

**Yasar Abu Ghosh, Jakub Grygar, Marek Skovajsa (eds.): MONOTEMATICKÉ ČÍSLO SOCIÁLNÍ ANTROPOLOGIE V POSTSOCIALISMU [THEMATIC ISSUE SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN POST-SOCIALISM].**

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Social anthropology has not yet had a firmly established position in post-socialist Europe. The editors of 2007's first issue of the Czech Sociological Review therefore decided to contribute to a debate about the position of this discipline and at the same time to outline which topics concern contemporary anthropology. The original intention was, above all, to present a kind of cross section of the discipline. The editors called for the submission of text abstracts which were to fulfill three conditions: "a perspective of the discipline (social anthropology), empirical research method (ethnography) and time-space limitation (Czech Republic, Slovakia and other geographically close post-socialistic countries after 1989)." (p. 8) At the same time they asked Chris Hann, one of the leading representatives of the anthropology of post-socialism if he would provide an overview of the development of anthropological research in Central and East

Europe. They then had other anthropologists comment on his essay and thus facilitated a stimulating debate about the institutional and political level of the rising of social anthropology in Central and East Europe.

The resulting monothematic issue of Social Anthropology in Post-Socialism was thus de facto composed of two separate – but at the same time closely connected – parts: the study itself chosen from the abstracts that were sent in and a debate about the actual position of the discipline. Not less basic, however, is the *Editorial: Ethnographic Research in Focus*, in which the issue's editors Yasar Abu Ghosh, Jakub Grygar and Marek Skovajsa not only characterize their motivation for creating a publication with such a focus and the approach they used for it, but mainly they justify their emphasis on the anthropological research method of ethnography. They make a de facto connection to the debate that is published here about the character of social anthropology. They resign themselves to the theoretical or paradigmatic limitation of the discipline (whenever possible) and place emphasis on field research and its reflexive concept as the basic characteristic of the discipline.

In their own empirical part, they publish five studies whose characteristics for this report are taken from the abstracts published in this issue. Slovak political scientist and anthropologist Juraj Buzalka, in his text *Nationalism, Religion and Multiculturalism in Southeast Poland* develops the classical anthropological topic of the function of ritual. On the example of the Polish city of Przemysł, which became known for the

tensions existing between Roman Catholic Poles and Greek Catholic Ukrainians (derived from the indivisible links between nationalism, religion, and politics in Southeast Poland), he analyses how they are tied up in political rituals. “The first two rites analyzed commemorate the sufferings during the war and, by politicizing collective memory, they strengthen the sense of mutual antagonism between religious-national groups. The author’s key argument is that, given the important role religious identification plays in the individual’s relationship to the nation, religion is becoming a crucial factor in any form of political change. The author also presents an example of reconciliation and how it is applied to collective memory on the basis of a multinational tradition in a third political ritual. In this case two religious-national groups share a ‘multicultural’ heritage, derived from their understanding of sharing a common tradition, from the majority’s acceptance of the minority, and from the religious experience of reconciliation. Political change in either direction, that is, whether amidst the mobilization of differences or the promotion of tolerant co-existence, proceeds through rituals, symbolic gestures, and narratives, in which religion and religious experts occupy a dominant or at least secondary role, and this has an effect on how tolerant a society emerges in the region.” (p. 31) American cultural anthropologist Ben Passmore deals with the research carried out by two relatively successful companies in the South Moravian city of Brno during the period preceding EU accession. He indicates that Czechs harbor considerable doubt about the honesty

of their political and economic system. The paper *Legitimacy, Engagement and the Creation of Social Capital in the Late Transition Czech Workplace* “accomplish three objectives. It analyzes the interplay in those companies of discourses of honesty with the twin goals of managerial legitimacy and worker engagement. It documents the process of negotiation which has resulted in the development of a new moral economy on the work floor and the growth of powerful worker networks within the enterprise. Finally, it presents a theoretical framework to capture the process of social capital creation and expenditure which is the product of these processes.” (p. 67) In this compilation Czech anthropology is represented by researchers of Masaryk University in Brno, Eleonóra Hamar and Czaba Szaló. In the text *Eight Women Migrants and Their Shared Transnational World*, they “examine a transnational migrant network of eight highly educated young women from the post-socialist region of southern Slovakia and devote special attention to the construction of their diasporic identity and shared life-world. They interpret the migration of these highly educated people not as a rupture but as a coherent continuation of their life course. In order to understand their recent biographical situation, it is necessary to consider the role that a particular form of habitus plays in migration. The authors claim that the experience of living in the culturally hybrid life-world of Czechoslovak Hungarians has played an important role in shaping their ability to live in the dual world of migrants.” (p. 69) Timothy McCajor Hall of the University of Chicago introduces himself through

