

A CURRICULUM OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: PROPOSALS AND PERSPECTIVES IN CROATIA

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Professional paper
Stručni rad
Accepted: July 7, 2008

In this paper a discussion on potentials, scopes, aims, betterments and prospects of cultural anthropological education in Croatia is provoked on the basis of the proposal of new curricula. It figures as a platform for a debate that could open up some new perspectives and critical appraisals of existing programs.

Key words: *university curricula, ethnology and cultural anthropology*

The interest in cultural anthropological themes and interpretations in contemporary Croatia is growing. This statement can be corroborated by the number of individual anthropological courses and new study programs introduced in the university curricula throughout the country in the last decade. For example, anthropology is taught at the Faculty for Croatian Studies in Zagreb (within the Department of Sociology, since 1998); at the Department of Ethnology and Social-Cultural Anthropology at the University of Zadar (department founded in 2006); at the interdepartmental Study of anthropology at the Faculty of Arts and Letters in Zagreb (since 2000) and in Rijeka within the Department of Cultural Studies (since 2006).¹ Last

¹ To our knowledge, at the moment, two more anthropological programs are being planned at two universities in Zagreb.

but not least, the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Arts and Letters in Zagreb, currently the oldest ethnological department in Croatia (continually from 1927)² and until recently the only one, has significantly expanded its range of cultural anthropological courses in the last decade while it also changed the departmental name (adding “cultural anthropology”) thus responding not only to the development of the ethnological discipline itself in Croatia³ but also to the increase in contemporary demand for education in cultural anthropology.

A significant number of associates from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb are engaged in the above mentioned programs, either at the graduate or post-graduate level. With its library resources, documentation of ethnographic material, as well as with its interdisciplinary fellowships⁴ the Institute also provides assistance for students of ethnology and cultural anthropology. Therefore, discussions on potentials, scopes, aims, betterments, and the modernization of cultural anthropological education in Croatia have also become a matter of concern at the Institute.

In this text, we will present a proposal for a cultural and sociological curriculum which was recently discussed among a group of the Institute's associates.⁵ First, we will elaborate on the necessity for such a program. This will be followed by the presentation of the aims of the proposed curriculum and prospects for employment of people with anthropological competence/expertise at the current juncture in Croatian society. Finally, in accordance with the proposed perspective, a list with anthropological courses will be presented. Although some of those courses are already taught by our colleagues at different faculties, the curriculum as presented here has not yet been implemented as an integral program. Therefore, it figures as a proposal or a platform for discussion that could open up some new perspectives and critical appraisals of existing programs.

² Courses with ethnological content were introduced on Zagreb University even before. On university education of ethnology in Croatia until the end of 1990s see Belaj 1998:353.

³ See: Rihtman-Auguštin 2004, Prica 2001.

⁴ See the Institute's internet page: <http://www.ief.hr>.

⁵ The whole program can be seen at the web site of the Institute (<http://www.ief.hr/page.php?id=360>).

DISCIPLINARY BACKGROUND

As distinctive disciplines of the general science of man, cultural and social anthropology have their focus on the research and interpretation of social, cultural, political, religious, ecological, economic and artistic factors, phenomena and processes, which create and mark similarities and differences among humans and human groups. Having developed primarily via research into so-called traditional societies (pre-modern, colonial, rural), cultural and social anthropology have a foundation in a cross-cultural comparative approach to various domains of social and cultural life of human communities. Besides the *comparative focus*, the principles of anthropological research include *holistic perspective* and *cultural relativism*. Altogether, these principles make up the epistemological basis of social and cultural anthropology. In recent decades, anthropology has oriented itself towards a *critical interpretation of modern, post-modern, and complex societies*, as well as of cultural processes and societal changes in contemporary society, such as globalization, migration, the development of IT-society, post-fordism, consumerism, multiculturalism, human rights etc.

Together with this encompassing analytical corpus of social and cultural anthropology, a non-negligible part of these disciplines is their *theoretical vibrancy* and specific *methodological foundation*. Following various theoretical paradigms throughout the 20th century, anthropology has created a high level of critical reflexivity toward fieldwork, ethnographic text, and ethical issues. *Methodological foundation in qualitative research* makes social and cultural anthropology distinctive in relation to other disciplines dealing with societies and cultures in the past and in the present. It confers the quality of *contextual analysis* to an interpretation stemming from qualitative methodology. Such an analysis does not aim at defining general laws but at interpreting particular processes in changeable spatial and temporal horizons.

