

# Ethnology and Anthropology in Europe

## Towards a Trans-National Discipline

Jasna Čapo

*Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb*

### Abstract

*Twenty-five years after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the European East-West divide has not been relegated to the annals of history. Among other areas, it persists tenaciously within the ethnological/anthropological sciences practised in Europe. This article deconstructs and challenges reified differences between ethnologies in Central-Eastern Europe and Western, mainly British-style anthropology. It proposes to go beyond the prevalent divisive discourse towards a trans-national European ethnology/anthropology of Europe. It argues that fairness and equality in academic dialogue is a necessary prerequisite of such an endeavour.*

**T**hough twenty-five years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, entrenched Cold War divisions remain in place on the European continent. One encounters still the notion of a European “East” that is different from the “West.” It refers not to the geographic but the symbolic European “East,” a former space of communist ideology and socialist societies. In geographic terms, it includes Central and Eastern Europe (from now on referred to as CEE, both in the adjectival and substantival form). Most of the former socialist countries in that area have joined the European Union, but this does not preclude the outdated notion of the “East” being widely used. The polarity “West”-“East” stands for many opposites: centre/core vs. periphery/margin, capitalism vs. former socialism (today post-socialist/post-communist space), democratic vs. undemocratic, developed vs. backward, modern vs. traditional. Its implications have persisted a quarter of a century after the ideological-political boundary nominally disappeared and in spite of recent regional realignments and developments, which underscore (old/new) divides along the North-South and EU-non-EU axis (with the non-EU space becoming smaller with each new country’s entry into the EU). However, it seems that “for the core members of the EU, the traditional West, new members will remain part of East-Central Europe, or

Eastern Europe, for obvious economic, political and cultural reasons" (Kürti and Skalník 2009a, 1). The "East"- "West" divide in Europe seems to exist in academic circles as well.

The former political and ideological borderline between the West and the East had an impact on different academic fields, two of which are more familiar to me—anthropology/ethnology and demography. Historical demographers proposed spatial distributions and cultural divisions of the European territory, demonstrating a preoccupation with establishing historical, cultural, and disciplinary borders in Europe, which were essentially based on the exemplary ideological border prevalent until the 1990s. That borderline distinguished between diverse demographic and family systems in historical and contemporary Europe (see Szotysek 2012 for a critical review). The "Eastern European" demographic and family space were perceived as homogeneous and were characterised by marriage at an early age, large proportions of married people and large and complex family systems. Proponents of such an image of the family system in the "East" sometimes referred to it as a "non-European" system. On the other side of the borderline, running between St. Petersburg and Trieste, they found, not unexpectedly, a system that they named "European."

Anglo-American anthropologists sometimes do the same as historical demographers and "flippantly utilize Europe simply to mean Western Europe or the European Union" (Kürti 2008, 30). They differentiate "Western" anthropological (social/cultural, depending on the viewpoint) from the CEE ethnological and folkloristic scopes of enquiry, which they relegate to second-class anthropology and bracket out as relevant knowledge. Aligned with this discourse is a range of contrastive qualities attributed to one or the other side: the small, national(istic), positivist, atheoretical and outdated ethnologies of the East are contrasted to the metropolitan, theoretical, cosmopolitan and modern anthropologies of the West (Hann 2003, 2005; Stocking Jr in Baskar 2008; Buchowski 2004; Kürti 2008; Pobołocki 2009). In addition, the first are thought of as not being "proper anthropology" because they have purportedly never dealt with other cultures, confining themselves rather within the limits of their own national cultures (Hahn 2005). Defending the study of the Other as a hallmark of anthropology, even at a time when social anthropology has come "home" (to study domestic terrains), British anthropologists indeed show a curious fascination with CEE and its allegedly nationalistic, navel-gazing, atheoretical ethnologies. The idea that "Westerners cannot really learn anything from those backward Easterners since their paradigm is outdated (both nationalist and positivist at the same time)" is not unique (Buchowski 2004, 10). At an earlier period, it was also used with regard to Southern Europe, e.g. John Davies stat-

ed: "... a contemporary ethnographer from France and England or America, carrying the very latest lightweight intellectual machine gun in his pack, may be suddenly confronted by a Tylolean or Frazerian professor appearing like a Japanese corporal from the jungle to wage a battle only he knows is still on" (Buchowski 2004, 10).

In the article, I comment on that debate between Western, mainly British anthropologists and their colleagues in CEE. Revolving mainly around post-socialist studies, it has revealed voices from CEE critical of the hierarchies that reflect political and economic power differentials in the academic arena. Those voices (Buchowski 2004, 2012a; Prica 1995, 2006, 2007), at first isolated, have now become not only more concerted (Kürti and Skalník 2009a; Kürti 2008; Baskar 2008; Pobłocki 2009), but have also been backed by those coming from the "centres" of anthropological production in Europe (Dressler 2000; Ruegg 2014). The latter compare the imposition of Western anthropological models on CEE ethnologies to a kind of post-colonial practice.

By and large, the debate has been led between ethnologists in CEE countries and their counterparts in the British-style tradition of social anthropology. A notable figure in that tradition is Chris Hann around whom much of the debate sparked. Throughout the paper I use "anthropology" to mean social (cultural) anthropology in the sense of the discipline conventionally studying other societies and cultures. Anthropology will also be used as a metonym for the British (sometimes also the American) strand of the discipline, to which I will sometimes also refer to as the Western strand. Ethnology, on the other hand, will be used in reference to CEE countries and to disciplinary traditions dealing with national cultures. Reference to Western and Eastern disciplines will be utilized as a convenient and economical means of expression, with implications of symbolic intra-European boundaries but without any implications of homogeneity of either one or the other. As I develop my argument, I use ethnology and anthropology more and more interchangeably, as well as connecting them in the phrase "ethno-anthropology" to indicate a convergence of the two in terms of theories, epistemology, and methodology.

