

Power Struggles and Competing Visions around Paradigm Shift: Socio-Cultural Anthropology in Post-Communist Czechia^{1,2}

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Abstract: The article critically analyses the last 30 years of sociocultural anthropology in post-communist Czechia. The author points out that in 1990 there was practically no sociocultural anthropology in the country. The transcendence of previous disciplines of nationography and ethnography was complicated by many structural constraints and terminological confusion, German cultural influence, nationalism, dependency path of communism and the lack of a culture of contention. The beginnings and further development of sociocultural anthropology were marked by the competition with ethnology understood as a synonym of Volkskunde-type studies. First departments emerged outside of the capital city in Plzeň (Pilsen) and Pardubice. Debates eventually arrived. Some were existential, and others pertained to the status of the Roma as a cultural minority. The article shows the gradual growth of the discipline of Czech sociocultural anthropology in institutional, publication and international dimensions. Although Czech socio-cultural anthropology established itself during the studied period as a respected

¹ I dedicate this article to Ulf Hannerz and Andrés Barrera-González. The former suggested in early 1980 that I write an article on Czechoslovakia for his special issue of *Ethnos* on national anthropologies (Gerholm and Hannerz 1982) and I responded at the time that there was nothing to report. The latter and Monica Heintz invited me in 2010 to submit an article about Czechia to their collection (Barrera-González, Heintz and Horolets 2017) and I never managed to complete it on time.

² I use “post-communist” because “post-socialist” or “post-state-socialist” appears to me as scientifically incorrect. The country was ruled by the Communist Party in a totalitarian way. “Socialism” was a propaganda term which the communist regime used in order to confuse the people. “State-socialism” is also not a correct term because the state was fully dominated by the communist party.

social science discipline, it still will have to overcome the paradigmatic threshold of theoretical hesitancy marred by jockeying for institutional power.

Keywords: *sociocultural anthropology, Czechia, Roma, culture of contention, paradigm, power*

Introduction

In the 30 years since the communist party lost its constitutional hegemony in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic has emerged from the first skirmish between the Czech and Slovak post-communist politicians in 1993. Pretty soon it became clear that the political, economic, social and cultural inertia or even the continuity between the communist era and post-communist period would last longer than had been expected. In an essay published in 1996, I suggested that this period would be as long as the previous era, i.e., forty years (Skalník 1996). Despite this gloomy prediction, the attempts to establish socio-cultural anthropology were launched immediately after the regime change (Skalník 2002). The fact that even after a full 30 years a question mark hangs over its existence is shocking. What and who has caused sociocultural anthropology still to be a marginal discipline in free Czechia? Was Václav Hubinger (1992a) right when he wrote on the eve of the 2nd biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) held in Prague in August 1992 that the explanation for why we (i.e., Czechoslovaks) have no social anthropology is the existence of *národopis* (nationography³)?

The present article⁴ has emerged from discussions of papers at Dubrovnik in 2016. Panel 352 at the Inter-congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, convened by the present writer, was entitled

³ “Nationography” is my neologism which literally translates *národopis*. Historically *národopis/lidopis* has been equivalent of the German term *Volkskunde*. During the communist era *národopis* was often used as a synonym of *et/h/nografie* or *etnografie a folkloristika*. After 1989 *národopis* was sometimes translated as *ethnology*, see Česká národopisná společnost/Czech ethnological society/Société ethnologique tchèque at <https://ich.unesco.org/en-state/czechia-CZ?info=accredited-ngos#ngo-00654>.

⁴ An earlier version with a broader European scope was published as an entry in the International Encyclopedia of Anthropology (Skalník 2018). I thank Jakub Grygar for his criticism of this encyclopaedic entry. Han Vermeulen copy-edited and commented on the text. I am grateful to Zbyněk Andrš, Nikola Balaš, Vesna Godina, Ulf Hannerz, Marek Jakoubek, Adam Kuper, Tim Quinlan, Jaroslav Skupnik and Zdeněk Uherek for their comments. I also thank three anonymous reviewers for their detailed inputs. The responsibility for the article remains exclusively mine.

“Anthropologies and ethnologies in post-communist Europe: Paradigm shift or hoax?”⁵ The description of the panel, written by me as convenor, opened with these words:

“What has really happened in ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology during the last 25 years since the fall of communism/socialism? Why do Western anthropologies not take seriously their post-communist equivalents? Why do post-communist anthropologies not develop innovative methods and research initiatives?”

In other words, I was puzzled by the apparent impotence of post-communist anthropology to get rid of residues of the descriptive positivism of so-called *Heimatkunde*,⁶ now called ethnology. I further asserted that “in most European post-communist countries the descriptive study of local folk cultures was well developed without much contact with theoretical developments due to colonial and post-colonial research outside Europe.”

So, I contrasted the theory that Western socio-cultural anthropology developed from fieldwork-based analyses of the “Other,” mostly non-capitalist societies of Africa, the Americas and Australasia, with the inward-looking study of home folkways which had a long tradition in Europe. What fascinated me was the contrast between the apparent adoption of liberal democratic politics in Eastern Europe and the very weak beginnings of a critical comparative knowledge production common in sociocultural anthropology in western liberal democracies but lacking in Eastern Europe. I wondered whether this was caused by the inability of seeing one’s society from a distance or just by inherent conservatism typical of a society which historically makes no radical decisions. Or was it simply lack of courage on the part of those who wanted to bring about fundamental change but wanted to make it without “pain”?

Thus, the purpose of the Dubrovnik panel and this article has been to determine whether a real paradigm shift happened during the three decennia since the fall of communist regimes or rather the world was played a trick on ... In other words, is it “*Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*”? Was there an irreversible move from which there is no return? Was a transition accomplished

⁵ At the 17th World Congress of Anthropology held in Florianopolis, Brazil, in 2018, I co-organized a panel „Can we speak of scientific progress in anthropology?“ and presented the paper „The Czech case: skirmishes between sociocultural anthropology and *národopis*.“

⁶ “*Heimatkunde*”, in *Czech vlastivěda*, is perhaps a broader expression than *národopis*/nationography but often these terms are mutually substitutable.

from historical orientation towards social science? I was also wondering whether the terminological transition from nationgraphy/ethnography to ethnology was justified or not. “Is the widespread combination of ethnology and cultural anthropology in the names of departments in Eastern Europe genuine? Why has no independent department or institute for social anthropology emerged for such a long time in ex-communist parts of Europe?⁷ Is ethnology coterminous with social and cultural anthropology in eastern European usage? What is meant by this term “ethnology”?

The essays published in this special issue of *Cargo* try to answer these questions. The reader can judge how successful we have been querying this goal.

The Czechoslovak (and thereby Czech) case is fascinating because by 1990 there was hardly any tradition of non-European research and no sociocultural anthropology to speak of. The pioneers of the 1960s, namely Ladislav Holý and Milan Stuchlík, did not return to Czechoslovakia from their stints abroad.⁸ Still, in 1993 Václav Hubinger, one of the Czech pioneers of social anthropology, when reporting for the nationgraphic journal *Český lid* (Czech people) about the 2nd conference of the EASA which met in Prague largely thanks to his initiative, wrote about “mythical ‘social anthropology’” (Hubinger 1993: 336) and that “social anthropology is no spectre nor a discipline dealing exclusively with ‘exotic’ cultures” (ibid. p. 338). He wrote this from the position of “our discipline (náš obor)” (ibid.) meaning, of course, nationgraphy or ethnography in the sense of folklore studies. Hubinger then exhorted his readers “not to fear and offer professionally what we have” (ibid.). Did he then still believe in the potential of the discipline from which he came? Along with Hubinger, Juraj Podoba, a future pioneer of social anthropology in his native Slovakia, also came to Coimbra, for the 1st EASA conference. At the time a research fellow in the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Podoba expressed his surprise at “essential disparities between Anglo-Saxon or Western social (and cultural) anthropology and East-Central European ethnography (etnografia, národopis, néprajz) ... and the nature of that first encounter was a kind of cultural shock. I unexpectedly found myself face to face with an advanced, modern social science”

⁷ Somewhat exceptional was the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, East Germany, where the German name that was registered legally in 1999 is Max Planck Institut für ethnologische Forschung.

