

## **ETHNOLOGIA EUROPAEA IN CROATIA AND SLOVENIA: BRANIMIR BRATANIĆ (1910–1986) AND VILKO NOVAK (1909–2003)**

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*The author deals with a chapter from the histories of Croatian and Slovenian ethnology, particularly the period of the 1950s, when both national ethnological disciplines were engaged with the issue of the relationship between general and regional/national ethnology. As far as concerns this relationship, Branimir Bratanić and Vilko Novak, both university professors at that time, followed the contemporary line of discussions in European ethnology (EE). They presented the “novelties” and advocated the integration of specific national traditions in EE, adapting them by respecting disciplinary legacies and current state of the discipline in their home countries as well as their educational agendas and broader research practices. For this reason, this study also includes a comparative presentation of some disciplinary convergences and divergences right before this particular period: the links between Croatian and Slovenian ethnology that come to light when emphasising the conceptualization of the research field, institutional history, and contacts among researchers.*

**Keywords:** *history of ethnology, Croatia, Slovenia, Branimir Bratanić, Vilko Novak, European ethnology.*

### **THE HISTORY OF DISCIPLINE, DISCIPLINARY CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES**

The history of discipline pertains to the general issues of knowledge production. It has no explicit comparative interests, yet its often non-explicit background might imply a wider frame of thought that transcends the boundaries of academic formation in a narrowly defined (national) area. The consideration of a broader comparative perspective is instructive, not

only due to the fact that in principle science is international or transnational, and due to the opinion that a discipline is best explored when based on its history. And there is *no single or unequivocal history*. Rather, it may be illuminating because it exposes the commitments to the specifics of time and space. That is to say, despite the known and recognised currents of knowledge production in general and of ethnology in particular, it is about idiosyncratic localisations of underlying tendencies, i.e. the specifics in national, even institutional frameworks in which it has been developing and unfolding. To know and understand them is essential for a dialogue that opens up and answers the general as well as specific disciplinary problems, enables cooperation and multiple interpretations of the phenomena and processes that have been subject to investigation. As comparisons are a *sine qua non* in anthropological/ethnological research itself, they might be illuminating also when they focus on different disciplinary histories.

When it comes to comparisons between Slovenian and Croatian ethnology there is no fear for them to be impertinent. The “subject” of the discipline i.e. the topic of cultural similarities and differences, which originate in geographical proximity, historical processes in the neighbourhood, migrations, and cultural contacts (daily contacts between people and between the intellectuals exploring such contacts) might serve as relevant comparative units. Mainly they impart that ethnic boundaries do not necessarily overlap with cultural boundaries. Equally comparable are discourses about them, which originate in the knowledge of the academic and pre-academic period in the formation of the ethnological scholarship in Croatia and Slovenia, in which many intellectuals and later also many ethnologists participated.

What is important in this regard are the questions that were raised by our predecessors, the incentives of why they were addressing them, and what answers they would provide; how they reflected the world about which they were inquiring themselves, what their findings were, what is their value at a more general level, their potential critical quality to (re-)direct the paths of the discipline, what they can tell us today about various times, spaces and daily cultural practices.

Evaluation of disciplinary past is usually schematised in two perspectives: the presentist and historicist (Stocking 1968; Urry 1996).

The first one deals primarily with the current implications of past findings, the criterion being *our* questions. The second one, however, prioritises the understanding in a historical context: how the researchers before us would answer *their own* questions, to what extent those issues were topical at the time, how they were related to it, how they reflected expert dilemmas, political and other ideologies. Almost as a rule the first one ignores the historical context, and evaluates accumulated knowledge in the light of the achieved quantity and quality of the findings, sometimes also being critical in a biased manner. The other sometimes loses the sense of contemporary relevance, yet thanks to detailed contextualisation might discover much of what was overlooked by the first one. Both, however, each from its specific standpoint, emphasise either continuity or discontinuity, which are related to how scholarship is seen through time: either as cumulative accumulation of knowledge or as a flow that is being redirected by scientific revolutions. The latter, according to Thomas Kuhn, is particularly typical of exact sciences, but also in humanities paradigmatic turning points in broader sense (such, for example, was the critique and refusal of evolutionism in anthropology and ethnology) may be discerned. Still, these paradigmatic shifts are quite incomparable to turns in natural sciences or technology, which change the view of the world completely (e.g., the Newtonian paradigm, the relativity theory, etc.). In disciplines studying man and societies, new paradigms tend to redirect views, often by incorporating the past findings, (re-)conceptualise them within new terms, illuminate them with a novel theoretical perspective and interpret them with unconventional methodological tools. This certainly challenges, if not demands, re-reading of older sources and texts from contemporary perspectives. The emphasis on either continuity or discontinuity therefore always legitimises the current professional practices: discontinuities assist in rendering the simultaneous non-orthodox orthodox (by looking for comparable examples in the past), revive the ignored predecessors and build new genealogic connections with them, and/or diminish the statuses of other predecessors. In short: in the continuous process of selection (exclusion and inclusion), some are raised, others obscured.

