

CONFERENCE

**METHODOLOGY, ETHICS, WRITING AND VISIONS  
IN ETHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

(June 13–14, 2019)

The international conference entitled “Methodology, Ethics, Writing and Visions in Ethnology and Social Anthropology” took place on June 13–14, 2019 in the Centrum Salvator in Bratislava. This academic event organised by the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), was the final output of the VEGA project “The Application of Innovative Approaches in Ethnology/ Social Anthropology in Slovakia” (VEGA no. 2/0050/16) and also the opening event of the project “Reflexive Writing as a Method of Ethnographic Inquiry” (VEGA no. 2/0088/19).

The conference was officially opened by Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, director of the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Conference participants were then able to listen to the presentation given by Johnny Unger from Lancaster University, the first of the two keynote speakers. In his paper, he presented discursive methodology based on research into the influence of national identity on texts by writers during creative writing workshops. The presentation was an introduction to the first thematic set of papers dealing with ethnography as a creative process. This section included a paper by Adam Wiesner from the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS and Michaela Žáková from Masaryk University in Brno. Their presentations informed attendees about the therapeutic dimension of auto-ethnographic writing, and the potential of combining methods of narrative autobiography with Garfinkel’s ethnomethodological experiments. The conference’s second thematic section concerned institutional anthropology. Ľubica Voľanská from the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS talked about organisational culture using the example of a study of the stud farm in Topoľčianky. The presentation given by Karin Brünneemann (4 CEE, s.r.o.) concerned different leadership styles by managers and organisation leaders, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural differences at an individual and organisational level. This was followed by a paper by Helena Tužinská from the

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Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University dealing with the relationship between linguistic and legal anthropology using the example of court proceedings with asylum applicants in Slovakia. The section on institutional anthropology was concluded by Monika Vrzgulová (Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS) with a presentation on the various challenges and limits of oral history, focusing on the topic of mutual trust. The next four speakers were linked by the area of experimental methods in anthropology. Martin Lang (LEVYNA, Masaryk University in Brno) presented the use of the monitoring of physiological processes combined with methods of non-invasive monitoring, question surveys and economic games. Danijela Jerotijević from the Institute of Social Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University dealt with the role of rituals in the regulation of anxiety and stress and the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods during research. The same institute was also represented by Peter Maño, who presented experimental methods, the theoretical background and conclusions of his research on religious signalling and mate choice in Mauritius. The last speaker of this conference day was Vladimír Bahna (Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS) who presented the way in which people ascribe competence to a source of information using the example of spreading rumours and conspiracy theories.

The programme of the next day's academic event was opened by the conference's second keynote speaker, Tatiana Bužeková from the Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University who has worked on the anthropological study of altered states of consciousness. Based on her research into neo-shaman groups in Bratislava, she focused attention on the fact that when researching spiritual practises, cognitive processes should not be ignored. The next paper by Matej Paulík (Masaryk University in Brno) concerned a similar topic, dealing with research into spirituality and its function in coping with specific mental problems. The thematic section of methodological challenges was opened by Barbara Láštiová from the Institute of Social Communication SAS, whose paper discussed the dilemmas and challenges of measuring and reducing prejudices against Roma in Slovak schools. The objectives of Michal Uhrin's presentation (Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Art of Comenius University) were to illustrate the effectiveness of the ethnographic approach as a way of reviving abstract theoretical models and to show how the use of qualitative methods can test the validity of experimental methods. Rick Feinberg, representing Palacky University in Olomouc, gave a paper on auto-experimentation in anthropological research, based on his experiences of sailing with local inhabitants of the Solomon Islands.

The conference also included poster sessions by three internal doctoral students from the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS: Radoslava Semanová, Tomáš Kubisa and Tomáš Winkler. Participants learnt about

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the dilemmas of informed consent during field research, the movement of Slav-Aryan Vedas and the urban-ethnological view of currently popular development concepts linked to creativity.

The academic event was concluded by a session on the question of space in contemporary ethnology and social anthropology. It included a paper by Jaroslava Panáková (Institute of Social Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University) on different methodological opportunities for studying the categories of “us” and “them” which resulted from her research on ethno-tourism in Chukotka, Russia. The last paper was given by Milan Fujda from Masaryk University in Brno, who presented the different religious contexts among emigrants in the region of Southern Moravia.

The conference’s convivial atmosphere was aided by a joint dinner for participants on the first evening of the event, and a visit of Bratislava after the end of the official programme, which provided the opportunity to get to know colleagues from other countries better, as well as their work in different areas of social anthropology. The greatest benefit of the conference “*Methodology, Ethics, Writing and Visions in Ethnology and Social Anthropology*” in Bratislava was the very variety of topics presented and theoretical and methodological approaches and the chance to share academic work in an international context.

*Tomáš Winkler*