Singing Revolution Embraced Disciplines: Identity Politics vis-a-vis Ethnology and Anthropology

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Abstract: *The ethno-cultural nationalism and (re)Westernization featured in the post-communist change of the Baltic States are reflected in the (re)establishment of the disciplines of national ethnology and social and cultural anthropology. This paper seeks to unpack the influence of the Singing Revolution – an analogue of the Velvet Revolution and other echoes of the Berlin Wall's fall in the late 1980s – the embrace of national identity politics on the educational and research strategies of these two disciplines using the case of Lithuania. It suggests that national ethnology became a strategic field of political importance due to its expertise in 'revealing the nation's original character' and 'cultural tradition', nowadays still largely framed by "Lithuanian studies", the state prioritized field of research vulnerable to methodological nationalism. Social and cultural anthropology arrived as a novelty resisting methodological nationalism and deconstructing ethno-nationalist research strategies and was met as Westernization or an 'American concoction'. It faced difficulties of its recognition as a separate field of studies among 'big brother' disciplines of history, national ethnology, or sociology.*

Keywords: *national ethnology, social and cultural anthropology, methodological nationalism, identity politics, ethnic culture, Lithuania*

The Singing Revolution is a nickname for the revolution that dismantled the communist regime in the Baltic States at the end of the 1980s. According to Guntis Smidchens, it was a newly adopted form of a hundred-year-old tradition of mass singing which had been performed during the National Folk Song Festival regularly organized in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since the end of the nineteenth

century (Smidchens 2007, 2014). The Singing Revolution was backed by a mass interest in folklore which had already spread throughout Eastern Europe in the 1970s and the 1980s (ibid.). Many folklore ensembles, clubs, and local history study clubs were founded as a result of the wave of neo-Romantic nationalism enabled by Stalin's death and Khrushchev's reforms in the 1960s. Developing an interest in performing 'authentic' folklore with intense interest in the 'ancient culture of the Baltic tribes', along with recently appearing neo-pagan movements, they became hugely popular in the 1970s and early 1980s (Ciubrinskas 2000; Strmiska 2005; Smidchens 2014).

The ethnic-cultural nationalism, along with the (re)Westernization of these Sovietized societies, are the two main aspects of the post-communist change which were also reflected in the (re)establishment of the disciplines of *national ethnology*[1] and social and cultural anthropology in the Baltic States. This paper seeks to unpack the influence of the Singing Revolution and its embrace of national identity politics on the educational and research strategies of these two disciplines using the case of Lithuania. The study is based on the author's experience of being a participant in the activities of Lithuanian research institutes and universities during the period of change beginning in the mid-1980s, through his days as a doctoral student in ethnology, ending with his appointment as a university professor of social and cultural anthropology in the early 2010s.

Introduction

The constant epistemological focus of ethnology and social and cultural anthropology (characterized in Central and Eastern Europe by the 'division of labor' between 'national ethnography' and an anthropological understanding of ethnography: cf. Hofer 1968; Skalník 2002, Hann 2007) is in the category of 'culture' in relation to that of the 'nation'. This is an appropriate point of departure in studying the disciplinary transformations and theoretical and methodological tensions that have constantly reappeared in this disciplinary field. In sociocultural anthropology, it was realized long ago that attempts to define 'culture' are framed politically (Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta, Ferguson 1992; Sahlins 1999; Fox and King 2002), and can quite easily be interpreted as quests for cultural identity in what is a global process (Friedman 1996). It is also assumed that 'culture' is needed for analytical purposes, even if it 'does not exist' (de Munck 2004), due

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1   The term *national ethnology* is used here to emphasize that the discipline of ethnology is meant in the sense of *European Ethnology*. It is historically rooted in the discipline of *Volkskunde* and nowadays developed into *European Ethnology*, used (in Germany) interchangeably with the *Empirical Cultural Studies* (Empirische Kulturwissenschaft).

to anthropology being the discipline which claims 'culture' as its central concept (Fox 1999: i, cited from de Munck 2004: 34).

The opposing concepts of this extremely essentialist notions of 'culture' as 'our own culture' and the understanding of the discipline of ethnology as consisting of 'ethnic culture' studies are still influential in Lithuania to this day (cf. Vaiskunas 2013). This ethnicized understanding of 'culture' as the subject matter of ethnology paves the way for methodological nationalism and is thoroughly grounded in the identity politics provided by the Singing Revolution.

