word *ethnology* in this article also includes folklore studies, regardless of different conceptions of their relationship.

⁶ In this sense, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (1995), for example, connected mid-twentieth century works in Croatian ethnology with those in German *Volkskunde* and Croatian sociology. Other than that, in this context the following argumentations are important: self-understanding, (self)delineation, and intersections with other research practices in the immediate academic environment (e.g., Slovenian ethnology did this in a series of discussions with historians, geographers, and philologists) and abroad (this especially has to do with international involvement, which is reflected at numerous levels: first and foremost, in the very conceptualization of the discipline, according to which it is involved in science as a transnational practice through relevant references, and in its daily academic practices, including publications abroad, translations of foreign works into the local language, hosting and attending international conferences, education, training, research visits abroad, activity in international scholarly associations, participation in international research projects, and so on).

studies of scholarly traditions, regardless of whether the study proceeds from an intellectual, institutional, biographical, or any other perspective on disciplinary history.

In the “prehistory” of ethnology, there are a multitude of individuals that used their empirical observations and experiences to determine the cultural similarities and differences in neighbouring territories, which later provided the subject matter for disciplinary reflection, inscribing themselves in the ethnological subject-matter perspective and research methods.

Empirical similarity or similar subject matter is connected with geographical closeness, historical processes taking place in the vicinity, migrations, and daily contacts. These similarities have been documented in the writings of intellectuals from the sixteenth century onwards, and before that in the material remains. Here, a series of authors should be listed that also took their close neighbours into account while writing about the inhabitants of what is now Slovenia. Hence, for instance the Protestant writer Primož Trubar also mentioned *Istrijani* ‘Istrians’ and *Krovati* ‘Croats’ alongside the language differences between Upper Carniolans, Carinthians, Styrians, Lower Carniolans, and the inhabitants of the Karst region, comparing Slovenians with neighbouring nations (e.g., Lower Carniolans had nearly the same character and customs as Croatians and Serbs, and the people of the Karst region took after Italians and Croatians).

The most important authors and works documenting Slovenian-Croatian cultural and research similarities between the sixteenth and twentieth century (Belaj 1982) show that these contacts have been continuous. When it comes to the end of the seventeenth century, it is important to mention the intellectual and professional connections between Johann Weikhard von Valvasor on the Slovenian side, and Aleksandar Ignacije Mikulić and Pavao Ritter Vitezović on the Croatian side. It was to Mikulić that Valvasor sold his valuable and extensive graphic collection, which is still preserved in Zagreb today, and Vitezović worked with Valvasor at Bogenšperk (Germ. *Wagensperg*) Castle, creating fifty-six copper etchings for him, and most importantly, under the influence of Valvasor’s *Die Ehre deß Herzogthums Crain* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola, 1689), he published *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov* (A Chronicle or Remembrance of the Eras of the Whole World) a few years

after the release of *Die Ehre* (1696). In Slovenia, Valvasor is a wonderful example of how centuries ago intellectuals formed links and networks with one other, which can be used to trace the paths of knowledge circulation and which were not limited to the neighbouring countries, but spread all over Europe. Early interests thus testify that scholarship is transnational, even though it is neither unique nor uniform, because its currents always reflect the specific circumstances of time and place. This is what characterized the Baroque polymath perspective, the historiography and geography of the Enlightenment in which anthropological and ethnological perspectives began to develop, and the Romanticism-inspired national endeavours.

Within this context, which was dealt with in detail in the extensive literature on the history of European ethnologies, Slovenian and Croatian ethnologies have also been well researched. In addition to a series of individual short or long works, mention should also be made of two works published a few decades ago: Vilko Novak's *Raziskovalci slovenskega življenja* (Researchers of Slovenian Life, 1986) and Vitomir Belaj's *Die Kunde vom kroatischen Volk* (The Science of the Croatian People, 1998). Both reveal cultural and research parallels.