The European debate over Eastern ethnological and Western anthropological traditions has not involved the French tradition of national ethnology or European ethnology (*Europäische Ethnologie*, formerly *Volkskunde*, in some countries folklore studies) with its different yet converging national disciplines practiced in German-speaking, Scandinavian and Low countries. This omission can be understood in terms of the academic and cultural prestige of Anglo-American social and cultural anthropology and the sheer numbers of anthropologists writing in the hegemonic English language, of CEE colleagues

studying in the UK or US rather than in Germany, France or Sweden, and, last but not the least, in terms of the Anglo-American space viewed as a primary paragon to be imitated by CEE (comp. Giordano 2014, 239). It is also to be found in the ambivalent position of European ethnology as “not quite” cultural anthropology though evolving in conversations with it (Frykman 2012). Maybe this lack of reference to ethnology in other European countries on both the Western and the Eastern side of the debate about proper ethno-anthropological practice is due to European ethnology’s own past as a nationally oriented discipline without a colonial agenda and the endogenous critique that it underwent some decades ago, which brought it, as judged by Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith and Jonas Frykman, thematically, theoretically and methodologically in alignment with cultural anthropology (Kockel et al 2012a, 3). Finally, perhaps this omission occurred because CEE ethnologies consider themselves a branch of European ethnology—and are considered by British social anthropologists as such. Indeed, that might have been so for when Chris Hann discovered that Germany had two historically well-established strands of anthropological sciences (*Volkskunde/Europäische Ethnologie* and *Völkerkunde* / social anthropology), which occupy parallel niches in the academic arena and resist unification until this day, he was fascinated and bewildered (Hann 2002, 2003). I wonder if his perception of the fields in Germany had an impact on his perception of ethnological sciences in CEE, and led him to stress their differences with regard to British social anthropology and, more recently, to propose cross-fertilization of the two disciplinary strands (Hann 2012, 2013, 2014).

The presentation of debates between ethnology and anthropology or Eastern European and Western European styles of anthropology will not be exhaustive, since a rich production on these topics is becoming more and more insuperable. There is also a language barrier limiting what I can read; unfortunately, my language competences do not include most national languages spoken in CEE, so that I have consulted almost exclusively what my colleagues from those countries have published in English. I refer especially to more recent volumes and articles without attempting to give a diachronic overview of the long-lasting, complex and somewhat sterile debate that has been going on since the beginning of the 1990s. I argue that by reiterating the old division between the “East” and the “West,” either by discussing it, by presenting anthropologists/ethnologists from only one side of the imagined intra-European borderline, by giving advice as to how anthropology should be practised in the “East” or even if only by using a catchy title referring to “East” and “West” (when the “West” is actually only implying British anthropology), these articles and volumes contribute to reinforcing the existing discourse of discipli-

nary division along the geographic-symbolic intra-European boundary at the time when the boundaries between the two disciplines are more and more blurred.

In the way in which it is sometimes presented, as a strict, firm borderline between a homogeneous, unified tradition of ethnology in the “East” and a similarly homogenous anthropology in the “West,” the division has never existed. Neither one nor the other tradition has ever formed a homogeneous ethnological/anthropological science. Our sciences have always been “polycentric” (Kiliánová 2012, 117) and quite different in terms of intra-national relations between social/cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, ethnology, and folklore studies. What is in this article discussed as a European divide between ethnology (in CEE) and social anthropology (British), exists also as an internal national divide in several European countries: e. g. France, Germany, and Scandinavian countries have had both a nation-building ethnology and social anthropology. United Kingdom is actually the only Western European country which developed national ethnology only recently, and named it “anthropology at home.” These intra-national divisions have given rise to separate professional associations in Europe—SIEF (*Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore/International Society for Ethnology and Folklore*) and EASA (*European Association of Social Anthropologists/Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux*). The two associations collaborate but still maintain their differences, one offering a forum to “scholars working within European Ethnology, Folklore Studies, Cultural Anthropology and adjoining fields,” the other to “social anthropologists either qualified in, or else working in, Europe.”<sup>1</sup>

I argue that the dichotomy between ethnology and anthropology is unacceptable in epistemic terms because the concept of anthropology is “amputated” if one’s own society is outside of the domain of the “science of man” (Barrera-González 2005), whose vocation is listening to the voices of others (Kürti 2008, 30), championing cross-cultural comparison and siding with the underdog (Kürti and Skalník 2009a, 16). I wish to go beyond the prevalent divisive discourse toward a trans-national ethnology / anthropology of Europe. A trans-national science should go beyond stereotypes and ethnocentric biases, acknowledge national ways of practicing ethnology and anthropology as equal and worth entering into debate with on the basis of fairness and equality (Ruegg 2014). This might be a way out of the present state of affairs, which relegates and locks up each national tradition in a certain box (social anthropology, ethnology, folkloristics) and this at a time calling for interdisciplinarity and academic dialogue.