There is no clear perspective and the two views are complementary rather than being exclusivist:

“No matter what their professional training and special interests, historians inevitably ask questions that are important in our age. They know that past concerns were different from our own, but they must also know how contemporary practitioners view their enterprise; the past may appear different in the future, but knowledge of a discipline’s present has some bearing on understanding its history. Thus, today’s anthropologists should be both served by attention to historical matters of contemporary concern and inspired by historicist accounts, which aim to meet anthropology’s time-honored goal of sympathetically reporting distinctive ways of life. And to describe episodes in the development of the human sciences also serves to reveal aspects of the general social orders within which they occurred, addressing questions of interest to all manner of historians.” (Kuklick 2008:1)

## **SLOVENIAN AND CROATIAN ETHNOLOGY: DISCIPLINARY LEGACIES**

In the history of our discipline, one might discern flows of thought that more or less reflect the general ideas of time, and local traditions that domesticate such currents to various extents. Appropriations are not only about local idiosyncrasies, but also about more objective circumstances that either accelerated or decelerated the formation of the disciplinary field. These include facts from their histories, histories of institutions, major contributions of individuals, academic networks, the politics of science, etc. It means that their pasts and presents are linked through historical, political, intellectual, professional and personal lines of descent.

Historians of anthropology and European ethnology, including the Slovenian and Croatian ethnology were discovering the origins of the discipline during the Enlightenment and the turn from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century when ethnology was being constituted as an academic discipline both in Croatia and Slovenia. In both ethnologies, this period has been studied fairly thoroughly.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. synthetic studies by V. Belaj (1989, 1998, 2001), V. Novak (1986), J. Fikfak (1999). To the exploration of this period *Historic parallels between Croatian and*

The process of constituting the discipline from its pre-academic into the academic period was heightened with the efforts of Antun Radić in Croatia, and of Gregor Krek, Karel Štrekelj and Matija Murko in Slovenia. However, both the starting points and the outcomes were different: in Croatia they were heading towards ethnography and in Slovenia at first mostly towards folkloristics.<sup>2</sup>

What is important despite all the dissimilarities is that Murko and Radić have authored the texts that have been considered the first ethnological research programmes (Murko's *Nauki za Slovence* 1896 and Radić's *Osnova za sabiranje građe o narodnom životu* 1897), even more; their influence on respective national ethnologies has been quite far-reaching.<sup>3</sup>

Their ideas and their reception paved the way for the institutionalization of a discipline exploring folk (Sln. *ljudska*, Cro. *narodna*) culture and folk life.<sup>4</sup> Its loci were the people (Sln. *ljudstvo*, Cro. *narod*) or the ethnic group, its bearers were the peasant populations who transferred cultural elements across generations, its spiritus movens was tradition and its opposites, the innovations being introduced by civilisation or high culture. That was, in fact, "a theory of two cultures" applied to the subject of folk/national, distinguishable with regard to sets "urban-rural, peasant"; "high-culture, civilisation – folk"; "foreign-domestic, ethnic"; "traditional – innovative"; "collective – individual", etc. Its academic authority was provided

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*Slovenian ethnology* organised by the Croatian and Slovenian ethnological societies were dedicated. The first meeting was organised in Ormož in 1981, focusing on parallel currents in the development of ethnology before 1848 (Bogataj et al. 1982), and the second meeting held in Varaždin in 1982 on the period between 1848 and 1945 (*Etnološka tribina* 13–14, 1983). See Muraj 1984b.

<sup>2</sup> For a comparison of A. Radić and M. Murko, see Kremenšek 1984.

<sup>3</sup> This has been proven by the attention that was paid to them by researchers in recent decades (on Radić: e.g. Belaj 1965; Čapo 1991, 1995, 1997; Muraj 1984a; Pletenac 2005; Vince-Pallua 1999; Vodopija 1977; on Murko: Grafenauer 1956; Kremenšek 1984; Križnar 2003; Kuret 1972; Muršič and Ramšak 1995; Slavec Gradišnik 2002, 2005; Stanonik 2002, 2003, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> The term was used less frequently in Slovenia, with "folk culture" being in the foreground. Vilko Novak, however, used the term "folk life", especially when discussing the history of research. Cf. *Raziskovalci slovenskega življenja* (Researchers of Slovenian Life, 1986).

by positivism crystallised in the cultural-historical perspective and methodology, its methods were based on the experts' authority, therefore it was by principle non-dialogic and certainly not what Radić would have imagined (cf. Pletenac 2005).

Particularly with regard to its subject, in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnology, which in Croatia was called *narodoznanstvo* (ethnology) and in Slovenia *etnografija* or *narodopisje* (ethnography), was neatly delimited from other disciplines, also from anthropology, which was then mainly understood as physical anthropology, and ethnology, which was engaged with the research into cultures outside the European continent and the general comparative topics.