AIMS

If we are to follow the above-mentioned very general framework in which we have described recent trends in social and cultural anthropology, a new curriculum of social and cultural anthropology in Croatia needs to address the following aims:

- Promotion of a cross-cultural and critical approach to cultures and societies as a specific anthropological lens. Both of these would lead to the respect of cultural and social differences and critically relate to any form of ethnocentrism, thus enabling the formation of a multicultural civil society in general and specifically in Croatia;
- Critical interpretation of contemporary society through dominant themes of our everyday life such as globalization, migrations, trans-nationalism, virtual communities, media, new religious movements, inter-culturalism, etc.;
- Education for social engagement of anthropologists in their communities, particularly through the exercise of empathy, which should become a value determinant of any relationship between an individual and her/his community;
- Education for a holistic approach, which is especially important in today's world of fragmented knowledge. This would bring the students back to a more complex understanding of the researched problem and would influence their action;
- Development of the skills of critical reading, argumentation, discussion and academic writing, which will enable students not only to engage in academic areas but also to competently participate in public discussions and evaluations of contemporary social processes.

PROSPECTS

There is a twofold direction that we would like the curriculum of cultural and social anthropology to take – an academic (critical and reflexive) and a non-academic (engaged, critical) one.

With regard to the latter, we deem that there *are not enough trained social and cultural anthropologists* in Croatian society. They do not represent a critical number of anthropologists that would be recognized by their specific professional knowledge and activities. However, foreign experiences point out the ever-growing demand for trained anthropologists in various, primarily non-academic fields.

Anthropological knowledge and skills are a prerogative today for a number of professional jobs – in the public relations sector, diplomacy,

journalism, education, museums and other cultural activities (from cultural tourism to the management of cultural resources). Anthropological expertise is also needed in huge corporations in the market research of consumer practices, contemporary habits and life-styles, new forms of socializing, and in the research of the relationship between technology and the individual. Even more so, the knowledge of anthropology is applicable in the civil society sector and community-work in general so that trained anthropologists can actively participate in the organization and implementation of social, cultural, educational and health programs within governmental and non-governmental organizations.

All these fields require the following *skills and abilities*: consciousness of difference and cross-cultural understanding, education for tolerance, holistic comprehension of a problem, empathy and respect for an individual point of view, understanding and application of qualitative methodology (observation, interviewing, empathy, sensibility for detail and the apparently "insignificant"). Therefore, the focus of a contemporary curriculum in social and cultural anthropology should be directed toward teaching these skills. This would enable the students to contribute to the life of particular communities and to society in general.

A VISION OF A CURRICULUM

Such a vision requires that the new curriculum of social and cultural anthropology be implemented as education in humanistic and social disciplines. It should integrate the American and the British tradition of cultural and social anthropology, the traditions of particular European ethnologies (German, French, Scandinavian, etc.) as well as the Croatian ethnological tradition. The students should be acquainted with Croatian and foreign cultures and societies through the lenses of the key terms of cultural and social anthropology such as identity, ritual, family and kinship, gender, ethnicity, everyday life, etc. Furthermore, the Croatian ethnographic material should be interpreted in an innovative way through the anthropological looking glass.

In other words, we are appealing for an all-encompassing and modern curriculum of social and cultural anthropology that equally treats the domestic and foreign ethnographic issues and follows relevant theoretical, methodological, and epistemological trends. As such, the curriculum will

enable the students to comprehend the past and today's Croatian culture and life-styles and European and global cultural flows. This is of immense importance in the modern and post-modern global society in which the understanding of the local and the particular requires the understanding of the global and the general and vice versa.

THE DESCRIPTION OF COURSES

The envisaged curriculum should encompass the following groups of courses:

- theoretical and methodological courses;
- ethno-anthropological⁶ courses on Croatian culture;
- topical and regional anthropologies;
- interdisciplinary courses.

1. *Theoretical and methodological courses* aim at giving a review of research areas, concepts, theories and controversies within cultural and social anthropology from the end of the 19th century until today, including a critical review of Croatian ethnology. Methodological courses should be largely organized as student workshops which should encompass short-term fieldwork projects and written presentation of the research. In this group of courses we want to emphasize that concurrent to lecturing in theory and epistemology of cultural and social anthropology, the students should be exposed to in-depth reading of classical and modern ethnographies, both those produced within social and cultural anthropology as those produced within European ethnologies.

2. *Courses in ethno-anthropological research into Croatian culture* should give basic knowledge about Croatian ethnographic heritage interpreted with the aid of the apparatus of social and cultural anthropology. In such a way the curriculum will contribute to the implementation of the appeal for anthropologizing Croatian ethnology, which was programmatically formulated by the late Croatian ethnologist and anthropologist Dunja

⁶ For the term see Rihtman-Auguštin 2004.