### **The Phantom of Eastern European-Style Ethnology**

The demise of communist party domination and “peoples democracies” in the Eastern part of the European continent has opened up access to what had not always been readily available possibilities for contact with the Western democratic world. This opening bred different expectations: the Easterners expected that they would soon and unconditionally be embraced by their peers in the West; the collapse of communism was thought of as a “return to Europe” (Skalník 2014) to which they belonged.<sup>2</sup> The Western idea of this “coming back” was quite different; it was seen as absorption into the Western model of society of the “stagnant and backward” societies (Giordano 2009). The East was expected to catch up with the West—politically, economically, societally, and academically. The fall of former socialist systems and communist ideology was believed to usher in modern Western-like democratic societies dominated by capitalism, with all the inevitability of historical determinism. A certain period of transition was theoretically envisaged within the Western linear scheme of modernisation (Kürti and Skalník 2009a; Giordano 2009, 2014; Buchowski 2012b; Skalník 2014).<sup>3</sup> The same transformation was expected to occur in ethnological sciences practiced in CEE as well.

Though research in CEE was not completely inaccessible to Western anthropologists, the 1990s brought what was certainly an unprecedented wave of exchange between academia on the two sides of the former Iron Curtain. Here I am especially interested in the encounter of social anthropology with the sister sciences practiced in CEE. What kind of ethnological/anthropological practice did the social anthropologists from the West “discover” in the East as a consequence of its opening? They have allegedly “discovered” a more or less unified discipline dealing with own folk (peasant) culture, a positivist and atheoretical discipline, influenced by nation-building and communist ideology. In sum, it was an outdated discipline that had not much to offer to social anthropology.<sup>4</sup> Characterisations of CEE ethnologies presented in the following paragraphs have been mainly derived from two sources: on the one hand, the writings of the social anthropologist Chris Hann (2002, 2003, 2005, 2012, 2013, 2014), and, on the other, of those CEE ethnologists/anthropologists who have responded with criticism to Western, mainly British and American, portrayals and dismissals of national ethnology in their own country or in CEE (Buchowski 2004, 2005; Baskar 2008; Kürti 2008; Kürti and Skalník 2009a; Pobłocki 2009). Some of them offer a generic critique in which quotations on CEE ethnologies by Western authors are difficult to trace. For this reason it may seem as if they have themselves contributed to the fabrication of the phantom of CEE ethnology. Or, according to a felicitous phrase by Kacper Pobłocki (2009,



Ethnologist Aleksandra Muraj doing fieldwork in the Kordun region, central Croatia, 1962. Photograph from the collection of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, photo no. 40082.

227), on both sides there appeared the “practice of manufacturing straw men that are utilized in waging academic battles.”

Across the former communist-bloc border there were different strands of the science with similar designation. *Néprajz*, *ludoznanstvo*, *etnologija*, *etnografija*, *folkloristika*, *narodopis(je)*... were the terms denoting a particular national (local) brand of the “description or study of people” (known elsewhere by the German term *Volkskunde*). Western social anthropologists saw in those disciplines a field very different from their own discipline and portrayed them without discriminating between different national contexts. Their subject matter was perceived to be exclusively their own folk culture, the culture of the peasantry, which was identified as the repository of national culture. This finding led to the assumption—that has become a myth (Buchowski 2012b)—that they were harnessed in the service of nation-building in each of the countries in which they developed. Unlike social anthropology, then, whose context was empire-building overseas and its subject matter other peoples and cultures, the CEE ethnologies supposedly dealt with their own culture and people in the context of national projects. A standard Western opinion on the practice of

anthropology is succinctly exemplified by Adam Kuper's description: "scholars in CEE countries tended to share a traditional, nationalist preoccupation with peasant traditions, and their work had little theoretical content or comparative range" (in Buchowski, 2004, 10). In the rendering of similar opinions by CEE scholars, their ethnologies allegedly exhibited a lack of theoretical thinking, positivism and empiricism (Buchowski 2004). In addition, they connoted smallness and marginality (Baskar 2008). These notions were contrasted to the theoretical sophistication and importance of the "core" of anthropological science practiced in Anglophone countries.

Further opposites developed: national vs. cosmopolitan anthropology (Hann 2003), native ethnographers vs. universalist/comparativist anthropologists (Hann 2002, 2013). Some voices from CEE confirm, even today, the relevance of those fundamentally opposing dichotomies in their countries. For example, Saša Nedeljković (2014) presents the relationship between ethnology and anthropology in contemporary Serbia in terms of a set of opposites between national-global, Eastern-Western, traditional-modern, rural-urban, and empirical-theoretical science.

The above description of Eastern-style ethnology by Western anthropology more or less follows the famous article by the Hungarian ethnologist Tamás Hofer, in which the author dwells mainly on the difference in the subject matter (own or other culture) and methodological differences between anthropologist's long-term fieldwork and ethnologist's short-term visits to field sites (Hofer 1968).<sup>5</sup> In the South-Eastern European area, a similar statement, which described ethnology in Yugoslavia as traditionalistic, atheoretical, and of little interest to American-style cultural anthropology, was written by American anthropologists Joel Halpern and Eugene Hammel (1969). It seems that these two earlier articles, one by a CEE ethnologist, another by American anthropologists, have sealed up until the present day the perception of the difference between a Western-style anthropology and an Eastern-style national ethnology. The differences discussed by Hofer were thus evoked almost 40 years after in Chris Hann's articles. He firmly adhered to the conventional colonialist habitus of the British social anthropology as the study of a distant, far away Other (Hann 2003, 2007). Obviously, CEE ethnologies could not fit that paradigm. Therefore, both the "*Ethnowissenschaftler*" and their terrains in CEE seemed exotic to Hann (2002). In a reply to Buchowski's article (2004), he openly admitted that he did not find much CEE anthropology useful and advised the "native" practitioners to do "proper" fieldwork. In his words, if locals "wish to be as widely read as some of the outsiders who write about CEE, then they need to put in the field time and write monographs of equivalent depth and sophistication" (Hann



*Ljelje*, spring procession from Gorjani in north-eastern Croatia, with musicologist Stjepan Stepanov taking notes, 1957. The procession is on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Photograph from the collection of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, photo no. 30897.