When trying to conceive the folk, national culture – which rather than nation was the real, actual subject matter of ethnology (Čapo 1991; Slavec Gradišnik 2000a), it is important with regard to the inclusion in the broader social and political context that they assigned to it the function of integration and segregation: the inclusive character of culture is shown at the level of the nation, of ethnic identity with its own specific culture, and it is folk culture that, being specific is also exclusive in relation to other nations. Segregation marked cultural distinctions between the rural and the urban, “the culture of peasantry – the culture of gentry” (Radić), thus also being intracultural. In both cases it was bound by the ethnic paradigm, according to which distinct culture was the main marker of an ethnic community/nation. Obviously, the emphasis on cultural specifics as ethnic specifics was not a neutral act, and it never is. It was based mainly on political and internal social conditions as well as on ethnologists' world-views: ethnologists recognised in folk/national culture the most authentic, oldest, healthy core culture. In this regard the social conditions between the two world wars were slightly different in Croatia and Slovenia. Indeed, they were both constituents of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians/the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, yet the reluctance towards the Yugoslav state was somewhat more pronounced in Croatia than in Slovenia, at least from the aspect of ethnologists' political and social commitments. In Slovenia, the national constitutive potential of ethnological activity was mainly pointed against Italianization, Germanization and Hungarianization.

Another difference between the Croatian and Slovenian ethnology that should not be overlooked is the institutionalization of the discipline.

In the period between the two world wars they both had their national ethnographic museums. At the University of Zagreb, a chair for ethnology was founded in 1924, its operation commencing in 1927 under the leadership of Milovan Gavazzi, whereas at the University of Ljubljana, the chair “of ethnology with ethnography” was founded only in 1940. Right before the war, some lectures were given by Professor Niko Zupanič, were then suspended during the war only to continue in full afterwards, in the academic year 1945/46. Furthermore, ethnology was integrated in lower level education in Croatia before World War II, which was related to the strong ideology of peasantry and nationalism as the worldview foundations of ethnology at the time (see Leček and Petrović Leš 2010). In Slovenia, the ideology of the ethnological discipline was more implicit. To be more precise, the Catholic horizon marked also the scholarly habitus of researchers, who, however, were only exceptionally engaged in social and political projects. When it comes to the subject of the discipline, the situation was quite different – folk/national culture or folklore was being popularized in various ways, with some researchers appearing as popularisers (e.g. France Stele, Stanko Vurnik, France Marolt, Niko Kuret), but all of them entered ethnology/ethnography as specialists for other sciences – philology, art history, geography, archaeology, etc.

### **ETHNOLOGY AFTER 1945**

Post-war changes in the political, economic and social life echoed in the sphere of culture and education system as well as in science politics. Considering the propagated relationship between politics and science (Marxist foundations, socially engaged science) and the general attitude towards peasantry as a conservative social stratum, the social or political support towards the ethnological discipline appears as a bit of a paradox, which was commented on lucidly by Ivan Lozica (2011) when discussing professional priorities as a fact dictated by the market, politicians and scholars.

Both in Slovenia and Croatia, ethnology has since been institutionalised within university curriculum, in central national ethnographic museums, and gradually in regional and local museums,

somewhat later also within the protection of cultural heritage. After the war, in Slovenia the Commission/Institute of Slovenian Ethnography (1947/1951) within the academy was grounded, and Croatia in 1948 obtained the Institute of Folk Art that was subordinated to the state directly.

Based on the sparse ethnological articles and the activities that were reported at the time, it was clear that the discipline in Slovenia was poorly advanced: unsubstantiated at practically all levels, not particularly explorative and therefore marginal.<sup>5</sup> Its main actors were mostly the same as before the war. In the spirit of general activism, restoration of the homeland and social reform, non-reflexivity, which largely echoed the poorly developed institutional level, was replaced by an extensive list of tasks that were formulated by the leading scholars in the Ethnographic Museum (its principal being Boris Orel), in the Commission for Slovenian Ethnography headed by the philologist Ivan Grafenauer, and by some other experts who were pursuing ethnography one way or another.

Their plans were warning of unexplored areas which were due to unsystematic research in the past: folk culture had only been researched poorly, both as regards balanced research of all the elements of folk material, social and spiritual culture as well as the aspect of regional coverage of the entire Slovenian ethnic territory. There was no mention of any theoretical objectives. However, much was said about the social prominence of ethnography in the new economic and social-political system: writings on

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<sup>5</sup> Speaking of marginality, the following statement is very suggestive: “in a society where for a very long time the revolutionary practice remained the only theory of cultural change, in which mass and often forced migrations from villages to cities were part of an untouchable ideological project, ethnology contributed to its own marginalisation with its silence and seemingly voluntary exile into a distant ‘timeless tradition’ (into archaeo-ethnology)” (Sklevicky 1991:52). What we are dealing with here is political ideology and some spontaneous philosophy of ethnologists entrenched in the unquestionable legacy of the discipline. Thus, for example, Vilko Novak referred explicitly to the latter: “Both in Slovenian as in the remaining Yugoslav scholarly literature, not enough attention has been paid to exploring theoretical issues on the essence, tasks and methods of ethnography... Indeed, the work as such is of main importance, but it is not possible and cannot be directed accordingly if the bases are unclear. It is the lack of theoretical exploration that is to blame for the multitude of false views of ethnography and for the considerably lagging nature of our work in the past” (Novak 1956:7).