Cultural parallels refer to cultural features that know no ethnic borders: for example, a cultural-historical interest in various cultural phenomena (e.g., folksongs, folk costumes, customs, and so on) that facilitated comparative insights into the cultural layers and areas—in the case of Slovenian and Croatian territory, they referred especially to the Pannonian (and South Slavic in the broader sense) and Mediterranean cultural environment, and later on to the narrower regional and microlocal comparisons within the Slovenian-Croatian border area.

Research parallels show that the bases for ethnology in Croatia and Slovenia existed before and after its institutionalization. Here, several well-known Slovenian and Croatian names come to the fore: Anton Tomaž Linhart and Martin Sabolović, followed by Belsazar Hacquet, Emil Korytko, and Stanko Vraz, and important Slavic specialists, including Jernej Kopitar, Josef Dobrovský, Maksimilijan Vrhovac, Fran Miklošič, Vatroslav Jagić, and others.

The works of these authors gradually brought to the fore the issues that are perceived as ethnological and anthropological today, although in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were merged together with other scholarly interests (especially historical, geographical, and philological) in both Slovenia and Croatia. The disciplinary tradition of that period is of a broader European scope encompassing, for example, the emergence of the terms *ethnology* and *ethnography*, their broader and narrower conceptions that thematized exploring human characteristics as a whole and the principles of the general evolution of humanity, followed by the state-based descriptions of *Land und Leute* (“countries and people”), the attempts at reconstructing ethnic history, collecting and publishing material on the cultural characteristics of one’s own nation (i.e., the phenomenon of the folk), comparative studies of various ethnic groups, social and political engagement expressed to different degrees in different periods, and so on.

With regard to the beginnings of institutionalization, at the end of the nineteenth century a comparison can be made between Matija Murko and Antun Radić (Kremenšek 1984), who defined the Slovenian and Croatian program of research on their national cultures. They were important for both national ethnologies not only in terms of the ambitiousness of their programmes, but also in terms of their far-reaching impact on the further development of the discipline. During this time, Karel Štrekelj attracted the attention of both Slovenians and Croats because his folksong collection also included Croatia (Muršič and Ramšak 1995).

Ultimately, in the new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, ethnology (largely called *narodoznanstvo* in Croatia and *narodopisje* in Slovenia) saw its first institutions established: the central ethnographic museums (in Zagreb in 1919, and in Split even before that; and in Ljubljana in 1923) and dedicated University departments (in Zagreb in 1925 or 1927 and in Ljubljana only as late as 1940). Both departments contained the terms *ethnology* and *ethnography* in their official names. This demonstrates the broader view held by their founders, which transcended the tradition of German *Volkskunde* and Murko and Radić’s programme.⁷

In Zagreb, the credit for conceptualizing the University syllabus, which comprised the history of ethnology and an overview of traditional

⁷ This involves the distinction between *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*, or ethnography and ethnology, popular in continental Europe at that time.

Croatian culture, the culture of Slavic and other European nations, and cultures outside Europe, went to Milovan Gavazzi.⁸ More for personal than academic reasons, the beginnings of the ethnology studies in Ljubljana with Niko Zupanič appeared later than in Zagreb (although a programme modelling the one from the University of Belgrade was already envisaged upon the establishment of the University of Ljubljana in 1919), but its curriculum included courses⁹ that broadened and surpassed the Slovenian ethnographic horizon. In addition, a series of Zupanič's comparative articles on physical anthropology, and the ethnic and historical past of the Balkan Peninsula included the Croatians (e.g., Županič 1926/1927, 1937/1939; Zupanič 1928); as a native of White Carniola, Zupanič presented the ethnic and cultural interconnections in this border region (the settlement of Croatians and Serbs, folk costumes, singing, architecture, and emigration) in a concise manner. Another interesting detail regarding Zupanič is the fact that Milovan Gavazzi was involved in the drawn-out procedure of his appointment to a faculty rank, which stalled the beginnings of the University ethnology programme; specifically, Gavazzi felt that Zupanič was more of an anthropologist than an ethnographer. At the same time, Gavazzi thought it was necessary for the University of Ljubljana to have separate Departments for Anthropology¹⁰ and for Ethnography (Jezernik 2009; Muršič 2009).