⁸ Attempts to establish non-European ethnography and social anthropology in Czechoslovakia were buried after the departure in 1968 of Ladislav Holý for Zambia and Milan Stuchlík for Chile and confirmed by the dissolution of a special non-European department by Antonín Robek soon after he assumed directorship of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1972.

(Podoba 2007: 28). Podoba's account is very frank. "I experienced the biggest cultural shock later when I spent a long time at the universities in Zurich and Cambridge...It was a confrontation between the archaic, pre-scientific, descriptive field of ethnography, with no theory or methodology of its own...and a modern, theoretically and methodologically elaborated social science that endeavours to reflect on a broad and diverse array of fundamental issues in the sphere of social and cultural development, and to do so in literally a global comparative context" (Podoba 2007a: 29; see also Podoba 2007b).

For obvious reasons, socio-cultural anthropologists had to be recruited from among ethnographers or nationographers who were not satisfied by the arid "národopis" (ironically meaning a mere description of the nation instead of a science of nation) and physical anthropologists as well as theorists of culture (culturalogists). In effect, people reared in a humanity discipline would be required, by joining socio-cultural anthropology as a social science, to commit theoretical and methodological suicide. If these recruits would succeed in institutionalizing the new discipline, they and their students would become the true founders of socio-cultural anthropology in the Czech Republic.

Structural constraints

A digression is needed here. Several historical and other circumstances were framing the potential for socio-cultural anthropology in post-communist Czechia. How to explain that social and cultural anthropology was an anathema for Czech nationographers/ethnographers? I believe that there were several structural impediments. The following several clusters of facts determined the absence of socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia (and other post-communist countries).

The first limitation is terminological. Even today if one mentions "anthropology" or introduces her/him/self as "I am an anthropologist," the average Czech interlocutor understands that you are talking about biological or physical anthropology. Such is the historically evolved folk model of the term, in Germany and Russia as well. Therefore, it is no surprise that "sociocultural anthropology" is missing from the vocabulary. This understanding of the word "anthropology" is quite widespread on the European continent. In the USA, anthropology includes both biological and sociocultural anthropology, even archaeology and linguistics. Only slowly is the Czech public becoming accustomed to the terms "social anthropology," "cultural anthropology" and "sociocultural anthropology." At the same time, a hybrid concept of anthropology is expressed in the phrase "general anthropology" or just "anthropology" which in both cases includes all

four types of anthropology. In some cases, the term “anthropology” may even include philosophical anthropology, psychological anthropology, ethnology or even pure philosophy. This confusion contributes to the problematic status of an academic discipline that is at the same time a natural and a social science, nay humanity. Therefore, to understand sociocultural anthropology as strictly a social science would strengthen its position both among sciences and in the public’s eye.

Another limitation is German cultural influence on the Czech academic milieu. It is reflected in the whole organisation of scientific life. The German academic tradition is highly hierarchical. From the Middle Ages, academics have been divided into professors, docents (readers, associate professors) and masters/assistants. To climb in this hierarchy is very tedious and dependent on various extra-academic conditions. First, a master will have to attain a doctorate. But that is not enough. Especially the transition from an assistant or specialised assistant to the “docentura” (docentship) is crucial for one’s career. This process is called “habilitation.” Most doctors never make it through to the benchmark of docentship. Only docents and professors are considered the true teachers at institutions of higher learning. Yet in practice lesser paid assistants and specialised assistants do the bulk of the teaching. The secret why they do not reach the benchmark is that they are too busy teaching and are unable to produce those scholarly works that are the main criteria in the habilitation. Once a person manages to publish several articles or chapters in prestigious media, he or she may dare to become a candidate for habilitation through submitting a special thesis (*habilitační práce*) that is assessed by a special ad hoc habilitation committee composed only by docents and professors. If approved, the candidate is invited to pronounce her/his habilitation lecture whereupon the scientific council of the entire faculty votes in secret ballot whether or not the docent title can be conferred to the candidate. The members of this council may not know the candidate or have no idea about her or his academic specialisation. The next stage of becoming a professor is by appointment. This means that within the faculty a consensus has to be reached that a particular docent is worthy of a nomination. If the candidate is approved by the faculty’s scientific council and the university’s scientific council the nomination to a professorship is sent to the President of the Czech Republic for approval. Although this feudal-type privilege should be a formality, the President may delay or even try not to approve the nomination.

Nationalism is another serious hindrance to making sociocultural anthropology less acceptable in post-communist Czechia. Whereas sociocultural anthropology studies comparatively all societies of all times, the Czech tradition of studying one’s own nation or people (or related nations, i.e., Slavic) has

dominated the academic scene during the modern era⁹. In this case, too, the German inspiration was strong: the division into *Volkskunde*/Ethnographie and *Völkerkunde*/Ethnologie reflects itself analogically in Czechia and other post-communist countries. The Czech forms of self-study have predominantly been concerned with the rural folk (in fact, well-to-do peasants) and the discipline was largely descriptive. Therefore, we encounter studies related to “*vlastivěda*” (literal science of mother/ fatherland, German *Heimatkunde*), “*národopis*” (description of [own] nation) or “*lidopis*” (description of the folk), even “*lidozpyt*” (science of the folk). Often the study of [one’s own] folklore is included. The scientific quality of writing was lowered by self-celebratory homeland tones. In the English-speaking literature, the practitioners of these inward-looking disciplines are called “native ethnographers” (Hofer 1968) or even “ethno-anthropologists” (Rihtman-Auguštin 1997; Buchowski and Cervinkova 2015; Buchowski 2017: 40). Historically, nationalist forms of self-study contributed to political conscientisation, identity building or nation-building, eventually leading to the political independence of Czechoslovakia, since 1993 of Slovakia and Czechia (as well a host of other nation-states in Europe and to some extent also the non-European world). The comparative and analytic dimensions of this branch of knowledge are hardly discernible. Some researchers perform the study of the “internal other,” such as exoticized minorities like the Roma (formerly known as Gypsies). Native ethnographers also show interest in national diasporas, such as Czechs in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, USA, even in far-away countries such as Namibia (Mildnerová 2018, 2020). Since 1893 they have their own scholarly society, now called the “*Česká národopisná společnost*” (for translations see note 3). Under communism, nationalistic self-study (nationography) almost had a monopoly. The study of “foreign nations” (*cizokrajný národopis, obecná etnografie*) was quite marginal. After the demise of communism, some nationographers tended to embrace social and cultural anthropology, many not whole-heartedly. The majority, however, embraced the name ethnologists (under communist rule, the denomination “ethnology” was officially considered a bourgeois pseudoscience).

The dependency path of communism is another obstacle in the way of sociocultural anthropology. The communist rule in Czechoslovakia (1948–1989) marked by the hegemony of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia determined the fate of nationography and socio-cultural anthropology. The latter was seen as a direct competitor to Marxism and therefore suppressed while the former was considered a historical discipline, in fact, an auxiliary to Marxist-Leninist historical

⁹ Most contributions of this kind can be found in the pages of *Český lid*, the main journal of Czech nationographers.

materialism. What was most important was to reconstruct the origins of human society, private property and the state, following Engels' classical compilation. The Soviet preoccupation was decisive also for Czech nationographers who now studied the working class, starting with miners, which substituted the traditional study of peasants. However, it was again historical reconstruction writing. Practically no substantial study of contemporary "socialist" society was undertaken. Attempts to introduce Soviet-style ethnography as the study of the peoples of the world (comparable to German *Völkerkunde*) were not successful either. Although in the communist era departments were renamed into those of "ethnography and folklore," nationography continued to dominate. A later Soviet reorientation towards the study of ethnoses was echoed in late-communist Czechia by research on ethnicity and "ethnic theory," which Hubinger (2015: 70), with the benefit of hindsight, considers as rudimentary anthropological. As late as 1991, articles appeared in *Český lid* about these Soviet-induced themes (Hubinger 1988, 1990; Brouček et al. 1991). The heritage of communist rule is active until the present day (Summer 2020).