the discipline were decorated by the obligatory rhetoric of the time speaking of usefulness and “orthodoxy” that permeated all the levels of life in the socialist Yugoslavia. The main task was systematic and methodical research as recorded in the collecting outlines. In the so-called “collecting years” (Slavec Gradišnik 2000a: 217–239), research methodology was indeed enhanced, yet the fundamental research paradigm endured unchanged, thus reinforcing the discipline’s marginality. Comparative aspects were also mentioned here and there, maybe most explicitly and simply in the following excerpt: “many specifics of a certain people cease to be specific when our gaze reaches a bit further” (Vilfan 1954:188). The comparative nature of ethnology in contrast to ethnography was appraised by Vilko Novak (1947) in the first post-war ethnologic dissertation *Ljudska prehrana v Prekmurju* (Folk Food in Prekmurje).<sup>6</sup> In general, researchers followed typological and regional comparisons, which, based on the model of cultural-historical ethnology sometimes reached beyond the Slovenian ethnic territory. However, the view of culture endured to be reduced to individual elements – artefacts, customs and practices, linguistic forms, etc. Recognizing the distribution of these elements was the first step towards understanding the elements as separate pieces with their own “life” and as segments of the cultural whole that is difficult to grasp. In this sense, the study of individual elements, even more than the ethnographic regions, was a priority,<sup>7</sup> in which historic and geographical interests were intertwined.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Novak, *ethnography* is descriptively interpretative (information on the preparation of food, kitchen, tools, crockery; original namings; ties with the economy; on religious, ceremonial, magic meanings), and its look into the past “extends beyond the geographical reach of the forms, names and mutual influences that are intertwined within the same ethnic area or reaching into neighbouring nations. In such research, ethnography has to apply the methods and findings of *ethnology*. Thus, based on comparisons of situations in various, or the same yet geographically remote, ethnic areas it can establish the origin and mutual relations of food and drinks, of how they are prepared and consumed. Such findings reach beyond the description of the ethnographic situation. They provide materials to *ethnological research*, which they make part of based on their method and findings” (Novak 1947:6–7).

<sup>7</sup> In post-war years, this was relevant to the preparation of the national and European ethnological atlases, in which both Bratanić and Novak participated.

## **VILKO NOVAK AND BRANIMIR BRATANIĆ: ON A WAY TOWARDS EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY?**

After World War II, the challenges of reshaping the so-called national ethnologies exceeded the national and state borders. The revived efforts of international professional organisations provided them with a broader European context, in which it was comparative dimensions that were in the forefront. The International Congress of European and Western Ethnology was held in Stockholm in 1951,<sup>8</sup> then in Vienna in 1952 and in Arnhem in 1955. The Stockholm congress was attended by lecturers from ethnological departments at universities of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana,<sup>9</sup> including Branimir Bratanić and Vilko Novak, who had then just began their academic university careers.

Bratanić had been Gavazzi's assistant since the pre-war years and Novak Zupanić's since 1948. Both were educated as philologists – experts on Slavic studies (Bratanić graduated in 1932, Novak in 1933) in the broad sense that included the study of language and literature as well as culture or cultural history. Following their degree they worked as secondary school teachers, Bratanić briefly, Novak somewhat longer. They both acquired supplementary education in ethnology – Bratanić graduated in ethnology under Gavazzi in 1936, and Novak achieved non-formal education through contacts with Gavazzi, and at the Budapest University in Hungary during the war. They both obtained a PhD in 1947. Bratanić became assistant professor in 1951, Novak in 1955, Bratanić gained professorship in 1969, Novak in 1972. They were both long-term heads of university departments of ethnology (Bratanić 1965–1989; Novak 1957–1974).

As university teachers, Bratanić was a lecturer in European and introductory ethnology (methods, history of ethnology, non-European

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<sup>8</sup> The meeting was reported by Vilko Novak (1952a). The topics under discussion were: individual and the environment in researching the formation, life and decay of folk tradition; monographs of social groups in the Western society; delimitations between ethnology, ethnography and folklore as well as the position of these disciplines within social sciences; ethnological terminology; ethnographic museums; national reports on the status of the discipline; international cooperation in publications.

<sup>9</sup> M. Filipović from Belgrade, M. Gavazzi and B. Bratanić from Zagreb, V. Novak from Ljubljana.