With regard to ethnology in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, it is important to mention the general social and political engagement of Croatian and Slovenian ethnology, which was incomparably more explicit in Croatia (Leček and Petrović-Leš 2010; cf. Kremenšek 1978, 1983; Slavec Gradišnik 2000).

WWII set the University programme in Ljubljana back significantly. However, the University regained its strength soon after the war and

⁸ For more on the history of the department, see: Petrović Leš [s. a.].

⁹ General ethnology, physical anthropology, comparative geographical presentations of nations and cultures, linguistics and languages, archeology, history, museology, educational science, and anthropogeography.

¹⁰ Referring to physical anthropology, in line with the general understanding of that time.

especially when Vilko Novak became an assistant instructor under Zupanič in 1948.

Novak's academic career was closely connected with Milovan Gavazzi and his understanding of ethnology in terms of both research and teaching. Gavazzi served as his most important example in the immediate University environment. They knew each other from 1941 onward, when Novak first visited Gavazzi in Zagreb and became familiar with the seminal works on ethnology outside Europe as well as Gavazzi's article "Razvoj i stanje etnografije u Jugoslaviji" (The Development and Status of Ethnography in Yugoslavia; published in *Lud slowiański* 1930–1931). This was what encouraged Novak to study the history of folk life research in Slovenia. Another thing that stimulated Novak and was again related to Gavazzi had to do with the post-war Slovenian ethnography programme, whose goal was to systematically explore Slovenian folk culture, expand existing material with new information, and comparatively integrate its subject matter with European development. Novak found inspiration for this in Gavazzi's studies (Gavazzi 1928, 1937, 1942). Specifically, a comparison between Novak's paradigm¹¹ and that of Gavazzi (cf. Čapo 1991) shows that they basically shared the same (i.e., cultural-historical) paradigm.¹² This is also evident with another Zagreb University professor, Branimir Bratanić. From the 1950s onward, among the Croatian ethnologists Bratanić made notable efforts to include Croatian ethnology in European ethnology on the one hand, while promoting ethnology cartography projects or atlases in the European and Yugoslav context, on the other. In both cases, he found a good partner in Vilko Novak (Slavec Gradišnik 2012).

Changes in political, economic, and everyday life after WWII were also reflected in the cultural and educational system, and research policy.

¹¹ Evident from his article on the structure of Slovenian folk culture and an article in which he provided an outline of Slovenian folk culture (Novak 1958, 1960).

¹² Based on this paradigm, ethnology defines folk culture as a specific structure of material, social, and spiritual elements; these are the product of both evolution (indigenous development) and the influence of diffusion (cultural contacts); the chronological aspect of structure is expressed in cultural layers (from old Slavic to modern), and its spatial aspect is reflected in cultural areas; typology is thus the effect of historical (cultural-genetic) and cultural-geographical criteria.

Despite the unfavourable relationship between politics and scholarship, and the prevailing attitude toward rural people as a conservative social layer, paradoxical support was provided to ethnology as a discipline (cf. Lozica 2011). In short, the new ideology did not bring the disciplinary tradition of cultural-historical study to a halt, which at least until the 1960s was especially active in collecting material for typological and regional comparisons.

From that point on, ethnology in both Slovenia and Croatia was institutionalized in university education, central national ethnographic museums and gradually other museums, which later also included institutions for monument protection. A new feature was the establishment of research institutes: the academic Committee/Institute of Slovenian Ethnography¹³ at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1947 and 1951, and the Croatian Institute of Folk Art,¹⁴ which was directly subject to the government, in 1948.