Perhaps the last but very important impediment is the lack of discussions. One of the young students who spent a semester or more at a university in Britain, Nikola Balaš, in an early article contrasted the academic style in his home university in Czechia with a British university (Balaš 2014). He clearly stated that "the parochialism of Czech anthropology is also caused by the structure, form and content of contemporary curricula in sociocultural anthropology" (Balaš 2014: 76) and that the "educational practice I encountered in England was a far cry from Czech practice. The cultural shock I suffered in England made me ponder the nature of the two systems" (Ibid. p. 81). The most important deficiencies were little time for library study, no fieldwork, too many courses which amount to the "German idea of *Bildung*," no learning how to write, not enough knowledge of English (Ibid. p. 85). Balaš concluded his intriguing article by arguing that if we look for causes for the limited nature of Czech anthropology "we cannot get far with historical explanations" (Ibid. p. 87). I would tend to agree with him if I were not aware of how much the inertia of the past is alive. Balaš developed his criticism of Czech anthropology in another article four years later, admitting that there is a strong line of descent between nationography/ethnography towards sociocultural anthropology, at least in its Czech brand. At the same time, he stressed that Western anthropology is characterized by its contentiousness. Balaš painstakingly showed that the Czech journal *Český lid* did not exemplify any trace of contention. The lack of fundamental discussions goes hand in hand with the lack of theory. After 1990 some young authors who studied and even published in the late 1980s presented interesting articles after their stints abroad. However,

“[T]hose ethnographers [now calling themselves ethnologists, PS] in the Ethnography Department who began their careers during Robek’s era still made up the majority of the department’s staff until a few years ago. They were thus in a key position from which to reproduce their academic habitus. Whereas curricula changed quickly in the early 1990s and students could freshly pursue anthropological knowledge, their education was carried out mostly by academics whose habitus was unaccustomed to practices that promote a contentious style and extensive writing” (Balaš 2018: 363).

In conclusion, Balaš (2018: 364) wrote: “Anthropology as knowledge was accepted quickly, but the same cannot be said of anthropology as a scholarly practice.”

First steps

When the present writer first revisited Czechoslovakia in December 1989/January 1990 and after his return from exile while working at the Institute of Near East, India and Africa of Charles University in Prague (1990–1992, 1997–1999), he proposed to establish social anthropology as a separate study subject in the Faculty of Philosophy. This initiative received backing of Josef Kandert (born 1943), then curator of African collections at the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, and Josef Wolf (1927–2012), the physical anthropologist cum sociocultural anthropologist. This attempt was not successful as František Vrhel, the freshly elected head of the Department of Ethnography and Folklore, vehemently opposed this proposal. He did arrange that this department was renamed in 1991 to become the Department of Ethnology, later the Institute of Ethnology, but it showed only marginal interest in non-European ethnology.¹⁰

¹⁰ The largely unexpected fall of communist rule and the arrival of post-communism prompted society-wide criticism of the communist past but this criticism was never thorough and was sometimes inaccurate. It was often uncritically positive about the period of the interwar Republic of Czechoslovakia (1918–1939). These same deficiencies can be detected also in academic disciplines including the social sciences. *Národopis*/ethnography/ethnology was also subjected to a sort of audit or scrutiny. Almost immediately after the fall of the communist rule the then *Národopisná společnost československá* (Czechoslovak Nationographic Society) nominated two of its members to evaluate of the communist period but their report did not go into crucial details. The critical article by David Scheffel and Josef Kandert published in the U.S. in 1994 remained practically unknown at home because of its inaccessibility (both of the language and the journal as such). When the present author translated it into Czech and it was eventually published in 2002 (Scheffel and Kandert 1994, 2002, cf. Kandert 2002), it met with disagreement and even rejection by most of those who joined

However, in 1990 a separate Faculty of Social Sciences was re-established at Charles University as a remedy of the restrictive past. Social anthropology lectures were introduced in this new faculty in 1992 and one full-time position for a social anthropologist was created in the Department of Sociology. The present author won the competition for this post but suggested it to be divided into two halves, one for him and the other for Josef Kandert. While the present writer assumed the position of Czechoslovak and later Czech ambassador to Lebanon in 1992–1997, Kandert continued to work there, eventually in a full-time position, until his retirement in the 2010s.

Still, there was no real institutional base on which social anthropology could evolve. A small light appeared on the horizon when Prague became one of the three podiums of the Central European University (CEU), financed by the Open Society Foundation of the philanthropist George Soros. Ernest Gellner joined that university in 1993 upon his retirement from Cambridge where he had been William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology. In Prague, Gellner became the head of the newly founded Centre for the Study of Nationalism. Gellner's coming to Prague was important for several adepts of social anthropology, among them Zdeněk Uherek and Radan Haluzík, who attended lectures and seminars that took place at this Centre. Gellner's untimely death in 1995 was a blow to the fledgling socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia. The Centre was dissolved and CEU retreated to Budapest and Warsaw. In 1993 Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* was translated into Czech.

During the 1990s a group of students and graduates from the Department of Ethnography and Folklore/Ethnology showed a keen interest in social and cultural anthropology, eventually launching their journal *Cargo: Journal of Cultural/Social Anthropology* in 1998.¹¹ The “Cargonauts,” as I called them at the time, have played an important role in establishing socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia. Some of them joined the EASA and attended international conferences. Along with several senior colleagues, they were instrumental in founding the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA) in 2008. I shall return to CASA later in this article.

the discussion (“missed opportunity,” “failed attempt” “anachronistic error” “lampoon” “belated uselessness,” etc.). The present author had pointed out in the notes of the translator, and in a special four-page commentary, that the article contained inaccuracies and misplaced generalizations; see Holubová et al. 2002: 213–270).

¹¹ At first, *Cargo - Journal for Cultural/Social Anthropology* published in Czech, Slovak and English was a journal of dissident students at the Institute of Ethnology, Charles University of Prague, which appeared in ten separate printed issues until 2003. As such *Cargo* was listed in the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH). Then there was a break until 2009 when a sequel “swansong” issue appeared. From 2010 on the journal was adopted by the newly formed Czech Association for Social Anthropology and has since (except for volume 11 for 2013) been printed biannually in single issues. *Cargo* is listed in the ERIH/NAT.

The formation of the Institute of Fundamentals of Learning (*Institut základů vzdělanosti*, IZV) that substituted the abolished Institute of Marxism-Leninism of Charles University was significant for socio-cultural anthropology. In 1993, the IZV launched an M.A. course called “Integral Study of Man” which was later expanded with “General Anthropology” (Integrální studium člověka; Obecná antropologie). As the IZV had no right to confer degrees it was the restored Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University that helped out for some years only to withdraw from this function when it appeared that there were some irregularities. The Faculty of Science took over the task of conferring degrees to IZV graduates until a new university faculty, the Faculty of Humanities (FHS), was formed in 2000. Mirjam Moravcová (born 1931), originally a Slavic ethnographer, has been the *spiritus movens* of the IZV and despite her advanced age she continues to give support to the FHS.

Another attempt to create a base for social anthropology was the launch of monthly Gellner Seminars by the sociologist Jiří Musil and the present writer in 1998. Both founders were friends of the late Ernest Gellner. The seminars, given by local Czech and foreign anthropologists and sociologists passing through Prague, became the main activity of the newly founded Section of Social Anthropology within the Masaryk Czech Sociological Association. The Gellner Seminars still meet today, now convened by the Czech Association for Social Anthropology in cooperation with the French Centre for Research in Social Sciences in Prague. Almost 190 seminars have taken place up to now.

Meanwhile, in 1999, the 4th International Anthropological Congress of Aleš Hrdlička took place in Prague and Humpolec, Hrdlička’s birthplace. Although until then a domain of physical anthropologists, this decennial event included a panel on “Social and cultural anthropology” for the first time. In the Preface to the edited volume resulting from this panel, I wrote the following: “Painstaking search for truth by way of extensive fieldwork was an anathema for the theologians of ‘historical materialism’ and ‘scientific communism’. Thus, it is quite symbolic that when the yoke of communism has been removed, sociocultural anthropology was put on the programme of the 4th Hrdlička congress” (Skalník 2000: ix). Among the authors contributing essays was Zdeněk Uherek.