2005, 195). “Proper fieldwork,” of course, meant staying in a foreign country for a year. Stressing distant fieldwork as the hallmark of anthropology and a necessary epistemic tool for “in-depth work,” he further advised his counterparts in CEE to step out of the national framework of doing fieldwork.

As late as 2013, Hann modelled the differences between two anthropological practices schematically, distinguishing positivist “native ethnographers” dealing with their own and “comparativists” dealing with other cultures, in a volume which, if read carefully, disclaims such a mechanistic and panoramic portrayal of “native ethnographers” (Hann 2013). In that not entirely clear-cut article, Hann (2013) tries to rephrase the dichotomous view of “native ethnography” vs. “comparative anthropology,” which underlies many of his earlier contributions. He recognises “convergences” in topics, theories used, methodological changes in both ethnological and anthropological traditions, and advocates for a necessity to overcome the dichotomy (Hann 2012, 2014). How-

ever, the following and similar statements transpire with the condescending attitude of the author toward “natives” *qua* scientists and undermine his statements elsewhere: “Many natives have shown that they are just as capable as the foreigners of carrying out insightful studies of a range of modern topics...” (Hann 2013, 24). The statement points out that the debate between Eastern ethnologists and British anthropologists is not just a figment of Easterners’ imagination but that there indeed is a problem in the “core” anthropologist’s perceptions of what can be achieved by ethnologists in CEE.

### **Realities of CEE Ethnologies**

The image of a homogeneous and outdated ethnology in the post-socialist world has never been accurate, not more so at the time of its “discovery” in the 1990s than today. The fragmentation of the discipline in that part of the world was no less significant than in other parts of the world, including in the “cosmopolitan” (Anglo-American, French) anthropologies. CEE has developed nationally specific ways of practicing the discipline and of relating to sister sciences. Even a cursory glance at varied histories of the discipline(s) in the pre- and post-1989 era, and at studies of contemporary ethnologies in Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia would suffice to recognise the oversight committed in the uniform depictions of ethnology in these countries (see e. g. papers in *Ethnologia Balkanica* 2014; Giordano et al 2014a; Bošković and Hann 2013; Kürti and Skalník 2009b).

Significant deviations from the canon peasant-authentic-national occurred in some former socialist countries as early as in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia; see Rihtman-Auguštin 2004; Slavec Gradišnik 2012; Muršič 2002; Potkonjak 2013; Buchowski 2012b; Kiliánová 2012; Čapo and Gulin Zrnić 2014), and *not* in the post-1989 era. The influences were diverse even in the pre-1989 period. The impact of the German critical ethnology of Herman Bausinger, anthropological theories coming from Western Europe and the United States, as well as anthropological new terrains on the European Southern and Northern peripheries (studies in the Mediterranean, Ireland) and later in urban milieus—all had an effect on ethnologies in CEE countries, with the result that earlier research paradigms were at least paralleled, if not surpassed by the incorporation of ethnological and anthropologised streams coming from various sources into local contexts. For example, in Croatia and Slovenia, everyday life and contemporary issues were studied already in the 1970s and 1980s. These two countries (at the time in Yugoslavia) followed general trends in global science, both the transformations that led from *Volkskunde* to European ethnology, and those coming from Anglophone and Francophone

traditions. That is why the Croatian ethnologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (2004) used the term “ethno-anthropology”<sup>6</sup>: it denotes anthropologised ethnological sciences—in the sense that they apply anthropological theories derived from various sources, including social and cultural anthropology and European ethnology, while still doing research on home terrains. That term has entered standard use (Johler 2012; Buchowski 2012b) and is widely applied to denote transformations that ethnologies in CEE have undergone since the 1970s.

This process of “anthropologisation” led to a notion in certain CEE countries (e. g. Croatia, Slovenia) that there was no difference between ethnology and anthropology (social/ cultural). Though their co-existence was not always smooth (especially in the 1990s), the co-presence of anthropological discourses finally led to a “velvet revolution” in which departments and institutes of ethnology doubled up their names to become departments and institutes of ethnology and cultural anthropology (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia).<sup>7</sup> This development resembles the one bringing closer European ethnology in other parts of Europe to cultural anthropology (Kockel et al. 2012a, 3). That transformation was not only cosmetic, it reflected real disciplinary changes from historical to contemporary and rural to urban topics of ethno-anthropological research, still mostly done at home. British social anthropology’s discovering “home” as a fieldwork site certainly contributed to the argument that there was not an intrinsic difference between ethnology and anthropology. Indeed, one can reverse the perspective by saying that European ethnologies have been “at home” for longer than the British social anthropology; social anthropologists



Ethnologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin 1997. Photograph from the collection of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, photo no. 38197, photo taken by I. Lozica.

only recently “came home” to where ethnologists have always been (comp. Godina 2002). The epistemic changes that anthropology underwent in the 1980s, when it abandoned comparison and generalisation, also contributed to the perception in certain CEE countries that there was no clear boundary distinguishing ethnology from social/cultural anthropology (ibid.).