Although with slightly different dynamics, all of these institutions took on the challenges of the new era; they did this based on a discernible professional heritage of studying folk culture, which from the 1960s onward ultimately received criticism in both Slovenia and Croatia, albeit from slightly different starting points: from a more structural functional perspective in Croatia and a more structural genetic angle in Slovenia. In terms of spreading ethnological and folklore studies issues, this criticism comprised a thorough reflection of research issues, with a deconstruction of the concepts of *folk*, *folk character*, *folklore*, and *tradition*, and criticism of the cultural-historical methodology; it was embedded in similar discussions elsewhere in Europe and in line with the anthropological rudiments that gained new impetus during the 1990s, after *die Wende*, or the period of profound political, economic, and social changes following the 1989 collapse of communist regimes (Köstlin et al. 2002). In both Slovenia and Croatia, this brought ethnology even closer to the currents in modern European ethnology or “ethno-anthropology” (cf. Čapo 2014).

¹³ Now the ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology.

¹⁴ Later renamed the Institute of Folklore Research, and finally the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies.

From the 1960s onward, the institutional bearers of change in both countries included the University Department in Slovenia and the Institute of Folklore Research in Croatia, which can be ascribed to the main figures in these institutions, especially Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin in Zagreb and Slavko Kremenšek in Ljubljana. Expanding the research subject matter to include for example urban phenomena, contemporary culture, everyday life, folklore in context, and so on, both sides promoted stronger interest in both theoretical and methodological issues, and rereading and re-examining the older texts. This expansion was also an indication of a new disciplinary self-reflection, which thematized the social engagement of ethnology not only in the present, but also in retrospect. In Slovenian ethnology, in the last two or three decades of the twentieth century, these issues were discussed in works on the social foundations and ideological bases of its development (especially those by Kremenšek), and in Croatia they were discussed in considerations on ethnology and politics, and the thematization of power relations in studies of culture (especially those by Rihtman-Auguštin). Both also provided a firm basis for the greater inclusion of anthropological material and perspectives from the 1990s onward, which was ultimately reflected in the renaming of both University Departments by adding “cultural anthropology” to “ethnology” to their official names.

SLOVENIAN-CROATIAN PARALLELS¹⁵

Due to the disciplinary closeness and the relevance of interethnic and later on other topics too, a series of conferences known as Slovenian-Croatian Ethnological Parallels has been held by the Croatian and Slovenian

¹⁵ I should add here that this series of conferences was not the only meeting venue for the Croatian and Slovenian ethnologists and folklore specialists. In socialist Yugoslavia, researchers, museologists, and university instructors met regularly at the congresses of the Association of Folklore Societies of Yugoslavia and the Association of Ethnological Societies of Yugoslavia, visited one another as guest lecturers, were participants at various conferences, and so on. Since the 1990s, Croatian researchers have often participated in the international Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School in Piran, Slovenia. Since Slovenia and Croatia joined the EU, this cooperation has been taking place within a new framework of teaching and research cooperation.

Ethnological Societies since 1981 (with a pause between 1991 and 2004).¹⁶ Seven took place during the years leading up to the 1991 collapse of Yugoslavia (for more, see Muraj 2006) and the following seven have been held since 2004.

During the last decade of Yugoslavia, these biennial meetings were the first to provide room for discussions on the comparative histories of both disciplines, which, as a matter of fact, had been driven by intercultural comparisons and (inter)ethnic issues ever since their pre-scientific beginnings. These were also closely and dialectically connected with the identity of the two disciplines, which the conference participants sought to “measure” in terms of their social relevance, origins, and a stronger orientation toward anthropology or cultural studies respectively (Kremenšek 1982:6). The first conference encompassed discussions about the ethnological and folklore endeavours until approximately the midnineteenth century (Bogataj et al. 1982). Special mention should be made here of the examination of the Enlightenment and Romantic origins of ethnology, the comprehensive evaluation of Stanko Vraz’s significance, presentations of overlooked writers and sources, and special genres relevant to ethnology (travelogues and texts written by missionaries), and especially to the realization that modern perspectives on the discipline were re-evaluating its past achievements, problems, and insights. Or, as Aleksandra Muraj later commented:

“Reflection on the history of national ethnologies imposed itself as a discussion topic not only in order to expand the existing body of knowledge with new insights and to juxtapose parallel currents with today’s changes, but also in order to examine well-known facts and evaluate their importance using modern criteria.” (Muraj 2006:90)