The University of Western Bohemia, based in the beer city of Pilsen, was the first in Czechia to obtain an accreditation for teaching “cultural anthropology” at the B.A. level in 1998. This accreditation¹² was within the study programme of the humanities. It was expanded to the M.A. level in 2001. However, the Pilsen Faculty

¹² The Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education, since 2016 the National Accreditation Office, approves which subjects will be broadly taught at what schools.

of Philosophy requested the right to award PhDs in ethnology and not in cultural anthropology because the “humanities” would not allow that. Ethnology was officially listed among the historical disciplines, while the sociology programme allowed for social anthropology. Jitka Kotalová, a doctor in social anthropology (fieldwork in Bangladesh) from the University of Stockholm, was the mainstay of this department for more than a decade. Over the years the Pilsen department went through several metamorphoses. Originally, when it started its first bachelor programme, its name was the Department of Cultural Anthropology. Now it is called Department of Anthropology but until recently it was known as Department of Anthropological and Historical Sciences. Its founder, Ivo Budil, had studied in the Department of [physical] Anthropology of the Faculty of Science at Charles University until 1990. Afterwards, he defended a PhD in the Department of the Theory of Culture and published his first textbook of cultural anthropology (Budil 1992). Subsequently, he moved to Pilsen, soon became the dean of the Faculty of the Humanities and obtained the *habilitation* [docentship] in sociology for his book *Za obzor Západu* [Beyond the Horizon of the West]. This volume (Budil 2001) is a broadly conceived (pre-)history of anthropology up until the late 19th century but was later found to be deficient in references and suspected of plagiarism. The Budil scandal (Skalník 2007, 2018) tarnished social and cultural anthropology in the Czech Republic quite considerably and other disciplines such as sociology or historiography have been looking at it with suspicion for a while. The Pilsen department has been known for its iconoclastic approach to studies of the Romanies (Romové, Cikáni). The team was led by Marek Jakoubek, who did his fieldwork in eastern Slovakia. I shall dwell on the resulting controversies below. While the department employed the US-trained archaeologist Daniel Sosna (now based at the Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague) for years, another of its graduates, David Henig, took his PhD at Durham and accepted a teaching appointment in Kent (recently he moved to the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands). Since 2012, the department has been headed by Petr Lozoviuk, a staunch *Volkskunde*-type ethnologist interested, among others, in the influence of German *Volkskunde* in the Czech lands.

The only department in the Czech Republic that began to teach social anthropology as its main specialization was the Department of Social Sciences (since 2018, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology) at the University of Pardubice in East Bohemia. Established in 2001, this department was quite dynamic during the first years of its existence. Its first head was the folklorist Bohuslav Šalanda, who recruited several people claiming to practice social anthropology: Petr Skalník, Livia Šavelková, Tereza Hyánková and Tomáš Boukal, who were later joined by Tomáš Samek and Hana Synková. The department also includes the Romany

specialists Zbyněk Andrš and Lada Viková as well as the visual anthropologist and filmmaker Tomáš Petrář. Most of the members graduated from the Department of Ethnology of Charles University but Samek also studied anthropology in the USA and France, whereas Skalník's degrees were from Leningrad State University, Charles University and the University of Cape Town. Emphasizing the sine qua non of fieldwork, the department received an M.A. accreditation in Social Anthropology in 2004 but efforts to start a PhD program were systematically thwarted by a lack of support on the faculty leadership level. A docent from Prague's ethnology, Oldřich Kašpar, a historian of Latin America, joined the department in 2007 to be followed by Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, a specialist in economic anthropology, who took her PhD from the London School of Economics (as a student of Ernest Gellner) and habilitated in Germany in 2009. However, Šalanda left in 2005 and Skalník followed him in 2010. From 2015 on the new head of the department has been Adam Horálek, a young dynamic specialist on ethnicity in East Asia. He appointed Tomáš Retka, a graduate of Pardubice anthropology and a specialist on the mountaineers of Tajikistan, to an assistant lectureship. Retka recently took his PhD from the Faculty of the Humanities at Charles University.

Efforts to introduce the teaching of social anthropology at the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University of Brno succeeded in 2005. Social anthropology has accreditation for a Bc. degree. For a while, Jakub Grygar commuted to Brno to strengthen social anthropology there.

As mentioned, Josef Kandert, one of the pioneers of social anthropology and a disciple of Ladislav Holý, had become a staff member at the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in 1992. Gradually strengthening his position, Kandert became head of the department and eventually managed to accredit social anthropology as a separate Bc. subject in 2011. But this accreditation was discontinued after a few years in connection with the retirement of its founder. At present, social anthropology is being taught as one of the sociological specialisations on the bachelor's and master's levels.¹³

The Department of Sociology, Andragogy and Cultural Anthropology in the Faculty of Philosophy of Palacký University in Olomouc added "cultural anthropology" as the last ingredient of this hybrid department. Martin Soukup, a prolific writer on field ethnography and of anthropological textbooks, joined the department in 2014. Thanks to his scholarly reputation "cultural anthropology" recently received the accreditation to confer bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. However, Soukup left the department in 2019 and the "guarantor" of the doctoral programme became Hana Horáková, habilitated in 2011.

¹³ I am grateful to Zdeněk Uherek for this up-to-date information.

Debates

While during the communist era debates, discussions and disputations were extremely rare or practically non-existent, the onset of post-communism brought about an exchange between Ladislav Holý and Václav Hubinger. Holý came to Prague with a British research grant to carry out a study of Czech political culture in the wake of the demise of communist rule (Holý 1996). He gave a talk about “Freedom, nation and the individual in Czech culture.” to his former institute at the academy. Its reception was mixed. The lecture was published in *Český lid/ Národopisný časopis*. Holý argued that protests during the final stage of communism were symbolic, not very concrete. He saw in them nationalist expressions putting the nation up against the state. The individual is constructed as part of the nation. Nation and state must be in cultural accord. The Czechoslovak crisis was a crisis of the symbolic order, in other words, culture. Hubinger wrote a long critique to which Holý rejoined (Holý 1991, 1992; Hubinger 1992). Hubinger’s reaction was well measured, not emotional. He believed that Holý did not analyse empirical facts but rather his idea of the Czech nation, about Czechness and the relation between the nation and the state as reflected in some cultural facts. In his rejoinder, Holý defended his interpretation because an “anthropologist does not do anything else than interpreting interpretations of others” (Holý 1992: 265). Rejecting the existence of reality other than culturally constructed, he asserted that the “whole Czech culture is aimed at the systematic devaluation of individualism” and “intolerance toward whatever deviation from the collective norm is striking” (Ibid. p. 268).

In 2004 the “ethnological” journal *Český lid* published a polemical article by Zdeněk Nešpor and Marek Jakoubek, then two young Turks, with the title “What is cultural/social anthropology and what it is not” (Nešpor and Jakoubek 2004). Nešpor (born 1976) studied general anthropology (Mgr. 2001),¹⁴ while Jakoubek (born 1975) studied at the Institute of Fundamentals of Knowledge and took his Mgr. in General Anthropology in 1999. They were working on their PhDs at the moment of the publication of the article. It was meant to be polemical and several people commented on it in subsequent issues. The gist of the article was that sociocultural anthropology has little in common with *národopis/ethnology*. The authors criticised the fact that sociocultural anthropology was adopted by

¹⁴ Although Nešpor became docent in cultural and social anthropology in 2009 and (thus far the only) professor in the same subject in 2017, his interest in sociocultural anthropology is marginal. He specialises in religious studies and also took a PhD. in history. He teaches at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University and researches at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

many as a term without really grasping what this discipline aimed at and what a sociocultural anthropologist does. “It is a question what fruits the graft of cultural/social anthropology gives in our meads” (Nešpor and Jakoubek 2004: 75). While sociocultural anthropology only slowly searches for its niche, the authors suggest that its research field should be mainly aimed at Czechia and the linguistically related regions to the east and southeast (Ibid. p. 76). Jakoubek became the director of the Institute of Ethnology at Charles University ten years later, in 2014, when he started to reorganise this major institution by “anthropologizing” it (Jakoubek 2014).