Ethnology – Asia, northern Africa), and Novak was a lecturer in introductory ethnology (history of ethnology, methods), the so-called “national” (Slovenian and Southern Slavic) and European ethnology. However, there were noticeable differences among their research interests, which were broader in Novak’s case: Bratanić mostly researched and wrote about agricultural tools, ethnological cartography, general, regional and European ethnology, methods and techniques, whereas Novak’s bibliography covers topics from the history of ethnology (bio- and bibliographic aspects), Slovenian folk culture (genesis, structure) and its elements (economic activities, architecture, food, customs, literature), contacts between Slavic cultures and on Slovenian and Hungarian cultural and literary liaisons.<sup>10</sup> What they have in common is a general cultural-historical interest, classifications of cultural material, the concept of folk culture as a material, social and spiritual structure, an interest in culture areas and positivist methodology, which reached its peak in the ethnological cartography as developed and promoted by Bratanić, whereas Novak also predicted in it the explications of certain issues relating to the distribution of cultural phenomena across time and space (Novak 1974).<sup>11</sup> Both were active from their beginnings in the Ethnological Society of Yugoslavia as the central professional organisation of all Yugoslav ethnologists.

In the centre of attention in their intertwined biographies and shared aspects of the respective institutional histories was their teaching at the university that requires constant following of theoretical and empirical novelties within international dialogue. Based on their international connections, Novak and Bratanić participated in discussions on European ethnology, which echoed in several of their articles (Bratanić 1956, 1957, 1967, 1971, 1976, 1979a, b; Novak 1952, 1956). Particularly close are their papers “O bistvu etnografije in njeni metodi” (On the Essence of Ethnography and its Method, Novak 1956) and “Regionalna ili nacionalna i opća etnologija” (Regional or National and General Ethnology, Bratanić 1957), addressing the same subject matter: disciplinary names and concepts

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<sup>10</sup> See the bibliography of B. Bratanić in Belaj 1980b and of V. Novak in Kuzmič 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Novak also coordinated the work for the Ethnological Atlas of Yugoslavia in Slovenia, while students of ethnology were collecting the materials for the atlas.

of the “domestic” discipline in a comparative European framework. Each in his own way, they also exhibited unlike openness towards the current international debates, showed the persistence of discipline's legacy, the gaps between theoretical statements and practice, and the unique scholarly and personal habitus.

As mentioned already, Vilko Novak first touched on the topic in a report on the international ethnological conference in Stockholm. He then placed particular attention on the definition by Sigurd Erixon, who marked ethnography as:

“A branch of general ethnology applied to civilised peoples, to their distribution and complex cultural conditions ... as a study of man realised by comparative and historical research into culture at a regional and sociological basis, also taking into consideration certain biological and psychological aspects.” (Novak 1952:272)

Erixon particularly addressed the concept of culture and the need to research the culture of cities, which, when compared with folk culture, is “mobile, professional and centrifugal culture” or civilisation (Novak 1952:272). Novak mentioned the terminological dilemmas related to diverse names of the discipline in various European nations and their languages, mainly reflecting separate disciplinary traditions, and also announced the planned international terminological dictionary that would help to reduce problems in scholarly communication. Upon learning of the current concept of anthropology (physical and cultural in the USA, social in the UK), Erixon suggested the understanding of ethnology as “a science about culture”, in which alongside the historical dimension, “social and functional deepening of the ethnological study” are of growing importance. In such a framework, “the differentiation between ethnology and ethnography is gradually disappearing, the aim being ‘general European ethnology’” (Novak 1952:273) that requires organised international cooperation and a common journal.<sup>12</sup> Novak’s treatise on ethnography and its method<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Before the war, the Swedish *Folk-Liv* was attempting to serve as one. Alongside the Stockholm congress, the first issue of the journal *Laos* appeared, edited by Erixon and published by CIAP, a predecessor to today’s SIEF, but the plan was properly realised by founding the journal *Ethnologia Europaea* (1967).

<sup>13</sup> More detailed in Slavec Gradišnik 2000b.

reads like the programmatic extension of these observations, also those originating in Vienna conference of 1952, where it was stressed that there was no fundamental difference between research in European folk cultures (the *Volkskunde* tradition) and cultures of the so-called primitive peoples (the *Völkerkunde* tradition). He repeated the assessment on the theoretical void in Slovenia and welcomed the recommendation submitted to the Arnhem conference for international practice and communication to use the term ethnology for all the heterogeneous national traditions.<sup>14</sup> Ethnology was envisaged as a unified study of “man as a cultural being as well as the contents and form of his culture” (Novak 1956:9) or, in broader terms: “It is the task of ethnology to analyse and research based on genetic comparison the cultures of primitives societies as well as the folk culture of civilised nations, thus to be able to provide the general laws of the development of human culture” (Novak 1958:3). In case of ethnography, he repeated Erixon’s definition that it was “regional ethnology, its task being to study the man based on comparative and historical research into culture on a regional basis, also taking into consideration certain psychological and biological aspects” (Novak 1956:10–11).