Judging by the “struggles” engaged in by P. Skalník (2002), this has not been the case in the Czech Republic, and social anthropology, which had disappeared due to political pressure under communism, only slowly established itself as a discipline—distinct from ethnology—in the post-communist period. The re-established discipline entered into a competitive relationship with ethnology. But here, as in other countries, this competition might have been less a matter of epistemological, theoretical and methodological discrepancies between ethnology and social/cultural anthropology and more a matter of a “struggle for position in the academic world and access to financial resources” (Kiliánová 2012, 116). In some countries, that “struggle” pitted ethnology against social anthropology (the Czech Republic, Slovenia), in others, it was more a struggle between ethnology and biological anthropology (Croatia).<sup>8</sup>

It appears that what in the German-speaking world has been called *die Wende*—i.e. a decisive change in political, economic and social development that started with the collapse of communist systems after 1989—did not provoke such a decisive academic *Wende*. Various contributors discussing post-communist changes in the academic world in a volume edited by Konrad Köstlin, Peter Niedermüller and Herbert Nikitsch (Köstlin et al. 2002) could not establish that 1989 was a clear dividing line for the changing identities of ethnological disciplines in CEE. Clearly, transformations started earlier, and even without institutionalised forms of social or cultural anthropology in CEE, there was access to anthropological and contemporary ethnological knowledge (to a varying degree), which had been transforming the disciplines before 1989.

Another issue is to what extent CEE ethnologies were under the sway of communist ideology. Here, too, we do not find a uniform ideological influence across all (post-)communist countries. The inflection the communist system had on ethnology was different from country to country (just as much as the systems varied among themselves), ranging from complete isolation and ideologisation of the society and its sciences, as in Albania (Hysa Kodra 2014), to a semi-open system that allowed contacts with the international scholarly world, as in Yugoslavia, which culminated in only indirect pressure and self-imposed censorship (Rihtman-Auguštin 2004). It ranged from the “blind intervention of the socialist official ideology” in Romania (Șerban and Dorondel 2014) and rigorous adaptation of Soviet theories in East Germany to escaping

ideologization in Hungary and Poland (Hann 2012, 2013). Paradoxically, one South-Eastern European country, otherwise omitted from these discussions—Turkey—which was not a space of long-term communist rule, was the champion in political controls over social sciences. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkish state exercised constant ideologisation and control across the board of changing military regimes and governments, causing discontinuities in the development of social sciences (Kartari 2014).

There are a few other aspects of the debate between “Eastern” and “Western” styles of anthropology upon which I wish to comment. Though the idea that CEE ethnologies were exclusively nation-building disciplines—both in the sense of studying the own (peasant society) and imbuing it with nation-building capacity—has been challenged by local scholars (Čapo 1991; Baskar 2008<sup>9</sup>; Kiliánová 2012; Buchowski 2012b; see also works quoted in Pobłocki 2009), that idea still has currency among some in the “West” who reiterate the myth of national(istic) ethnology in CEE (Buchowski 2012b), without subjecting it to analysis, scrutiny and cross-national comparison.<sup>10</sup> We are still awaiting a study—that could come from any strand of ethnology/anthropology—that would deal with and explain the paradox that the communist ideology, which promulgated the “working class” into the subjects of history, tolerated ethnology (the “reactionary bourgeois science”) that was researching “peasants as bearers of national values.” How was this paradox resolved in different communist countries? How did local ethnological paradigms deal with these issues? Were there any differences between countries with a clear national majority and those with mixed multi-ethnic populations as in former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union? In an article dealing with this issue, I showed that Croatian ethnology, in spite of its alleged national(istic) bias, or maybe because it feared being accused of it, managed to navigate relatively freely in the multinational Yugoslav workers’ state by examining individual items of peasant cultures within a diffusionist paradigm, irrespective of their “ethnic bearers.” I argued that Croatian ethnology, at the time, promoted a culturalist and transnational rather than a national(ist) agenda (Čapo 1991; for a summary Čapo and Gulin Zrnić 2014). Quite a different scenario was deployed in a country with a clear-cut national majority, Albania, where ethnography was in the service of the nation during communism (Hysa Kodra 2014).

Due to these pre-1989 differences, the 1990s saw an old and a new wave of nationalization of ethnologies in CEE. Some would interpret it as a typical post-colonial development, a “nativist stand” understandable in the broader political context of the re/construction and emancipation of the nation (Ruegg 2014, 91-92; see also Muršič 2002, 160). In Slovenia, the nationalization of eth-

nology provoked sharp criticism from the colleagues interested in a comparative anthropological enterprise and in other cultures. In the wake of the creation of the nation-state and in the context of a long repressed public interest in national culture, national issues came to the forefront of ethnology in Croatia in the 1990s. However, since Croatian ethnology had by that time become a critical science of culture and had been internationalised, ethnologists/anthropologists engaged with critical identity studies rather than national(istic) agendas (comp. the interpretation in Čapo Žmegač 2002). Thus, there is another complex issue regarding CEE ethnologies: at the same time as they were internationalising in outlook, the topics of their research were increasingly national (comp. Löfgren in Jöhler 2012). Therefore, it is clear that the marriage of ethnology with a national agenda in CEE countries played out differently in different countries: in some countries the communist period coincided with national agendas while post-communism abandoned this perspective; in others it was precisely the post-communist era that brought about a more national science (but not necessarily a more nationalistic one).