Several authors responded to the article. For example, Jiří Woitsch (2004) more or less agreed even though he did not and does not consider himself a sociocultural anthropologist. The present writer was not sure about the sense of the article in a situation in which socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia did not exist as a discipline (Skalník 2004). Finally, Václav Hubinger wrote in a stylistically elegant article that he did not see much difference between sociocultural anthropology and ethnology/ethnography (Hubinger 2005). This would not be that objectionable if by ethnology was meant what in German-speaking countries is meant by *Völkerkunde/Ethnologie* and in France *ethnologie*. However, the meanings in these countries have nothing to do with “ethnology” in Czechia where, after 1990, *národopis/etnografie* was renamed *etnologie* without a real paradigmatic shift.

The next discussion was called forth by a text written by Chris Hann, one of the directors of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany. Supported by prolonged field experience in Hungary and Poland and a lifetime of monitoring of the communist and post-communist societies of Eurasia, Hann suggested that the native ethnography as had been practised in Central-East Europe should merge or combine with social anthropology as practised in the West. The article was published with quite a few responses, simultaneously in English and Czech (Hann et al. 2007; Hann 2007). The Czech version of the discussion was entitled “Social Anthropology and *Národopis* (i.e., nationgraphy): Partners or Rivals?” Most participants in the discussion rejected or were sceptical of Hann’s idea. Only Zdeněk Uherek, along with the Polish colleague Michał Buchowski, showed sympathy to Hann’s idea. However, Uherek asserted that in the Czech Republic the traditional nationgraphers (*národopisci*) after the communist takeover had been diminished in both numbers and importance and were substituted by an “emerging generation of ethnographers and folklorists” who instead of Marxism applied evolutionist approaches to the study of workers, industrial society and urban culture (Uherek 2007: 200). Unfortunately, as to the postcommunist period, Uherek did not comment on the almost instant

transformation of ethnography and folklore into “ethnology”. Instead, he mocked - without any references - the “first generation of ethnographers to emerge after 1989 who were already calling themselves social and cultural anthropologists” (whom did he mean, really?!) and confused village life nationgraphers with ethnographers of the communist era. According to Uherek the freshly emerged sociocultural anthropologists very conveniently criticised nationgraphers because these were no longer around and could not defend themselves. “A ‘mob’ of irate social anthropologists enthusiastically exorcised a non-existent opponent, celebrated their victory, and were able to blame the damaging influence of ethnographers as responsible for their failures. This was a secure and almost touchingly childish game” (Uherek 2007: 201; Uherek in Hann 2007b: 47). By the end of the century, this situation had begun to change when the new generation established systematic contact with world anthropology.

Chris Hann responded to Uherek and Skalník by admitting that the symbiosis of native ethnography and social anthropology was highly problematic (Hann 2007b: 55). This was corroborated by Katherine Verdery, a leading American specialist on the anthropology of East-Central Europe, who wrote:

“Peter Skalník’s edited book *The Struggles for Sociocultural Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe* (2002) offers unexpected insights. These contributors (all from CEE) tell us that Franglus anthropologists are not trying to impose their anthropology on CEE: rather, the impetus comes from CEE scholars trying to import it. According to these papers, the postsocialist era offers an opportunity for would-be anthropologists in CEE to achieve upward mobility and to gain access to western benefits such as grants, trips abroad, etc., by building up western-style anthropology as a symbol of ‘democratization.’...Traditional ethnographers, however, have resisted this move: nearly all the papers in Skalník’s book complain how difficult it is to institutionalize Franglus anthropology and create jobs in it, against the opposition of already-entrenched native ethnographers. Skalník’s report of his futile efforts to build Franglus anthropology in the Czech and Slovak republics is particularly revealing (Verdery in Hann 2007b: 49-50).”¹⁵

The ensuing discussions were diatribes rather than anything else. Jakoubek, for many an *enfant terrible*, excelled in it. He engaged in an exchange of unflattering labels with Jaroslav Skupnik, who pointed out that Budilová and Jakoubek’s study of Romany kinship lacks coherence (Budilová, Jakoubek 2007; Skupnik

¹⁵ Franglus is Verdery’s term for a combination of French, English and American languages.

2009; cf. Budilová and Jakoubek 2019). Later Jakoubek got into a polemic with the foremost ethnologist Jiří Woitsch (Woitsch 2011). The substance was a rather fundamentalist exchange about the differences between ethnography/národopis and anthropology (= sociocultural anthropology). While Jakoubek charged that ethnography is not a science, Woitsch rather cynically countercharged that ethnography can get more research funding, because the gatekeepers who approve funding are “owners of a nice countryside cottage and costume after their great grandmother” (Woitsch 2011: 509). Woitsch wondered whether Jakoubek, whom he considered a practitioner of true anthropology, wanted to join “the sectarians for whom národopis is the most terrible nightmare (Skalník 2002)?” (Ibid. p. 508). It seems that the stone of contention was the meaning of the term ethnography. While in anthropology ethnography is both the product and process of an anthropologist’s work not only in the field but also when writing it up,¹⁶ ethnography in Czech národopis/ethnography denotes a specialist historical science. This fundamental difference was evident to Jakoubek (cf. Jakoubek 2017) but not to the entire Czech guild of practitioners of národopis/ethnography/“ethnology.”

Marek Jakoubek is, however, better known to the Czech audience for his research on the culture of the “Roma” or “Romanies” and the polemics around them. First of all, he denied that Romanies were an ethnic unit or nation. Distinguishing three types of Roma culture, namely (1) traditional Roma culture of rural settlements which is based on kinship/joint family, (2) national Roma culture which is a consciously built entity, and finally (3) a culture of poverty, emerging in urban ghettos, Jakoubek dismissed the Romist¹⁷ establishment for not knowing what the (anthropological concept of) culture is and believing in the blood/racial unity of the Roma (Jakoubek 2005: 227–234; cf. Jakoubek and Poduška 2003; Jakoubek 2004, 2006; Svoboda 2006; Pivoň 2018). This set of viewpoints has put him in conflict with those Romists and the educated Roma who consider the Roma an ethnic group or minority based on origin and physical characteristics.¹⁸ The study of Roma culture and society attracted many adepts of sociocultural anthropology in Czechia, who travelled to Slovakia in search of the colonial Other, but often avoided the most burning issues. For example. the

¹⁶ “If ethnographies can be seen as the building blocks and testing grounds of anthropological theory, ethnographies and the ethnographic process from which they derive are also shaped and moulded by theory” (Sanjek 1996).

¹⁷ Romists are usually non-Roma specialists on the Roma language, folklore and “culture” who are often also engaged in activism in favour of emancipation of the Roma people.

¹⁸ After the fall of communism, the Roma (Romové) have been classified by the Czech state as an ethnic minority along with Slovaks, Poles, and Germans living in Czechia.

Czech-born Canadian anthropologist David Zdeněk Scheffel, who helped Czech anthropologists to enter the Slovak Roma field, after many years in the field (Scheffel 2005) was detained in November 2017 and since then kept in Prešov prison, awaiting the result of his appeal against a judgment of 7 years of imprisonment¹⁹, in fact for his detailed research on juvenile prostitution among the Roma of eastern Slovakia. He is bitter about the fact that “Slovak-Czech anthropology after thirty years of scholarly freedom did not show interest in a real analysis of the ‘culture of settlements’ – which in Slovakia number almost 1000, from which at least 300 belong to the ‘socially excluded’ – where I did my research, is scandalous” (Scheffel to Skalník, 28 March 2020). Scheffel admits that there are a few exceptions but the “crushing majority of anthropological research...continues in the tradition of socialist aim at ‘integration’ or assimilation. Settlements are considered a transient phenomenon – similarly to Indian reserves, studied up to the 1960s – opposed to the merger of the minority with the rest of society” (Ibid). The debate about Roma research is expected to continue in the framework of ethnic workshops organized by CASA.