In fact, Novak summarised Erixon’s idea of reconciling the division between the descriptive and theoretical methods in European ethnography/ethnology. He integrated the empirical-nomothetic (empirical research, comparative method, generalisations), regional (European and non-European ethnology) and temporal (research into the past and contemporary cultural phenomena) aspects of culture research. The latter aspect particularly inaugurated a thorough break with the practice of past-oriented research and opened up a field of tasks in the research of present-time, also in the non-rural, urban environment. To argue in favour of this, Novak redefined the “folkness”, which he wrenched from the frameworks of the peasant, rural, archaic. Following Richard Weiss and Leopold Schmidt, he defined it as the ahistorical, universal attribute of the man, instilled in collective forms and men’s attachment to tradition. The “folkness” was conceived as a kind of human universal, a general anthropological

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<sup>14</sup> In Slovenia, the name was only asserted in 1957 when used in the name of a university department, whereas the other two central institutions have preserved the original founding names until the present day (Slovenski *etnografski* muzej/Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Inštitut za slovensko *narodopisje*/Institute of Slovenian Ethnology).

characteristic, rooted in all human beings, past and present, regardless of where they live, and regardless of their social status. By providing this “anthropological” insight, Novak voiced his critique towards investigating elements of culture as separate from the human agency. He thus outlined the programme known under the catchphrase “the shift of interest from cultural elements to their bearers”, which is considered an announcement of the first wave of anthropologisation. In Slovenian ethnology, it occurred theoretically founded and realised in research practice, mostly within the efforts of Slavko Kremenšek and his students from the 1960s onwards. The introduction of contemporary culture issues into ethnology was also argued for by Novak in a methodical manner:

“Ethnography does not originate in the present only because of its method. It is the present that it wants to explain, the present social forms, material objects and spiritual phenomena, regardless of whether they were formed centuries or decades ago, or recently.”  
(Novak 1956:12)

As regards the method, he had foreseen an integrated one serving the historic and functionalist interest: the so-called “organic unified working method” is composed of four “directions” compatible with the subject and issues of research: the historical-philological and the geographical “directions” are suitable for research on the “objects and phenomena” of culture, whereas the sociological and psychological directions are suitable for research on the “bearers” and reciprocity between them and cultural elements. As far as concerns the methodological perspective, Novak thus canonised three ethnological dimensions: time, space and social embeddedness.

A year after Novak’s treatise, Bratanić’s article “Regionalna ili nacionalna i opća etnologija”<sup>15</sup> was published in *Slovenski etnograf*. It is comparable to that of Novak as regards the naming and main features of the contemporary ethnological discipline. Schematically, Bratanić separated the European regional/national ethnology (study of individual European nations, the *Volkskunde* tradition) from the general and regional

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<sup>15</sup> This text is adapted from the discussion at The International Congress of European Ethnology in Arnhem, the Netherlands (1955), published in German in Bratanić 1956.

non-European ethnology (the *Völkerkunde* tradition). Like Novak, he also argued in favour of the unified name of ethnology (with national attributes), i.e. a science

“On *culture* (the entire culture comprising the whole human life, material, social and spiritual, its contents and its form, and the so-called realia) and on people as *cultural beings* (or creators and bearers of culture).”

With regard to regional ethnology he said that it was

“a branch, *special ethnology* ... [that] is based on the spatial and particularly ethnical (as is seen from its name) principle.”  
(Bratanić 1957:12)

In ethnology he discerned two research orientations: the cultural-historical and the sociological-psychological. The former is important as materials from the past are getting lost extremely fast, and the other due to brisk cultural and social changes (Bratanić 1957:7). He argued for them, not only based on the distance between the past and the present, but mostly based on cultural duality: he repeated after Radić that “typical for the area of European ethnology ... is particularly the old *cultural duality*: two types of culture existing in parallel, side by side, influencing each other, interfering with and permeating each other to very different extents” (Bratanić 1957:13).

Consequently, Bratanić postulated the existence of two forms or types of culture: the “domestic, traditional, illiterate cultures ... that form the real foundations of national cultures”, grown from the bottom and maintained by oral tradition, and on the other hand, the foreign, urban civilisation extending from above and being “a phenomenon of a different quality” (ibid.) in relation to old peasant cultures. Not only is the duality social (lower peasant/higher gentry stratum), psychological (irrational tradition/logic, rationally acquired knowledge), it is also historically grounded. In a long-term cultural process, Bratanić warned of the shrinking and disappearance of the old folk culture, the only remains of which are the dry remnants of the traditional *folklore*.