In sum, in spite of heterogeneous particular contexts and transformations that have characterised ethnologies dealing with the own, in the pre-1989 era and later, some British anthropologists adhere to the ideal-typical and simplistic opposition between national, historicising and diachronic ethnology and cosmopolitan and synchronic anthropology to this day (Hann 2013). As already mentioned, neither ethnology nor anthropology ever corresponded to these ideal types. In addition, both were challenged and changing in the 1970s and 1980s, both discussed the loss of their subject matter and basic episteme, both had undergone a deep transformative process since the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, these changes prompted some German ethnologists to express concern over a loss of the “distinctive image” of *Volkskunde* in Germany (Brückner in Jöhler 2012). The encounter with ethnologies in CEE coincided with important changes in the established identity of social/cultural anthropology, notably with the disappearance of colonial terrains and search for novel territories for studying the Other. When the colonial Others disappeared or became less accessible for research due to decolonization, the Northern, Southern, and Eastern European fringes became new terrains in which anthropologists looked for Otherness. The development of urban anthropology, for example in France, was part and parcel of that shift toward *terrains nouveaux* in the post-colonial era (see Ruegg 2014; Frykman 2012). At the same time, anthropology underwent intra-disciplinary transformations toward a self-reflexive discipline questioning the blind spot of anthropological involvement in the colonial project (the post-modernists of the 1980s).

In the midst of the decolonisation of the discipline, reflexive turn, questioning representation and reframing of fieldwork as dialogical, it is indeed curious that some British anthropologists would try to impose an obsolete notion of social anthropology as the study of the Other on ethnologies in the former socialist countries and that, instead of engaging in a dialogue with their colleagues in CEE they would choose to bypass them completely and condescend “native ethnography” (Buchowski 2004). In the words of François Ruegg (2014), it looks as if they had never been hit by post-colonial and reflexive turns.

### **Reactions by CEE Scholars**

The generic negative portrayal of ethnologies in CEE as well as their second-class status in relation to “proper” anthropology spurred criticism among CEE ethnologists. Stereotyping, patronising, Orientalising/exoticising, neglecting, nativising, and colonising are some of the terms with which they qualified Western images of themselves. CEE ethnologists/anthropologists found that their studies were received as “native/indigenous” ethnographies, as data rather than as scientific analyses, and they themselves as informants rather than as colleagues, or else they were completely dismissed and their work passed over in silence by anthropologists from the “West” doing research in their countries (Buchowski 2004; Kürti and Skalník 2009a; Skalník 2014). An example is the Croatian ethnography of the war of the 1990s: Croatian ethnologists who studied the effects of the war on everyday life were too easily defined as mere “natives,” claimed a local scholar (Povržanović 1995) and their war ethnography as disguised nationalism (e.g. by Greverus 1996).<sup>11</sup> They were identified with the culture they came from, and with the powerless, marginal, and dubious position of their country, through which, as claimed by Ines Prica (1995), the ethnologist becomes equally powerless, marginal, and ambiguous.

Prica (1995) argued that there was unidirectional communication between cultural anthropology and Croatian ethnology, and CEE ethnologies as a whole, and even contempt and prejudice on the part of anthropology towards ethnologies in CEE. Michał Buchowski (2004, 2005, 2012a) has denounced similar treatment of Polish and other CEE ethnologies/anthropologies while László Kürti and Peter Skalník (2009a) identified a persistent Orientalising discourse within the EU.<sup>12</sup> In spite of this, Kürti and Skalník seem to be themselves bogged down by conventional British social anthropology—and its Orientalising discourse which they criticise—when they speak of “native anthropologists” and praise a “special position of a returnee anthropologist,” trained abroad and returning home to work (Kürti and Skalník 2009a, 11). I argue that that position might have its specificities, but this is a judgement from the viewpoint of British so-

cial anthropology and it neglects a more common position, that of the anthropologist at home who was trained at home as well. Even more worrying is that Kürti and Skalník address themselves primarily to colleagues in the West and they fail to inspire themselves by what colleagues in the similar position of anthropologists at home, located in CEE, have to say (e.g. in Croatia, Gulin Zrnić 2005 on fieldwork at home). If it is true that “Westerners” do not quote us, we, the “Easterners,” do not read and quote us among ourselves even when we publish in English.

The contestation of the hegemonic discourse of social anthropology by CEE ethnologists is sharp and straightforward: there is reference to “hierarchies of knowledge” (Buchowski 2004), “power inequalities” (Prica, various articles), “a poisoned antagonistic relationship” (Buchowski in Kürti and Skalník 2009a, 10), and “the perplexing vast academic hiatus” (Kürti 2008) between CEE anthropologists/ethnologies and their Western colleagues. The CEE ethnologists denounce their treatment as second-class anthropologists by their colleagues (Kürti 2008), etc. Kürti (*ibid.*) is particularly vehement in his criticism and I am left wondering what could have been the motives for his, at times, passionate personal statements.<sup>13</sup>

Having said that, the “soft power intrusion” (Kürti 2008) into CEE academic life by Anglo-American anthropology is undeniable. It induced and dictated research topics and social science models in CEE, not only because of its symbolic power, but even more so because of its financial power: ethnicity, nationalism, minorities, multiculturalism, property relations, civil society, gender issues, inequality, etc. are “academically correct” and “Euro-compatible” research topics in CEE rather than wedding rituals, legends, story-telling, etc. (Kürti and Skalník 2009a; Šerban and Dorondel 2014; Giordano et al 2014b; Ruegg 2014). François Ruegg even went as far as to state that “Eastern European social anthropology is still a colony of western academies: local anthropologists serve essentially as a working force for foreign institutions and moneys” (2014: 85). This indeed is a forceful statement by a social anthropologist from a “centre” of anthropological production, backing less powerful voices from CEE. Speaking from Austria, Gert Dressler (2000) also shows that Austrian “academic development aid” to Bulgaria was patronising. That there are grounds for speaking of a post-colonial condition in all aspects of life in CEE is confirmed by other influential voices from the West, such as Christian Giordano’s (2014). To the contrary, Kacper Pobłocki (2009) has recently argued that current hierarchies of anthropological knowledge production are a result of global political economy rather than of post-colonial context of the sciences in CEE.