In 2016 an artfully argued paper by Jakoubek was published in *Anthropological Notebooks*, an influential Slovenian journal published exclusively in English. Presenting the positivist historical method of nationgraphy/ethnology, he contrasted it with the anthropological method of constructivism. According to the latter, the formerly exiled Czechs of St. Helena/Voyvodovo’s belief in their origin in the wake of the battle on White Mountain (1620) is culturally valid even though it may not be true historically (Jakoubek 2016a). The earlier 2012 Czech version (Jakoubek 2012) of the article was criticised by Nikola Balaš who found it too rigid because his (and Nešpor’s) concept of sociocultural anthropology is too narrow for the “proclaimed interdisciplinarity, theoretical plurality and multiparadigmatic character” (Balaš 2016: 488). Was Czech sociocultural anthropology to be acceptable to all and be perceived as an eclectic hotchpotch? Balaš’s position is more careful, he is in favour of a “relative opening of anthropology to interesting questions and various sophisticated approaches” (Balaš 2016: 489). The question, however, remains whether this can be achieved without clarity about the subject matter of the discipline.

¹⁹ In February 2021, just before this article was copy-edited, the judgment was confirmed by the regional court. Professor Scheffel considers to lodge a special complaint to the higher Slovak or EU instance because the court accepted witnesses’ statements made without the presence of his legal representative.

Departments and institutes

As mentioned above, the Faculty of Humanities (*Fakulta humanitních studií*) took over the programme under the title of “General Anthropology – Integral Study of Man” from the all-university Institute of Fundamentals of Education. A Department of General Anthropology (*Katedra obecné antropologie*) was created in 2002 at this youngest faculty of Charles University. It seems that the interest in “general anthropology” was inspired by American four-field anthropology but today the department concentrates on teaching sociocultural anthropology as one of four specialisations. The department was initially led by Marek Halbich, an Americanist and holder of an M.A. and PhD degrees in “ethnology.” Presently the specialisation is headed by Yasar Abu-Ghosh, one of the original “Cargonauts,” who holds an M.A. in ethnology and a PhD from joint (“co-tutelle”) studies in Prague’s ethnology and Paris’ social anthropology from the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*. This department in the Faculty of Humanities opened a PhD study programme some years ago in cooperation with the Faculty of Sciences. The Faculty of Humanities, founded by Jan Sokol, an anthropologising philosopher, former political dissident and unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the republic, managed to secure accreditation for *habilitations* and nominations to the rank of professor in social and cultural anthropology in 2008. Unfortunately, almost all people thus far habilitated were not sociocultural anthropologists but persons coming from other disciplines who found it expedient for their careers to cross the threshold of habilitation in social and cultural anthropology. One professor out of four appointed within this accreditation (Z. Nešpor) has been partially working in social anthropology; the others do not. The reason for this tragicomic situation is that the view of anthropology in the faculty is too broad, reaching far beyond sociocultural anthropology. This view is also demonstrated by the trimestral review *Lidé města/Urban People* which boasts to be “the only anthropological journal published in the Czech Republic.” It covers both humanities and the social sciences, even philosophy, broadly conceived.

As mentioned above, a Bachelor study programme in social anthropology was initiated by Josef Kandert in the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. Kandert’s career is unusual because he was trained as an Africanist and ethnographer (1961–1966). Under the supervision of Holý, he carried out social anthropological fieldwork in villages of central Slovakia in the late 1960s, worked for decades as a museologist, but since 1992 combined his previous Africanist museology job in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures with a lectureship of social anthropology

in the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Basing himself on his early field research he presented an expanded text as a habilitation thesis to the Department of Political Science of his faculty in the mid-1990s and later published it in book form (Kandert 2004). Subsequently, he was appointed Professor of African Studies although he never joined the Institute of Near East and Africa at Charles University that proposed him for a professorship. Ironically, sadly and strangely, soon afterwards African Studies lost accreditation to teach because of the lack of habilitated personnel. Kandert's role was always limited to the Czech and Slovak scene and his work is practically unknown beyond it. One of Kandert's PhDs was Jakub Grygar, who achieved habilitation at FHS in 2016 and is currently the head of the Department of Sociology within the Institute of Sociological Studies, since 2017 directed by Zdeněk Uherek (see below).

The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (from 1999 called the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) included a division of non-European ethnography which pursued undeclared social anthropological interests (see, for example, Holý 1968). Until his departure for Zambia Ladislav Holý headed this section. As noted above, Holý temporarily returned to Czechoslovakia in 1992 to carry out anthropological research of the early post-communist period (Holy 1996). After the demise of communist rule, the institute gave some support to social anthropological research (thanks to Václav Hubinger, who became a member of the executive committee of the European Association of Social Anthropologists). During the post-communist era, the Institute's journal *Český lid* changed its subtitle five times,²⁰ published several translations of articles authored by international social anthropologists, and a few articles by Czech sociocultural anthropologists. Both the institute and the journal were firmly in the hands of *národopis*/now "ethnology" practitioners and folklorists. A change was expected when the directorship of the institute was assumed by Zdeněk Uherek who, after studying culturology, had worked at the institute in various positions since 1983. As mentioned above Uherek became acquainted with social anthropology when he collaborated with Ernest Gellner. He, however, did not carry out major changes in the institute apart from appointing Luděk Brož, a Cambridge PhD, to a leading research position, and Hana Červinková (a PhD from the New School in New York) to the editorship of *Český lid*. She introduced changes in the journal which signalled a better balance between contributions by "ethnologists" and

²⁰ 1990–1992 *Národopisný časopis*; 1993–1997 *Národopisný časopis/Ethnological Journal*; 1998–2000 *Časopis pro etnologická studia/Journal of Ethnological Studies*; 2001–2015 *Etnologický časopis/Ethnological Journal*; from 2016 on *The Czech Ethnological Journal*.

those by sociocultural anthropologists. However, Červinková²¹ left her post after a year and a half, in 2017, at the very same time as Uherek's directorship ended.²² Uherek's position has been ambivalent. While promoting social anthropology he reached the habilitation benchmark, not in social and-cultural anthropology but ethnology in 2012. In an interview, he clearly stated: "I am an advocate of the concept that social anthropology, cultural anthropology and ethnology are one discipline" (Uherek in Grygar 2014: 65). After leaving the Academy of Sciences, his docentship helped him in applying to the directorship of the Institute of Sociological Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. After ten years of Uherek's directorship (2007–2017), the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and its journal are now back to their predominantly národopis/ethnology profile with social anthropology in a marginal position. Nevertheless, social anthropologists with Western PhDs such as Luděk Brož and Daniel Sosna, employed by the Institute of Ethnology, are holders of substantial research grants without which the institute would be poorer.

It is important to mention the ambivalent position of the Institute of Ethnology in the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague. As mentioned above, this institute, called the Department of Ethnography and Folklore until 1991 and led by František Vrhel for 25 years (1989–2014), was opposed to the establishment of social or sociocultural anthropology in that faculty. This was ironic as Vrhel, originally a Romance linguist and Latin-Americanist, was well acquainted with sociocultural anthropology himself. Yet he presided over mostly very traditional senior nationographic staff. These people did not want to lose their jobs; the head of the department knew that his position would remain firm if he did not touch them. The young assistants interested in sociocultural anthropology were no threat to him. Among them, a complete "convert" to social anthropology was

²¹ From September 2019 on, Červinková has been a professor and head of the Department of Anthropology at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth, Ireland.

²² With Červinková internationally acclaimed anthropologists such as Eriksen, Hannerz and Buchowski resigned from *Český lid's* editorial board. The institute was temporarily led by a dance folklorist, Daniela Stavělová. Early in 2018, the editorial board of *Český lid* was reshuffled and most experienced colleagues were dropped from it. The present writer wrote to the acting director that "what is presented in Czechia as ethnology, does not intend to leave the scene. ... together with other colleagues in the Editorial Board I have always stood on the side of scientific progress, that is, against reactionaries, and in favour of creative cooperation with kindred disciplines...I permit myself to remark that my more than half a century experience suggests that the development of science can be hindered but not stopped. Those who retreat into the shell or even into a fortress of the narrow-mindedly defined quasi-discipline condemn themselves to self-annihilating isolation" (Skalník's email to Stavělová, 1 March 2018).