This seems to have been the reason for him to formulate an additional definition of ethnology:

“As civilisation is being researched by many other scientific disciplines, ethnology explores old domestic cultures, their mutual relations and the relation with the civilisation introduced from the outside. It is therefore understandable and justifiable that the primary task of European ethnology should be research into old peasant cultures.” (Bratanić 1957:13)

Due to different aims and problems, Bratanić distinguished within ethnology: *descriptive ethnology* (=ethnography) as the preliminary work and prerequisite for any scientific research (collection of materials); *historical ethnology*; and research into contemporary cultural life *from sociological and psychological perspectives* (structure, processes, function), i.e. a starting point for new individual disciplines (“ethnosociology”, “ethnopsychology”) (Bratanić 1957:14–15).<sup>16</sup> He favoured indisputably the historical ethnology, which was supposed to “reconstruct an extensive part of the European cultural history”<sup>17</sup>, and called for a comparative perspective. From the aspect of methodology, he delimited ethnology – in contrast to historiography – by its method of “reconstructing the past ‘back’ from the present”.

When commenting on the sociologically and psychologically oriented ethnological study of “the contemporary life”<sup>18</sup> he referred to the theory and practice of the American cultural and British social anthropology that European ethnologists were getting familiar with at the time. Curious, however, is his opinion that the methodology of such research had not yet been developed, that new methods still needed to be found and reinforced, which speaks of a limited overview of cultural and social-anthropological methods.

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<sup>16</sup> He also broke down ethnology based on subject specialisation: “folkloristics, ergology, ethnological technology, sociology, musicology, ethnological research into economy and religion, research into buildings, pottery, games, tales, etc.” (Bratanić 1957:14).

<sup>17</sup> Cultural-historical ethnology has the following research topics and tasks: cultural history of individual ethnical communities, ethnogenesis of peoples; definitions and histories of individual forms or types of culture; the history of individual cultural phenomena; the contribution of European ethnology to the general cultural history of the mankind (Bratanić 1957:14).

<sup>18</sup> Research into social formations and various social groups, functional connections between cultural phenomena, existential needs and surviving strategies; investigation into acculturation, cultural patterns and configurations, major psychological features of the people (folk character, ‘folk soul’), culture and personality relationships.



## **TO CONCLUDE: ON OCCASIONAL THEORY AND EUROPEAN PATHS**

Following the debates in European ethnology, Novak's and Bratanić's views on the current tasks of ethnology advocated conceptual changes to ethnology in Slovenia and Croatia, especially as regards the university curriculum. However, even if they agreed upon the "European" concept of the ethnological discipline, they followed different paths as far as concerns epistemological and methodological priorities, especially when interpreting the relations between national/folk culture and civilisation, between past and contemporary cultural phenomena. With Bratanić, these relations were more heightened as he would favour explicitly the historical orientation and its cultural-historical paradigm, developing it in the project of the ethnological atlas at the European and Yugoslav level. Despite great motivation and extensive commitment in the international academic community and within the Ethnological Society of Yugoslavia (Petrović 1980), it can be discerned indirectly that despite its considerate infrastructure,<sup>19</sup> "the atlas ethnology" as "a classifying machine" (Pletenac 2005:13) failed to provide inspiration. The concept of frozen, petrified culture had little in common with the general trends in European ethnology that were getting open to daily life and cultural change. However, not even then and not until today has "European" ethnology been a unified scientific field, either conceptually or in method. What it provides, mainly, is a comparative framework that requires a common language. Bratanić found it with those scholars – at home and in Europe – who devised a comparative project under the banner of science in the form of ethnographic atlas, which, so to speak, was the project of his lifetime.

Novak, on the other hand, was even reproached to have been an advocate of the so-called ethnology of the present (*Gegenwartsvolkunde*). In any case he rejected the insistence on "peasant studies" (*Bauernkunde*), the archaic dimension of the folk. Although contemporary cultural phenomena

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<sup>19</sup> The preparation of the Ethnologic Atlas of Yugoslavia integrated a number of ethnologists and students, and a special department was established in Zagreb to this end. Bratanić published several articles on the importance of atlases and on methodological aspects of cartography in domestic and foreign journals.

were not the subject matter of his research, he would always leave paths open for younger colleagues and disciplinary novelties. In Slovenian ethnology, he opened up the space for disciplinary innovation and for shifts, and all this originated at the university department. In Croatia, however, the centre of new paradigms was the *Zavod za istraživanje folklor*a (Institute of Folklore Research, previously *Institut za narodnu umjetnost* / Institute of Folk Art, at present *Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku*/ Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics), particularly with the critique of the cultural-historical ethnology and researching the transformation of tradition in contemporaneity and the mutually pervading traditional and contemporary cultural phenomena (see Supek-Zupan 1983; Rihtman-Auguštin and Muraj 1998; Pletenac 2006; Lozica 2009).