The second conference (1982) focused on the period from 1848 to 1945 (*Povijesne paralele* 1984), during which ethnology finally became

¹⁶ The initiative for it arose from the long-standing cooperation between individuals and institutions, but it was more concretely formulated during a 1980 Slovenian conference on Janez Trdina as an ethnologist (Trdina 1980); this conference, as well as a conference on ethnology and contemporary Slovenian society that took place in Brežice two years prior to that, was also attended by Croatian researchers (Kremenšek 1982; Muraj 2006).

institutionalized (there are parallels between Antun Radić and Matija Murko).¹⁷ Particular attention was given to the broader nineteenth century cultural and political developments in Slovenia and Croatia, and less familiar disciplinary tradition (studies that moved beyond Romanticism, the pioneering work of transcribers and collectors, and ethnomusicological contributions); all of the papers provided a valuable contribution to the poorly studied professional developments until then (Uredništvo 1984). The detailed examination of Janez Trdina's activities in the second half of the nineteenth century mentioned above also belongs within this timeframe. Until then, this particular study eluded the canonized disciplinary frameworks and genres of writing about the folk, but a different understanding of writing about people and their culture made it possible to re-evaluate its contribution to the knowledge of folk culture (cf. Fikfak 1999). Regarding the interest shown in overlooked research endeavours, attention was also paid to the work of Jakob Volčič (Fikfak 1988),¹⁸ which involved a parallel interdisciplinary scholarly examination and was open toward a wider context that included regional and thematic aspects (Croatian and Slovenian Istria).

The next edition of the conference introduced a series of papers on the state of research and current interethnic issues in the Slovenian-Croatian border areas: in Istria (Ravnik et al. 1987), the Kolpa Valley near Karlovac, White Carniola, the Žumberak Hills and the Sotla Valley, Croatia's Zagorje region, Prekmurje and the Rába Valley, and Međimurje (IV. paralele 1986; Slavec and Dolžan 1988; Keršič et al. 1991). Detailed comparative studies that would cover both sides of the border were less frequent than was initially envisaged by the initiators (Kremenšek 1991:5). One of the reasons for this was probably the lack of modern comparative research methodology, which was connected with the research practice of national ethnologies used until then on the one hand, and the broader

¹⁷ The postwar period was not covered in a separate conference because it was already the main topic of the 1983 Yugoslav Congress of Ethnologists and Folklore Specialists (Bogataj and Terseglav 1983).

¹⁸ The case involved research cooperation between the ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology in Ljubljana and the Croatian Institute for Folklore Research.

contextualization of studies of specific cultural phenomena on the other. Ultimately, this was also connected with the failure of ethnologists and folklore specialists on both sides of the border to take the opportunity for cooperation on joint research projects.¹⁹

At the fifth and sixth conferences in 1987 and 1989, ethnologists focused on two current topics: the national issue and the theory of ethnos, which were basically not discussed at all in ethnology during socialism (for the underlying reasons, see Rihtman-Auguštin 1995; cf. Hribar 1991). The ethnological deficit in the reflection of the discipline's seminal concept came to the fore especially in papers on the theory of ethnos (Teorija 1989), whereas the issue of ethnos as a universal and simultaneously dynamic phenomenon was instructively elucidated by sociologists, philosophers, and historians. The multidirectional "translation" of cultural transformations at the local, regional, and national/transnational levels discussed at the seventh conference in 1991 (Keršič et al. 1991) was also weak. It was only possible to transcend this through later orientations toward border studies, ethnicity and (national) minorities, (re)production of ethnic/national symbols, and so on.