Jaroslav Skupnik. Vrhel's limited opening towards social and cultural anthropology consisted of invitations extended to foreign lecturers of Czechoslovak origin who gladly came, some of them repeatedly, to give lectures or seminars. These were Leopold Pospíšil, Zdeněk Salzmann, David Zdeněk Scheffel, Milan Stanek, and Paul Garvin. Andrew Lass, a professor of anthropology from Mount Holyoke College in the U.S.A. who had studied ethnography and folklore in Prague in the 1970s also came and lectured.²³ Africanist lectures on anthropological topics offered by the present writer in the Institute of Near East and Africa (located on the same floor as the Institute of Ethnology) were clandestinely attended by students of "ethnology" radicalized by the foreign professors. In 2013 the institute incorporated some members of the abolished Department of Cultural Theory (Culturology), among them Václav Soukup and Martin Soukup (not related). Václav Soukup is the author of the handbook *Surveys of Anthropological Theories of Culture* and a compendium on *A History of Anthropology* (V. Soukup 2000, 2004). Martin Soukup carried out extensive fieldwork in Papua New Guinea. In 2014 the institute's directorship was assumed by Marek Jakoubek, who implemented substantial personal changes. Martin Soukup left for Olomouc's cultural anthropology and Jaroslav Skupnik for Bratislava's social anthropology. Jakoubek declared that he would concentrate on the study of the Central and Southeastern Europe including the formerly Czech-speaking village of Vojvodovo located in Bulgaria (Jakoubek 2014, 2016a). Under his leadership, the institute embarked more resolutely on the study of ethnicity and other anthropological topics. The problem, however, is how to reconcile this orientation with the *národopis*/ethnology ballast inherited from the past. My position is that such a reconciliation is not only counterproductive but is a sheer impossibility. Without forwarding a change of name, I believe that one cannot do something else than advertised for too long. Sociocultural anthropology deserves full recognition by those who truly practice it.

Achievements in research

Much more could have been gained for Czech sociocultural anthropology by the opening to the West, including student exchanges and longer study sojourns at Western universities. Because in 1990 there was no sociocultural anthropology to speak of, the intrusion of "Franglus" (Verdery's neologism for French, English and

²³ Lass grew up in Prague as a son of Herbert Lass, an American, who was sent to Czechoslovakia as a director of the CARE relief organization. In 1950 Herbert Lass unexpectedly applied for Czechoslovak political asylum but was expelled from the country in 1973.

American) anthropology caused a partial shift in theoretical and methodological paradigms but the miserable financial situation of post-communist universities and academies did not allow for much non-European research. Instead, the penetration of post-communist anthropology by Western academia at best produced exoticizing Romany studies (in fact meaning colonials), at worse a mere re-chewing of Western academic fads, especially that of the postmodern kind (cf. Boukal 2018). Isolated attempts at independent developments were not successful because of inward-looking scholarly establishments which did not allow creative openings. In addition, there was of course the problem of dependency within national anthropologies/ethnologies and the unachieved transformation which created either peripheral developments or isolationist situations.

Inertia is probably the most important feature influencing the development of socio-cultural anthropology in the Czech Republic. Importantly, debates about the problems of the communist era were part and parcel of post-communist transformations. In effect, one can see the advance of socio-cultural anthropology in the region as a function of the resistance or retreat of the discipline of nation-geography and its protagonists. One important issue of the period was changing the discipline's name. The term "ethnology" was considered progressive by many practitioners of *národopis/etnografie* and thus the departments soon changed their names both at Charles University in Prague and at the Purkyně/Masaryk University in Brno from "etnografie a folkloristika" to "etnologie." The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore (*Ústav etnografie a folkloristiky*) at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic resisted the change of name until 1999 when it became the Ethnological Institute (*Etnologický ústav*). Similar name changes took place in Slovakia and other post-communist countries. For example, university departments and institutes in Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia were renamed as 'ethnology and cultural anthropology' departments. It is curious that up till now there are no departments or institutes of social anthropology, except for the institute in Bratislava and recently the department at Pardubice.

At first, it seemed that there was no place whatsoever for sociocultural anthropology in the Czech Republic. Charles University's Institute of Ethnology merely added a section of non-European ethnology as if delimiting the "proper" (very limited) space for sociocultural anthropology. The initial struggle for sociocultural anthropology in Prague is described in detail elsewhere (Skalník 2002) but it is important to note that the first two new study programs in cultural and social anthropology emerged outside Prague because the capital city proved to be quite conservative as far as non-physical anthropology was concerned. Most recently the Institute of Ethnology at Charles University returned, under the "anthropologizing" leadership of Marek Jakoubek, to the limited scope of

studies on Czech and Balkan ethnology and folklore under the study programme “ethnology and cultural anthropology”. But Jakoubek’s rich research production is much broader. Noteworthy is his study on the death of informants. Jakoubek wrote: “Here I was left hanging, 19 years later, socialized into a society that had definitely ceased to exist” (Jakoubek 2019: 214). But his original interest was in Roma studies (Jakoubek 2004, 2005, 2012, 2018b). Presently, Jakoubek’s main interests lie in ethnic theory. He composed an original reader on ethnic theories (Jakoubek 2016b) and, together with Thomas Eriksen, he brought out an important international collection of essays at the occasion of 50 years since the publication of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Eriksen and Jakoubek 2019). For example, he also analysed ethnic ‘indifferentiation’ among the Bulgarian Czechs (Jakoubek 2018a). A member of the institute is Barbora Půtová whose production is outstanding. Particularly, I would like to mention an article on post-socialism and postcolonialism (Půtová 2016) and especially a thorough monograph on the anthropology of tourism (Půtová 2019). The institute publishes the biannual journals *Studia Ethnologica Pragensia* and *The Journal of Culture* that occasionally publish contributions to sociocultural anthropology.

In the thirty post-communist years, Czech social anthropologists have produced several major monographs. Like with Kandert’s monograph mentioned above, they are all published in Czech. Among them, the most outstanding is *Antropologie příbuzenství* (Anthropology of Kinship) by Jaroslav Skupnik (2010). The author, originally a graduate and later assistant professor of Prague ethnology, spent some time at Kansas State University under the mentorship of Martin Ottenheimer, a specialist on kinship. Skupnik’s 400-page monograph did not secure his promotion in his native department, instead, his contract was terminated as a result of “reorganisations” and now he is attached to the Institute of Social Anthropology in Bratislava, Slovakia. The other successful author is Jakub Grygar, who studied social anthropology as part of sociology in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. His intensive fieldwork on the socio-economic transactions on the Polish-Belarus border led to his study *Děvušky a cigarety* [Young ladies and cigarettes] (Grygar 2016; see review by Jakoubek 2017). This monograph earned him an associate professorship and now he is the head of the department of sociology at his faculty.

It appears that the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Pardubice is very productive in research results. Tomáš Samek wrote his monograph *Tahle země je naše* [This Land is Ours] while he was an assistant professor at the Pardubice department. It is an analysis of deictic phenomena as “a single, integral symbolic-deictic field model” (Samek 2016: 213). Another member of the Pardubice department whose work was crowned by a monograph

is Tereza Hyánková, whose field is Kabyle migration to Czechia. She seeks answers to the question of migration from a politically restrictive regime (Hyánková 2015). Lívía Šavelková published two monographs on today's Haudenosaunee or Iroquois of the USA and Canada (Šavelková 2011, 2015) and also produced two films about them. Jana Jetmarová analysed indigenist politics in Bolivia with a special emphasis on the regime of Evo Morales (Jetmarová 2013). Tomáš Boukal, a specialist on Siberia and its socio-ecological problems, produced several books. His recent monograph deals with the Mansi of Western Siberia (Boukal 2018a). Finally, the present head of the Pardubice department, Adam Horálek, spent years studying Chinese nationalism and the result of his efforts is the monograph *Velký čínský národ* (Great Chinese Nation), conceived as a synthesis of Chinese teaching, Western ideology and Soviet politics (Horálek 2019, cf. Horálek 2012). Two graduates from Pardubice who went on to obtain PhDs from Prague's Charles University produced outstanding monographs: Libor Dušek studied highlanders' changing life in Afghanistan, Tadžikistan and Pakistan (2016) and Libor Čech analysed the culture of martyrdom in Iran (Čech 2016).