How, then, could Bratanić's and Novak's engagement within European ethnology be assessed today? Considering their own research practice at least, it would seem that it might be considered textbook or "Sunday rhetoric". Looking at their texts with regard to European ethnology, it has to be pointed again at the "traditional" two-headed nature of ethnology (theory/practice). However, it also has to be considered that they were active in an era favouring empirical research decidedly above theoretical considerations. It is worth mentioning that Bratanić within Croatian ethnology was mainly seen as a theoretician, at least when compared to his teacher Gavazzi (Čapo 1991; Pletenac 2005), whereas Novak's views on the character of folk culture and its structure (Novak 1952b, 1958, 1978) relied exactly on Gavazzi to a great extent. He never continued to develop particularly the matters posed in this paper, yet all his work is pervaded with the awareness that any culture – in the historical, regional and social aspect – is hybrid and therefore has to be researched as such:

"Based on own findings and materials of other sciences, ethnology has indicated on the one hand at a great transfer of cultural goods and values from other continents to Europe, and here from land to land; and on the other hand it showed how the people who? had been receiving high culture from more developed social classes, had been transforming and adapting it." (Novak 1958:4)

Taking into consideration that in the post-war era Slovenian and Croatian ethnology were close despite their diverse shaping of the

ethnologic fields, that at the time they found themselves in comparable positions, that their actors were living in a similar political, social and institutional environment, and that they experienced dialogue within akin intellectual and broader disciplinary networks, post-war divergences might be attributed more to professional and personal habitus<sup>20</sup> of the leading figures, who were probably asserting their views on different types of authority. The same holds for Novak and Bratanić. Whereas critique of the past cultural-historical canon (social referential void and impertinence, ethnic/national canon, ethnographic classifications and typologies, positivism) could mainly bypass Novak, that is to say, could rely on the fertile bases in his work (see Bogataj et al. 2000; Muršič 2010), in Croatia Bratanić's ethnology as ethnic history based on culture appeared at the very heart of radical critique (Čapo 1991; Pletenac 2005, 2006; writings by D. Rihtman-Auguštin). And this critique, as mentioned before, was what at the same time opened to new paths of interpretation.

Looking back over several decades and being familiar with the subsequent developments, it can be concluded that the project of "European ethnology" as established in the 1950s is important in several regards: although a consistent emphasis on comparative aspects cannot by itself cure methodological nationalism, i.e. the focus on own culture and emphasis of its specifics, the integration of researchers into the international dialogue was of vital importance for reaching beyond the local disciplinary traditions. At least two prominent results have to be mentioned: the announced publication of the international vocabulary (Hultkrantz 1961) and the initiation of publishing the central European ethnological journal *Ethnologia Europaea*.

The "Yugoslav" ethnologies that since 1957 had been integrated in the Ethnological Society of Yugoslavia, were drawing close to the trends in European ethnology in various ways and with various dynamics, wriggling themselves out of the ideological grip, which was imagined rather than

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<sup>20</sup> It is beyond author's competence to provide characterological portraits of Vilko Novak and Branimir Bratanić. However, the undocumented insiders' "stories" or the disciplinary oral tradition would certainly supply with distinctive hints about their life trajectories, world views, personal stance towards the academic and social life, etc. Following Bourdieu, personal habitus refers to embodied and durable dispositions, individual mental and physical schemes and skills that guide individual's behavior in all fields of life.

real, and, as we know, in the former Yugoslav republics did not prescribe ethnological theory and practice any definite courses, so that its actors were relatively free to trace their own paths and either stay true to the disciplinary legacies or reach noticeably beyond them – fostering critique as well as new theoretical insights and practice comparable to trends and shifts in the international scholarship.

Although many researchers still see European ethnology/anthropology as a bricolage of diverse local/national disciplinary traditions, six decades ago it was the window on the world to our researchers, and today it is the referential disciplinary field enabling a European (and trans-European) ethnological dialogue in the spirit of plurality of translocal or transnational ethnological practice.

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ETHNOLOGIA EUROPAEA U HRVATSKOJ I SLOVENIJI:  
BRANIMIR BRATANIĆ (1910. – 1986.) I VILKO NOVAK (1909. – 2003.)

Rad se bavi poglavljem iz povijesti hrvatske i slovenske etnologije, točnije razdobljem 1950-ih godina, kada su se nacionalne etnologije dviju zemalja bavile odnosima između opće i regionalne/nacionalne etnologije. Što se tiče toga odnosa, Branimir Bratanić i Vilko Novak, obojica sveučilišni profesori, slijedili su suvremene ideje koje su bile dio tadašnjeg koncepta europske etnologije (EE). Zagovarali su 'inovacije' i spajanje specifičnih nacionalnih tradicija europske etnologije u svojim zemljama, koje su međusobno prilagođavali kroz poštivanje disciplinarnih nasljeđa i tadašnje situacije u etnologiji u svakoj zemlji, kao i poštivanje obrazovnih zahtjeva i širih istraživačkih praksi. Zbog tog razloga, članak uključuje i komparativnu analizu nekih disciplinarnih podudarnosti i nepodudarnosti koje su se dogodile u razdoblju koje je neposredno prethodilo 1950-ima: veza između hrvatske i slovenske etnologije koje su bile rezultatom konceptualizacije područja istraživanja, institucionalne povijesti i kontakata između istraživača.

**Ključne riječi:** povijest etnologije, Hrvatska, Slovenija, Branimir Bratanić, Vilko Novak, europska etnologija