

**THE STUDENTS' CONFERENCE  
"ETHNOLOGY WITHOUT BORDERS"<sup>1</sup>  
IN BRATISLAVA IN 2017**

**Cooperation of Students of Ethnology and Anthropology  
in the Visegrád Group**

The countries of *Visegrád Group* (Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) are connected through various historical, political, socio-cultural events and periods (for example Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the First World War, the Second World War, Soviet Union supremacy and the fall of the iron curtain) and also through organizations and political groups (for example the European Union, the UN). Through these events, organizations and political structures V4 countries are interwoven and linked together.

From the historical perspective Slovakia, Czechia, Poland and Hungary had to deal with many similar socio-cultural, ethical, political, economic, demographic issues. Despite the specifics of each region, we believe that there is also number of similarities between them. Therefore it can be assumed that scientists and researchers (ethnologists and anthropologists) from V4 countries face similar difficulties during field research and therefore seek answers to similar questions regarding anthropological methodology and theory.

The aim of this short paper is to present the reader with brief overview of collaboration between students of ethnology and anthropology in V4 countries. Ethnologists in V4 countries have been working together since the beginning of 20th century. During the twenties and thirties Czech ethnologists played an important role in establishing Ethnology as a distinct field of study at the Comenius University in Bratislava Slovakia. Another example of international cooperation of ethnologists from V4 is *The International Commission for the*

---

<sup>1</sup> This text was created as output within the grant project MŠ SR VEGA č.1/0421/17 *Symbolické reprezentácie nebezpečenstva* [Symbolic representations of danger].

---

*Study of Folk Culture in the Carpathians and the Balkans* (acronym MKKKB). MKKKB was established in 1959 in Cracow, Poland. The initiators of its establishment were researchers from Polish Academy of Sciences and Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Scientific collaboration between ethnologists of V4 continues today on multiple platforms. However, in most cases it is being carried out among university teachers, professors and researchers from organizations such as the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences, MKKKB and so on. Systematic cooperation and discussion among students is unfortunately not very common. There are, however, few exceptions. Let us therefore have a quick look at some selected forms of student seminars and conferences from the past as well as on its current forms.

From the late sixties and during the seventies of the twentieth century, the Department of Ethnography and Folkloristics of the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava<sup>2</sup> organised international seminars *Seminarium Ethnologicum*. The brain behind the idea was Professor Ján Podolák, one of the Nestors of Slovak ethnology. These seminars had several objectives. One of them was to build up and develop scientific contacts and collaboration between universities, teachers and students of ethnology. Another objective was to prepare students for ethnographic field research, which is demanding not only from a theoretical and methodological point of view, but also emotionally. Students participated in anthropological research of the tradition folk culture of the particular region where the seminar was held. The first seven seminars took place in Slovakia. The following were organized by universities in Poznan and Lodz, Belgrade and Warsaw. *Seminarium Ethnologicum* contributed to the development of international cooperation and to the processes of finding solutions to the then current theoretical and methodological issues of ethnographic research among the ethnologists of the V4 countries (Škovierová, 1991a).

Another type of ethnographic seminars of Polish and Slovak students were also organized during the seventies. The first one was organized in 1972 by the student association *Studenckie Kolo Naukowe Etnografów Uniwersytetu A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu* (which can be loosely translated as Study group of ethnographers from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan) in partnership with the students from the Department of Ethnography and Folkloristics. Seminars took place in Bratislava or Poznan, with the participation of students from Bratislava, Poznan, Lodz, Warsaw, Cracow, Budapest, Debrecen and Sofia. A total of nine of these events took place. They represented an opportunity for the presentation of the results of scientific work in front of foreign colleagues (Škovierová, 1991b). After this period, however, there is a decline in similar

---

<sup>2</sup> The current name of the department is Department of Ethnology and Museology.

---

student activities. The change occurred only in 2012 when the first international conference *Ethnology Without Borders* in Cieczyn was organized.

*Ethnology Without Borders* (throughout this paper I also use the abbreviation *EWB*) is a networking project of the students of ethnology and anthropology from V4 countries. It continues the previous fruitful cooperation between students of ethnography and anthropology. *EWB* is annual event hosted each year by University in different V4 country. The Conference has a long tradition in the context of linking the professional community of ethnologists of the Visegrád Group. The inaugural *EWB* was organized in 2012 at the University of Silesia in Cieczyn, Poland. The intention of the organizers was to strengthen relationships between students and universities in the in Central Europe as well as to increase the interest in participation in exchange programs such as Erasmus, CEEPUS and SYLF scholarships. In the following years, the conference was held in Budapest 2014, Warsaw 2015, Szeged 2016 and Bratislava 2017.

*Ethnology without Borders* has the potential to bring in one place aspiring ethnologists and anthropologists and provides them with a forum for discussion and finding solutions to the problems of ethnological and anthropological research. Discovering common issues and theoretical, methodological and ethical problems of ethnographic research is crucial for the advancement of science, which is deemed as one of the main aims of the *EWB*. The Conference allows aspiring anthropologist to discuss ideas, share experiences and knowledge, forge new professional relationships. The presented papers are usually published in Ethnological and Anthropological journals such as *Etnologia Slovaca et Slavica* or *Český Lid*.

One of the many goals of *EWB* is to strengthen the networking of young people and creating an international community of scientists from V4 countries. The number of students of ethnology, cultural and social anthropology and related fields such as ethnomusicology, regional studies etc., is rather small. The academic interests of students in various departments are diverse. By networking young researchers and by offering them a platform for discussion, *EWB* contributes to future cooperation in the processes of addressing common issues and finding solutions.