Zdeněk Uherek, working at Charles University since 2017, is a prolific writer on Czechs abroad and his interests also touch upon urban and migration topics (Uherek and Valášková 2006; Uherek 2009; Uherek 2011a; Uherek 2011b). Another influential anthropologist is Martin Soukup who beside publications from his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea (cf. Soukup et al. 2016) also published a book on culture as a bio-anthropological subject (Soukup 2011, cf. Horáková 2012). His is also an introduction to cultural anthropology (second edition, Soukup 2015). Recently, Soukup published a voluminous handbook *Antropologie* (Anthropology) which informs the reader about the discipline's history, schools, and personalities (Soukup 2019). Last but not least, a recently published book by Radan Haluzík, a PhD from the University College London, now a researcher at the prestigious Centre for Theoretical Studies in Prague, summarizes his long-term research on "postmodern warfare" in various parts of Europe, the Caucasus and elsewhere in the world (Haluzík 2018). Markéta Zandlová of the Faculty of Humanities produced a monograph about her ethnic research in Bulgaria (Zandlová 2015), while Zuzana Sekeráková Búriková from Brno's Faculty of Social Studies analysed domestic workers in Slovakia (Sekeráková Búriková 2017). One could mention more research output in Czech. Let us hope the authors will write more often in English or translate their works into the languages of the groups they studied.

Associations and the world scene

The Czech Anthropological Society (successor of the Czechoslovak Anthropological Society) has existed for decades. It associates biological anthropologists. It became well-known as the organizer of the decennial Aleš Hrdlička international congresses (since 1969). At the 4th International Anthropological Congress of Aleš Hrdlička that took place in Prague, and also in Humpolec, Hrdlička's birthplace, in 1999, a section on socio-cultural anthropology was organized by P. Skalník who published two volumes from the papers presented there (Skalník 2000, 2002). The above mentioned "Česká národopisná společnost" (Czech Nationographical Society) was founded in 1893 as "Národopisná společnost československá" (Czechoslovak Nationographical Society). Its membership mostly includes traditional *Volkskunde* specialists, who now also call themselves "ethnologists". Social or sociocultural anthropologists, mostly originating from the three departments discussed above (Prague, Pardubice and Pilsen), tried to create a broadly conceived association. This effort was not acceptable to "ethnologists" and the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA) was founded in 2008. It currently has about 100 members. Annually, CASA organizes the "Ladislav Holý Lecture" that are usually delivered by internationally renowned anthropologists. Together with its Slovak partner SASA – the Slovak Association of Social Anthropologists – the association has organized biennial international conferences. CASA applied successfully for membership of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA). It has continued the publication of *Cargo: Journal for Cultural/Social Anthropology*. The resumption of the publication of the *Cargo* journal was countered by the leading ethnologist Jiří Woitsch in an article published in *Lidé města/Urban People* (Woitsch 2012). Although subsidized much less than other journals, *Cargo* has continued to come out in double issues. CASA also cooperates with the Sociological Publisher SLON where one of its members, Luděk Brož, edits a series of anthropological publications.

For decades Czech and Czechoslovak anthropologists and ethnologists have been represented in the National Committee of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Established by the Academy of Sciences, this body, until its dissolution in 2017, was comprised of representatives of two and later three national associations (*Česká společnost antropologická, Česká národopisná společnost, Česká asociace pro sociální antropologii*). Physical anthropologists participated in the work of the IUAES since its inception in 1948. Later, during the 1960s, the committee gathered physical anthropologists and ethnographers from both Czechia and Slovakia. It met regularly and participated in the organs and meetings of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Thus far,

the largest participation from Czechoslovakia was registered at the VIIth world congress of the IUAES held in Moscow in 1964. At the Tokyo/Kyoto IUAES world congress in 1968, the Czechoslovak delegation filed a protest against the Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia. Subsequently, the active international role of Czechoslovak anthropologists and ethnologists was suspended and the National Committee was disbanded in the early 1970s by Antonín Robek, the post-invasion director of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. It was reconstituted only in 2004 after Petr Skalník was elected one of the vice-presidents of the IUAES during the 15th World IUAES Congress held at Florence in 2003. He was the main organizer of the IUAES Inter-Congress at Pardubice (2005). He represented Czech anthropologists and ethnologists at the meetings of the IUAES Permanent Council and in the Executive Committee at inter-congresses in Kolkata (2004), Pardubice (2005), Cape Town (2006), Antalya (2010), and Perth (2011). Skalník refused to participate in the 16th World Congress in the Chinese city of Kunming in 2009 in protest against Chinese policies towards minorities in Tibet and East Turkestan (Skalník 2009). After the new statutes of IUAES went into force in 2013, the IUAES Permanent Council ceased to exist and the organization primarily assumed individual membership. Czech anthropologists as individual members participated in the 17th (Manchester 2013) and 18th (Florianoópolis 2018) world congresses as well as in several inter-congresses (Chiba 2014, Dubrovnik 2016, Poznań 2019 and Šibenik 2020).

Several Czechoslovak nationgraphers/ethnologists and adepts of sociocultural anthropology were invited to participate in the 1st biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists held at Coimbra, Portugal, in 1990. It was Václav Hubinger who suggested there that the second conference of the EASA should be held in Prague in 1992, to underline EASA's pan-European character. This conference was attended by a large number of Western European social anthropologists along with several post-communist nationgraphers-ethnologists but the event had practically no impact on the status of social anthropology in Czechoslovakia (cf. Hubinger 1993). Hubinger, after short stints in the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Institute of Ethnology at Charles University, left for diplomacy, between 1996 and 2013 serving as Czech ambassador to Portugal, Kenya, Brazil and Turkey, and participated only sporadically in the life of socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia. Recently, however, after his retirement, he joined the Czech Association for Social Anthropology and contributed an interesting conference paper on anthropology in the service of the state (Hubinger 2015). Some anthropologists cum ethnologists participated in the conferences of the *Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore* (SIEF). Several Czech anthropologists attended the "Anthropology in the World" conference

held in London in 2012 (Skalník and Brocki 2018). Since 1990 several Czech students have been trained in Western anthropological centres. From among them Luděk Brož, Yasar Abu Ghosh, Radan Haluzík and Tomáš Samek eventually returned to the Czech Republic and have since participated in teaching and research. They were also instrumental in founding the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA). Others remained abroad and pursue their anthropological careers there.

Conclusion

Today, sociocultural anthropology exists in the Czech Republic, but its status is problematic. The heritage of communism and its post-communist inertia is probably the most important feature influencing the development of sociocultural anthropology in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the paradigm shift has not been fully accomplished and sociocultural anthropology does not enjoy a clear and firm status, neither in the system of science nor among the Czech public at large. This somewhat limbo situation is perhaps best visible in the insufficiency of funds for non-European fieldwork which is still considered “exotic” and thus dispensable. The library funds are also seriously limited.

In Prague, sociocultural anthropology is only present in the Department of General Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University. Social anthropology subjects are also taught at the Institute of Sociological Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, but the position of sociocultural anthropology there is marginal. The situation is similar in the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University at Brno. The situation in Olomouc’s Palacký University is somewhat better. At the University of Pardubice, there is a Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, which however has no accreditation rights for PhD training. Its best students have to take their PhDs from the Institute of Ethnology at Charles University or the above-mentioned Department of General Anthropology in Prague. The Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Bohemia teaches biological anthropology and ethnology while sociocultural anthropology is marginal there. The Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences has, after ten years of Uherek’s directorship, returned to its predominantly *národopis*/ethnology profile. The presence of sociocultural anthropology in the Institute of Ethnology in the Faculty of Arts of Charles University is undisputable but also not entirely clear because it seems to be mixed with home/domestic or southeastern European ethnology, folklore studies and “culturology.”

Socio-cultural anthropology in Czechia has in the last 30 years been developing

hesitantly and although one can admit that a paradigm shift has begun, it has not yet been completed. Despite the path dependency, ambivalence and conceptual nebulosity, the scholarly production of Czech socio-cultural anthropology has been growing. New generations of sociocultural anthropologists taught by émigrés and those educated in the West are slowly taking over initiative. The Czech Association for Social Anthropology is active but some of its members seem to be more comfortable as “ethnologists.” Regrettably, several crucial socio-cultural anthropologists are not (yet) members of CASA.

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