Rihtman-Auguštin(2004). Specific domains of Croatian ethnography treated in this way should include certain traditional topics such as worldviews, rituals, families, music, folklore etc. but also contemporary topics such as urban ways of life, diasporic identities, ethnicity and nationalism, (post-) socialist themes, etc.

3. *Topical and regional anthropologies* is a group of courses introducing specific sub-disciplines of social and cultural anthropology, such as linguistic, economic, religious, applied, urban, political, visual anthropology, and anthropology of kinship, music, of space and place, of migration, of food and internet. Besides these topical courses, the students should be introduced to regional anthropologies, such as Asian, (Meso-) American, African, etc. anthropologies, especially with regard to the study of contemporary post-colonial and globalizing processes in those areas. This is entirely dependent on the availability of experienced researchers of these areas. The latter imperative – that the teachers on these culture areas be experienced researchers on precisely those cultures – is difficult to implement, and the curriculum would probably have to rely on external, foreign experts, or attract in some way Croats living and teaching similar subjects abroad.

4. *An interdisciplinary group of courses* is necessary for achieving holistic education and should include such areas as the research into the interface between anthropology and history, anthropology and folklore studies, anthropology and sociology, anthropology and cultural studies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This expose is meant as an incentive for a discussion. We think it is important to discuss all existing and emerging curricula among our fellow-anthropologists, not only with the aim of avoiding their overlapping⁷ but also with respect to the prospects that they will offer for employment. We should not educate and produce professionals who will in the end not be able to find an adequate job. Therefore, we need to carefully think what kind of professionals are needed in our society and how we can, through

⁷This is probably not entirely possible to avoid.

anthropological curricula, perhaps help students apply for those new types of expert jobs that our societies are looking for (e.g. in the service sector of various kinds). For example, do people working as tourist guides have to be trained as anthropologists, and at what level? Is the three-year or perhaps the five-year curriculum most appropriate for them? It is for those reasons that new curricula require planning, in tune with the social processes and needs not only in the short-term but also in the long-term.

Finally, with regard to the recent proliferation of anthropological courses and departments, it might be advisable to develop different curricula with specific contents or specializations. For example, besides offering general anthropological and ethnological courses, the Department at the Zadar University might offer a specialization in Mediterranean studies, while a curriculum developed in one of the Zagreb faculties might want to offer a specialization in European ethnology, as taught and practiced mostly in central European countries. In the current surge of anthropological curricula such an approach would not only be rational from the viewpoint of a small country with moderate resources and scientific investments, but would, by opening the door toward difference and specificity, also diminish competitiveness between existing programs. By the same token, it would also enlarge the scope of possibilities with which anthropology might present itself – in all areas of its rich sub-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary capital – to the Croatian educational and social system.

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PROGRAM KULTURNE I SOCIJALNE ANTROPOLOGIJE: PRIJEDLOZI I PERSPEKTIVE U HRVATSKOJ

Sažetak

Interes za kulturno-antropološke teme i interpretacije u Hrvatskoje sve je veći. Na to upućuje i sve veći broj antropoloških predmeta uvedenih u sveučilišnu nastavu kao i novoosnovanih antropoloških fakultetskih odsjeka na sveučilištima u Hrvatskoj u posljednjem desetljeću. U izvođenju nastave etnoloških i antropoloških programa u znatnoj mjeri sudjeluju i znanstvenici s Instituta za etnologiju i folkloristiku u Zagrebu, stoga su pitanja o potencijalu, ciljevima i poboljšanjima antropološkog obrazovanja također dio Institutskog interesa. U članku predstavljamo prijedlog programa kulturne i socijalne antropologije o kojemu smo nedavno raspravljali s grupom suradnika. Iako mnoge od predmeta predviđenih programom naši suradnici već predaju na nekim od hrvatskih fakulteta, cjeloviti program kakav se ovdje predstavlja nije još implementiran. U predstavljanju programa polazimo od pitanja definiranja potrebe antropološkoga programa i u skladu s time predstavljamo predviđene ciljeve, predmete te propitujemo moguće okvire zapošljavanja onih koji obrazovno steknu antropološku kompetenciju. Ovaj je prijedlog platforma za diskusiju o novim perspektivama i kritičkim vrednovanjima postojećih programa.

Ključne riječi: sveučilišni nastavni program, etnologija i kulturna antropologija