### **Towards a Trans-National Ethnology/Anthropology of Europe**

To a crude generic portrait of CEE ethnologies by Western anthropologists, this article has opposed a picture of fragmented and heterogenous ethnologies in CEE. It has shown that there has never existed a unified Eastern European ethnology. There is so much diversity and variation in the historical paths of transformation of ethnologies in CEE that it is impossible to come up with any generalization about ethnological traditions in the former socialist bloc. Their “astonishing fragmentation” (Barrera-González 2005) is not any greater or lesser (or more astonishing) than the one found between them and the anthropologies in the West. A similar insight led Chris Hann (2012) to conclude that insisting on a dichotomous model is a pointless exercise. I also consider it pointless because anthropologies in the Western European countries and across the Atlantic are as diversified as the ones in CEE.

I am tempted to account for the heterogeneity of ethno-anthropological sciences by quoting André Burguière, the famous historian of the Annales school. He found the essence of this diversity in national histories. Explaining his experience with the publication of special issues of the journal *Ethnologie française* devoted to less known European ethnologies/anthropologies, Burguière observed that each issue on a particular national tradition of ethnology/anthropology (Norwegian, Swedish, Polish, Slovenian, etc.) was an experience of “*dépaysement*,” because the “intellectual orientation” of ethnologists from each ethnology did not only treat general problems of the discipline but showed “clear relation to the history of the country”; “it reflected an assemblage of ... particularities, that one can call national character, which is the result of the path travelled in the construction of the nation” (Burguière and Heintz 2012, 371, translation mine).<sup>14</sup> This opinion echoes Tamás Hofer (1996) who spoke of “intellectual style,” “concepts of reality,” and the input of different “historical pasts,” calling this tendency in ethnological sciences “latent ethnicity,” one that reflects the national societies in which they are practised. I argue that such a “national” bias pervades ethno-anthropological sciences as a whole. In those that are identified as cosmopolitan and comparative Western anthropologies, it found expression in their imperialism and exoticisation of other cultures and the refusal of parity to local scholars whom the visiting anthropologists condescended as “natives” and not academic interlocutors with whom to engage in scientific dialogue.<sup>15</sup>

When the CEE scholars retorted to the lack of parity in academic dialogue, or in the phrase of François Rugg (2014, 87) to a lack of a “deontology of fairness and equality,” their criticism was addressed to a generic “Western” anthropology. Though they were mainly debating certain American and Brit-

ish authors, they utilized a general notion of “Western anthropology” and opposed it to ethnological practices in CEE. It could be said that they committed the same error as their British and American counterparts who failed to recognize that there might be noticeable differences across ethnological disciplines in CEE. That is how a sterile exchange, pervaded by misrepresentations on both sides, went on for more than two decades.

The close encounter between Western traditions of anthropology of the Other with CEE ethnologies of own national cultures happened at the time when European anthropology/anthropology of Europe was well established, but remained marginal to the mainstream, and was still denied the status of “real anthropology” because it did not deal with remote Third World peoples (Goddard et al. 1994). Upholding dogmas (Barrera-González 2005) such as doing research in remote terrains went hand-in-hand with the “insidious scientific imperialism” (Hann 2012) of conventional anthropology and the neglect of other strands of anthropology, especially those practised beyond the former



Carnival, with ethnologist Tea Škokić interviewing a girl in costume, Pelješac peninsula, southern Croatia, 1997. Photograph from the collection of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, photo no. 37605, photo taken by S. Puljar.

Iron Curtain in the former communist CEE countries and known as ethnology, ethnography, folklore, etc. These national traditions of science, largely directed at researching one's own rural cultures, were doubly suspicious to the champions of Western anthropology: on the one hand, because they dealt with their own culture, it was questionable whether these scholars could produce scientific knowledge or merely "native" accounts/ethnographies and, on the other hand, they were suspected of putting ethnology into the service of local national projects, and they themselves of being outright nationalists. It is no wonder that colleagues in CEE responded to such assumptions with equally challenging allegations of a neo-colonial stance on the part of the Westerners.

Whether (European) ethnology and (social/cultural) anthropology are distinct fields of study is still open for debate; no consensus has emerged and their relation (or distinction) is still played out differently in different countries and, as already mentioned, in two European professional associations which separate social anthropologists from ethnologists/cultural anthropologists. Is it possible to bridge this "tale of two disciplines" (comp. Frykman 2012), ethnology and anthropology, and go beyond the "canonical disciplinary purity" that anthropologists were more eager to maintain than their peers from (European) ethnology (Kockel et al 2012a, 7)? In this respect I want to mention an exemplary volume, the *Companion to the Anthropology of Europe* (Kockel et al 2012b) as an important step in the direction of the creation of an ethno-anthropology of Europe. The volume is a fully cross-European endeavour and it includes anthropologists and ethnologists from all around Europe and successfully brings together different traditions and contemporary approaches, in such a way that discerning the original disciplinary affiliation of the authors—in (European) ethnology or in the social/cultural anthropology of Europe—is a "futile task" (Frykman 2012, 587). The long-standing efforts of Andrés Barrera-González and some other colleagues at founding a unified European research and teaching area in anthropology (Barrera-González 2008; Barrera-González et al s.a.) are another step in this direction.