his article *Transactional Sex in Prague among Young Men Who Have Sex with Men (1999–2004)*, based on the author's fieldwork in the gay community in Prague during 1999–2002 with follow-up visits in 2004–2006. His article "looks at the experiences of young men (especially gay-identified men) involved in homosexual sex work in Prague, describes their relationship to the mainstream gay scenes in Prague in several phases since the mid-1990s, and discusses problems they face." (p. 89) American social anthropologist Raymond June carried out sixteen months of participant observation research and conducted an interview in the Czech branch of Transparency International. He argues that "a new generation of civic activists has sought to carve a niche in the competitive field by crafting an authoritative professional image. They have accomplished this through the performance of new international codes of neoliberal professionalism to both a Czech and international/western audience in order to gain social recognition. At the same time, however, they risk alienating (and being alienated from) their local counterparts and public if they appear too much the global de-nationalized professional. The discomfort with having to craft their sense of self between globalizing cultures of professionalism and local conditions is a core tension these actors experience in the context of broader changes in the building of civil society and democracy (in the international image), the post-socialist labor market, and the role of the intelligentsia. It demonstrates the limits to the accumulation of global cultural and symbolic capital." (p. 111) The studies based on field

research are complemented by the essay by Jaroslav Skupnik (Charles University of Prague) *Reflected Worlds: Marginalisation and Integration from the Perspective of the Socio-psychological Dynamics of Society*, in which the author "takes the specific case of Roma settlements in Slovakia, where he has conducted anthropological research, to illustrate how the mechanism of marginalisation functions. Drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov and Peter L. Berger, he argues that at the heart of human sociability – the ability and necessity to live among others – is the constant human need for attention and recognition from others. This basic human need affects the socio-psychological dynamics of society, including the marginalisation as well as integration of some of its groups. This need for attention and recognition leads to the emergence of complex 'counter-worlds' or 'counter-societies', with their alternative value systems. The Roma settlements and urban ghettos represent such counter-worlds that provide their inhabitants with attention, recognition, positive self-interpretation, and confirmation of their values. If the inhabitants of these counter-worlds are unable to fulfill this need anywhere else, then their integration into wider society cannot be achieved." (p. 133)

From the above, it is clear that the published texts do not represent a cross-section of social anthropological post-socialism. Nevertheless through its thematic diversity it undoubtedly implies the answer to the question which the editors posed in the foreword, that is, if anthropological research in Central and East Europe after 1989 always had to present first and foremost an article

about research on post-socialism. It is evident that references to post-socialism are gradually disappearing from anthropological work and are being replaced by other perspectives. The composition of the authors of this issue is a sad testimony to Czech social anthropology. The editors deduce that the cause of the low number of native-born authors is the emphasis on ethnographic anchorage of the texts, which is not customary in the Czech environment. Besides, this is one of the factors to which another part of the annotated issue of the Sociological Review refers, that is, the introductory essay by Chris Hann, *Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in East-Central Europe* and, based on it, a lively debate on the topic of *Social Anthropology and National Ethnography: Partners or Rivals?* Participants were such native-born authors as Milena Benovska (Bulgaria), Aleksandra Bošković (Serbia), Michal Buchowski (Poland), Juraj Podoba (Slovakia) and Zdeněk Uherek (Czech Republic). Two further participants were authors who were experienced with emigration from the Czech Republic: David Z. Scheffel (born in Prague; working in Canada) and Petr Skalník (after nearly 15 years in the Netherlands and the Republic of South Africa, he returned to the Czech Republic in 1992). Last but not least, an external perspective is given by Don Kalb (Dutch anthropologist working in Budapest), Michael Stewart (UK; studies Roma in Hungary, etc.), and Katherine Verdery (USA, research primarily in Rumania). The wide pléiade of authors also presents a wide pléiade of opinions, some even very controversial, concerning the above-mentioned topic which would