The themes discussed at the conferences and accompanying events are always related to the current social problems or discussions within the scientific community of ethnologists and anthropologists. And since the political groups regarded as ultra-right and nationally oriented are gaining support in all V4 countries and negative attitudes toward minorities (religious, ethnic, national etc) are on the rise, the last *EWB* held in 2017 in Bratislava, was dedicated to the research of minorities and migration in the broadest sense.

Research of the minorities, migration, subcultures as well as far-right movements is one of the central topics of interest in ethnology. Several Slovak scientists are devoted to their research (e.g., Bučičová & Tužinská, 2016; Divinský,

---

2009; Hlinčíková & Mesežnikov, 2016; Mittelmanová, Tužinská, & Voľanská, 2009; Tužinská, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2015a, 2015b; Tužinská & Voľanská 2016). However, with these areas of research a great number of methodological, theoretical and ethical issues are involved. We believe that these problems and issues should be solved by a dialogue between the V4 countries.

As I mentioned earlier, in 2017 EWB was held in Bratislava at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University. The main organizers were PhD students of the Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in collaboration with PhD students from the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of Slovak Academy of Science. The conference was attended by students of ethnology, social and cultural anthropology and religious studies of Masaryk University in Brno, Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan and Comenius University in Bratislava.

A total of eleven students presented their papers at the conference. Participants in their contributions focused on the theoretical and methodological issues related to the research of migration and minorities, right-wing extremism and the research of racism and intolerance. They tackled the subjects of hate speech and netnography (anthropological research of the internet and anthropological research conducted on the internet), as well as various ethical and methodological aspects of ethnographic research, participatory and applied approaches.

For the first time in the history of *EWB*, two keynote lectures were also included in the conference program. The invitation was accepted by Mgr. Tomáš Hrustič, PhD (Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of Slovak Academy of Science) and member of non-profit organisation *Not in our Town* Radoslav Sloboda. In his presentation Dr. Hrustič spoke about applied anthropology and participatory research with the Roma. Radoslav Sloboda introduced to the audience aforementioned organisation, which is based in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. The main aim of the organisation is to promote and develop tolerance for diversity through cultural and educational events.<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 2018 it was announced that the seventh edition of *Ethnology Without Borders* will be organized in Poland by the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Wrocław and Ethnological Association of Wrocław. The conference will focus on anthropological research in the digital space.

Cooperation between universities and research institutions of the Visegrád Group should be an essential part of every scientific discipline. In the case of ethnology and anthropology it has a rich history. We believe that the inspiring

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information see the official website <https://nievnasommeste.wordpress.com/>

---

cooperation of Slovak, Polish, Hungarian and Czech ethnologists and anthropologist will continue on various levels and not only through *Ethnology Without Borders*.

Michal Uhrin

## References

- Bučičová, A. & Tužinská, H. (2016). Slová a moc. Prípadová štúdiá zo súdneho pojednávania. *Etnologické rozpravy*, 23(2), 80-94.
- Divinský, B. (2009). *Migračné trendy v slovenskej republiky (2004 – 2008)*. Bratislava: IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu.
- Hlinčíková, M. & Mesežnikov, G. (Eds.). (2016). *Otvorená krajina alebo nedobytná pevnosť? Slovensko, migranti a utečenci*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky.
- Mittelmanová, M., Volanská, M., & Tužinská, H. (Eds.) (2009). *Vybrané práva cudzincov na území SR a kultúrna rozmanitosť: Princíp nenavrátanie, zlúčenie rodiny a kultúrna citlivosť*. Bratislava: Stimul.
- Škovierová, Z. (1991a). Seminarium ethnologicum. Medzinárodná terénna prax poslucháčov národopisu. *Národopisné informácie*, 1, 81-88.
- Škovierová, Z. (1991b). Etnografický seminár slovenských a poľských študentov. *Národopisné informácie*, 1, 89-92.
- Tužinská, H. & Volanská, L. (Eds.) (2016). *IN\_akosti slovenské. Z rozprávání cudzincov*. Bratislava: CVEK. Centrum pre výskum etnicity a kultúry.
- Tužinská, Helena. (2009a): *Communication in the Asylum Courts: Limits of Inquiry*. *Slovenský národopis*, 57(5), 560-578.
- Tužinská, H. (2009b). *Kultúrna citlivosť*. In M. Mittelmanová, M. Volanská, & H. Tužinská (Eds.), *Vybrané práva cudzincov na území SR a kultúrna rozmanitosť: Princíp nenavrátanie, zlúčenie rodiny a kultúrna citlivosť* (pp. 79-110). Bratislava: Stimul.
- Tužinská, H. (2010). *Otázky opisu a prekladu. Využitie poznatkov antropológie a etnografie vo vedení a tlmočení interview s cudzincami*. Bratislava: Stimul.
- Tužinská, H. (2015a). *Sociolekt, migranti a tlmočenie: interakcia v štátnom sektore*. In J. Wachtarczyková, L. Satinská & S. Ondrejovič (Eds.), *Jazyk v politických, ideologických a interkultúrnych vzťahoch*. Sociolinguistica Slovaca 8 (pp. 241-256). Bratislava: SAV.
- Tužinská, H. (2015b). *Tlmočenie v štátnej správe: deskriptívne a preskriptívne prístupy*. *Sociální studia*, 2, 51-68.