Nonetheless, during the time when Croats and Slovenians lived together in Yugoslavia, which "irrevocably collapsed in a heap of ashes, tears, and blood" (Muraj 2006:91) only a few months after the last conference in Lendava, these conferences did more than bring the insights of the Croatian and Slovenian research tradition and contemporary research in the border areas closer together. Later, when Croatia, unlike Slovenia, was affected by a lengthy war, the power of ethnological knowledge and experiences was brought to the test, especially in terms of the challenge to

¹⁹ Such cooperation was practically only put in place as late as 1984 and 2004 as part of studies of carnival culture (ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology and the Croatian Institute for Folklore Research / Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies) and two later bilateral projects: *Nacionalni parki: konstrukcija dediščine in vloga države* (National Parks: The Construction of Heritage and the Role of the State, 2012–2013) and *Slovenija in Hrvaška – etnološke in folkloristične raziskave* (Slovenia and Croatia: Ethnological and Folklore Studies, 2014–2015). The applied research project *Živa coprnija / Živa štrigarija* (Living Witchcraft; Interreg Slovenia–Croatia, 2017–2019) is currently underway.

study social issues that ethnography can capture in the “here and now.” On the other hand, experts in both countries felt challenged to also thematize some of the topical issues which were at the time connected with the formation of new states and national identities.

Thus changes that took place in more than ten years of living in their own states were also reflected in the changes of the discipline itself; they were evident from the topics discussed in the second round of conferences, which were revived at Motovun in 2004.²⁰ They are illustrated by the keywords or most frequently used words: identity, border, perspectives, redefinitions, transformations, various *-isms* between the local and global levels, (intangible and industrial) cultural heritage (Černelič Krošelj et al. 2011), applied aspects, Europe, Europeanization, projects, minorities, volunteerism, women, the body, and so on. The meaningful redistributions of research priorities can be perceived in these words. Even in the new circumstances (the independent state, and joining and entering the EU), ethnologists thematized the status and role of ethnology as a critical study of culture, they familiarized themselves with current research in Slovenia and Croatia, research in the border area, and the exchange of experience in heritage protection, and they focused on work in museums and education (Jelavić 2008:173). Their works provided new insights into the life and identification processes in border regions, cities, and towns (Černelič Krošelj et al. 2006), and thematized cultural regionalisms as a cross-border phenomenon and the importance of the local and Europeanization, which is transforming life in rural areas at great speed and on various levels, either through financial incentives or support provided to many applied projects. Especially in recent years, ethnologists have sought and also found a new research niche for “engaged” or applied ethnology. One of the main topics is tangible and intangible cultural heritage - that is, a “traditional” ethnological and folklore studies topic, whose ongoing research outlines are, however, placed in completely different frameworks. Initially, these frameworks demanded thorough considerations of the definition and scope, and the relationship with tradition and past culture (including folk culture),

²⁰ This was followed by conferences in the Slovenia’s Kozje region (2006), Varaždin (2008), Krško (2010), Duga Resa (2012), Dolenjske Toplice (2014), and Lug in the Croatian region of Baranja (2016); this year’s conference is taking place in Mojstrana.

and afterwards especially the dialogue with politics and economics.²¹

As a matter of fact, social engagement was the main thread or one of the main issues based on which the Croatian-Slovenian Ethnological Parallels conferences were conceived. At the same time, this was an explicit issue that has accompanied disciplinary reflection from the end of WWII onward, when the view of ethnologists being locked up in ivory towers has been continuously repeated. Today the alleged ivory towers are found on the knowledge market, which determines the conditions for the survival of scientific disciplines—with special attention being given to humanities (Jambrešić Kirin 2014; Bagarić et al. 2017). Under such conditions, with regard to the plans for future cooperation, Slovenian and Croatian researchers should reconsider their research (and educational) priorities, which seem to be of central importance for future discussions about whether ethnologists, anthropologists, and folklore specialists will still remain the heirs of humanist curiosity and social sensitivity, or turn into (indeed if they have not already become) simply applicants for socially relevant and market-oriented projects that completely direct their professional thinking. This is the daily experience in our profession, but not our calling. This goes hand in hand with the brilliant comment made a few years ago by Ivan Lozica (2011), who touched upon the professional priorities as something that is determined by politicians, the market, and scholars.

²¹ Thus for instance, our latest interinstitutional projects (on national parks and cultural heritage) are a reflection of a harmonized response to the current topic of managing, protecting, and marketing natural and cultural heritage.

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