deserve basic analysis for which there is no room in this paper. Even though the subject of this debate is the relation between social anthropology and ethnography, in sum this discussion primarily shows that social anthropology in practically every country of former Central and East Europe has been wrestling not only with the establishment of the discipline as such, but primarily with its delimitation both in relation to “Western” (American, British or French) tradition and to the tradition of domestic social sciences. Besides, the home state (in this case, Czech) of anthropology is also evidenced by the starting of a controversy regarding publication ethics which was reprinted from this issue of the Sociological Review in pages of the Czech press.

The monothematic issue of the Sociological Review (in the Czech environment of a prestigious social science periodical) concentrating on contemporary social anthropology is undoubtedly a competent publishing feat. It opens a topic that is crucial for the establishment of anthropology in a given environment. However, the question remains of the degree to which native-born “anthropologists” are willing at least to take a peek into open doors in this way. That is, since 1989 there have already been three attempts to bring the topic of the character of social/cultural anthropology in the Czech environment to public discussion. (In the beginning of the 1990s a discussion about the study by Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech Man and the Great Czech Nation*, made an impression on the pages of the magazine *Český lid* [The Czech People]. Three years ago the young Czech anthropologists Marek Jakoubek and a Zdeněk R. Nešpor tried

the same on the pages of the same periodical.) Even though many researchers have claimed that the compatibility of Czech anthropology with foreign trends is rising, on the basis of the group of authors' empirical research published here it is clear that until now reality differs from this claim.

## REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

### ***Miasto po obu brzegach rzeki – różne oblicza kultury*** **[A city on both banks of a river – various aspects of culture]. October 18–20, 2007, Warsaw, Poland.**

Organizers: Polskie Towarzystwo Etnologii Miasta, Muzeum Historyczne m. st. Warszawy, Muzeum Niepodległości, Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy, Czeskie Centrum, Instytut Słowacki

### ***Hedvika Novotná***

Polish ethnology, in particular cultural and social anthropology, has been dedicated for a long time to urban topics. This interest is expressed in the anchoring of urban studies in the Polish Society of Urban Ethnology (Polskie Towarzystwo Etnologii Miasta) which came into being in the year 2000. The subject of interest of this society is the problematics of the social-cultural identity of cities with a view to changes which, at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, accompany the growth of cities and with them the adjoining regions. One of the most important

activities of the Polish Society of Urban Ethnology is the organization of international thematically oriented conferences – e.g., *Sfera sacrum i profanum w kulturze współczesnych miast europy środkowej* (The sacred and profane sphere in the culture of contemporary Central European cities (Warsaw – Pułtusk, Sept. 16–18, 2004), ); *Miejsca biesiadne. Co o nich opowiada antropolog?* (Places for parties; what does an anthropologist have to say about them?) (Łódź, June 1–2, 2006)

The most recent of a series of conferences – *Miasto po obu brzegach rzeki – różne oblicza kultury* (A city on both banks of a river – various aspects of culture) was held October 18–20, 2007, in the spaces of Warsaw museums. The topic of the papers was the city and the river from various perspectives. The fact that the topic is broad was already apparent from the introductory block of contributors: Danuta Kłosek-Kozłowska (Politechnika Warszawska) in a comparison of Rome, Florence, Paris and Prague from an urbanistic viewpoint followed the role of the river in the development of the city. Blanka Soukupová (Univerzita Karlova in Prague, Czech Republic) talked about the Vltava as a symbol of Czechness and Czechoslovakness and, from this point of view, about the changes in the relationship between the Vltava and Prague, oscillating in various historical periods and contexts between partnership and rivalry. Zuzana Beňušková (Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa in Nitra, Slovakia), taking the example of Bratislava and the Danube, demonstrated the function of the space on the banks of the river and changes of its values in the present.