The trans-nationalisation of European ethnologies/anthropologies has started and needs to continue. I do not think that it is desirable that the ethnology/anthropology of Europe remains just "a network of perspectives" in the future "in which every national, regional group can make conscious use of its cultural specificity" (Hofer 1996, 95). I would hope that an even greater degree of trans-nationalisation of particular national traditions continues to develop, i.e. that by analysing cultural issues of European reach and relevance, ethno-anthropologies would rise above their "cultural" and/or "national" specificity and interest and formulate trans-nationally relevant topics and analyses. This

is taking shape when European ethnologists/ anthropologists join to analyse the issues of contemporary heritage and the tourism industry (Bendix et al 2012), regional co-operation (*GrenzRaumSee* 2008), post-socialism (Roth 2005; Giordano et al 2014a) or whatever other topic of pan- or regional European relevance. A trans-national ethnology/ anthropology of Europe is thus on its way to cease being just a rhetorical figure, an empty vessel or a misnomer. The success of this enterprise depends on acknowledging local ethno-anthropological knowledge production in CEE, being open to outside influences without abandoning one's own interests in research (this should function in all directions) and on fairness and equality in academic exchange among ethno-anthropologists across Europe.<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

- 1 See <http://www.sieffhome.org> and <http://www.easaonline.org> respectively.
- 2 On a personal note, I recall very well that expectation in Croatia in 1990 and 1991, soon to be followed by disappointment because it seemed to Croatians that "Europe" took a long time to recognise Croatia's quest for independence and a much longer time to agree to its membership in the Council of Europe (1996), and to allow it to join the EU (2013).
- 3 The authors quoted are critical of such views. In particular, Kürti and Skalník (2009a) argue that many current analyses of economic and political processes in CEE are based on Western notions of how transformations ought to occur instead of on what actually occurred at the local level. That volume (Kürti and Skalník 2009b) rejects the concepts of transition and transformation and points out "the blatant epistemological flaws" of the paradigms of linear development that were firmly upheld by Western social sciences (Giordano 2009, 299). See also insightful analyses of the neo-colonial characteristics of EU hegemony (the EU as an instrument of colonisation) over the post-communist countries, which reproduces the gap between Western and Eastern Europe (Skalník 2014; Giordano 2014).
- 4 A notable exception, that is curiously omitted from the accounts presented here, are Russian structuralists, who have been used by Western structural anthropologists.
- 5 This methodological difference was linked to different epistemologies but probably also to the costs of long-term fieldwork.
- 6 Rihtman-Auguštin was in close contact with Italian ethnologists among whom the term "ethno-anthropology" is common.
- 7 I can testify to this for Croatia; see Muršič, who writes of "denomination struggles" and heated discussions in Slovenia since the 1980s (Muršič 2002).
- 8 Unlike social or cultural anthropology, biological anthropology was professionally established in CEE countries during socialism and it became equated with anthropology (Skalník 2002; Muršič 2002; Martinović Klarić 2013). In Croatia, biological anthropologists promoted an American four-field approach, which might explain why a parallel institutionalization of ethnology/cultural anthropology occurred: currently there are two MA programmes at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, one pursuing formation under the aegis of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, the other under the aegis of the Interdepartmental Chair of Anthropology, which offers a four-field approach and teaches cultural anthropology outside the department that carries its name.
- 9 In an interesting twist to a generally accepted idea, Bojan Baskar (2008) argues that the "Western" and "Eastern" ethnologies/ anthropologies have been playing both the nation-building and the empire-building roles.

- 10 With it comes the myth of nationalistic societies: during the IUAES Congress in Zagreb in 1988, Chris Hann saw “large and noisy parades on the streets of central Zagreb, in which folk costumes mingled with the national colours in celebration of a uniquely Croatian identity” (Hann 2013, 8). An uninformed reader might think that people indeed dressed in folk costumes on the streets of Zagreb in 1988, but an informed one would know that the Congress that Hann attended coincided with the International Folk Festival. Moreover, the programme of the festival in that year, as in any other year during communism, was a showcase of Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity” ideology, staging folklore groups from all over the former state and not just Croatia.
- 11 The nationalistic spectre haunting ethnologists/ anthropologists in CEE also found its way into my exchange with an Austrian historian, Karl Kaser, over the seemingly innocuous topic of the “Balkan family pattern” (Čapo Žmegač 2001; Kaser 1998). While I claimed Kaser was exoticising family patterns in the Balkans, Kaser asserted my nationalistic position.
- 12 In a somewhat different argument, Kacper Pobłocki (2009, 227) asserts that we cannot speak of “asymmetric ignorance” but rather of “reciprocal lack of interest.”
- 13 He is sometimes so passionate as to overlook the fact that ethnologists from CEE do publish in “mainstream” ethnological/ anthropological journals, collected volumes and with American and English publishers. It is precisely some of these colleagues who venture into criticism, like Kürti and Skalník, who end up publishing with Ashgate or Berghahn Books, neither of which is a little-known press.
- 14 These are significant efforts of the *Ethnologie française* journal’s editors to present in French not only CEE but also other European national ethnologies. They have led to special issues on the ethnologies in Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Ireland, Turkey, Croatia, etc. This has been done not from an outsider but rather from an insider viewpoint by inviting editors from these countries to prepare representative collections of ethnological/ anthropological production in their country.
- 15 Those CEE ethnologies that did not do research in the colonies but in their own peasant culture, were correspondingly exoticizing their peasants so that exoticism is not an exclusive trademark of Western anthropologies. I thank Bojan Baskar for this observation.
- 16 I thank Bojan Baskar, Valdimar Hafstein, Peter Jan Margry and the anonymous reviewer for their useful comments on the article.

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