1. Singing Revolution as cultural revivalism and the forging of 'ancient-traditional-authentic' culture

The Singing Revolution as a social movement for national independence of the Baltic peoples could be portrayed as a cultural revivalist movement 'for national culture' similar to those in Central and Eastern Europe known as 'the spring of nations' and the 'nation-building' movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Ciubrinskas 2000). Such cultural revivalism as a politics of (national) culture makes fundamental 'the culture' in relation to 'the nation' particularly with reference to its past. Different periods of national history are accorded different values, and the 'ancient past'– the medieval ages of the Baltic tribes along with the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – came to be known as the heroic 'history of the forefathers' as the 'genuine past' of the Lithuanian nation. This was prioritized over the 'syncretic' periods of the Poland-Lithuania Commonwealth of the 16th to 18th centuries and the periods of Russian and Soviet oppression in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Singing Revolution revivalists' politics of Lithuania's national past were focused on reviving 'the culture' purified of anything foreign by finding a new ascription for the national identity that was jeopardized by the atheism and Russian culture imposed by the Soviet regime. Their claims in favor of a 'Lithuanian traditional folk culture,' the 'ancient Lithuanian language,' along with the Catholic religion came to be ascribed as distinct markers of 'nationness' and an alternative to the 'Sovietized' Lithuanian culture and its extremely unpopular character of *homo sovieticus* (Kuznecoviene 2007). In this way, the revivalists forged an image of the 'ancient Baltic' and 'traditional folk' as normative categories of what 'Lithuanian culture' means opposed to the 'fake culture' of the Soviet-Lithuanian cluster within Soviet 'multiculturalism'. This ascription to the 'traditional' and 'ancient' reinforced the symbolic power of the reference to 'authenticity' in pre-Soviet Lithuania by marking a methodological distinction from the Soviet manipulation of the term 'culture'.

a) *Ethnification of (national) culture*

In the revivalist understanding of 'culture', it was assumed to be a territorial entity 'rooted' in 'ethnographic territories'. As a result, the term 'ethnographic' became politically charged, a word used to mark a cultural distinctiveness and belonging to distinct 'cultural areas'. This cultural particularism was at the core of the cultural nationalism promoted by the Singing Revolution, where nation-hood and the national culture was framed as doubly rooted, both territorially (as 'ethnographic'), and temporally, as belonging to the 'ancient past' and the 'traditional folk'.

Specifically, this signalled not only the ethnification of the 'national' and cultural fundamentalism of the building of the nation-state in the post-colonial (Rapport 2006: 192) and post-communist era, it was also in agreement with the fragmentation of the 'global'. The 'architects' of Lithuania's post-Soviet society tried to (re)build the Lithuanian nation state by opening it to Western political culture, modernization and globalization, but the 'turn to roots', i.e. fragmentation, superseded.

Jonathan Freedman, an anthropologist of globalization, meticulously describes practices of global fragmentation. In his view globalization, characterized by the decentralization of capital accumulation and the decline of modernity, produces fragmentation (Friedman 2002, 2004). 'In this decline, there is a turn to roots, [and] to ethnicity... [and it provides] the basis for cultural politics and political fragmentation' (Friedman 2002: 295). Fragmentation, according to Friedman, takes such forms as indigenization, the ethnification of the nation state, regionalism, and immigrant ethnification (idem.: 295–297). In this perspective, the ethnification of cultural politics of identity can be seen as an outcome of global fragmentation, in other words, fragmentation of monarchies, colonial and totalitarian states, and later of nation states, which constructed homogenizing identities as standing entities (Geertz 1994). So in our case this understanding of ethnification can be assumed as the fragmentation of institutionalized identities of the Soviet totalitarian establishment which was central to understanding of what was happening with the revival of the national culture in Lithuania already starting with Perestroika in the mid of 1980s.

b) *'Ethnic culture' institutionalized*

Beginning the mid-1980s, the period of Perestroika-the notion of an 'ethnic culture-had become central to discourses on the 'Lithuanian tradition', as well as a key marker and a resource in the competition over recognition of the renewed nation state and its national culture. After Lithuania regained its independence as a nation state in 1990, this 'ethnification' of the 'national' continue, even becoming

institutionalized when the Lithuanian Parliament's Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture was founded in 2000 as a follow up to 'the Law on the Principles of State Protection of Ethnic Culture', passed in 1999 (Law of 1999). At that time, institutions of 'ethnic culture' were mushrooming throughout the country.

As Friedman suggested, processes of ethnification take the form of nation states turning 'fellow nationals' into 'ethnics' at home, as well as abroad in the diaspora. Ethnification occurs because of how 'nativism' and 'culture' are categorized. This was shown by the *Law on the Principles of State Protection of Ethnic Culture* (Law of 1999), in which the heritage culture of the ethnic majority was voiced and singled out at the expense of the silenced 'ethnic cultures' of ethnic minorities. Here the 'ethnic culture' is seen as both inherited as 'passed from generation to generation' as well as a living body that is continually changing by being 'constantly renewed' (ibid.). Thus the term 'culture' is portrayed as a set of ethno-national 'cultural properties, created by the entire nation (*ethnos*)' (ibid.).

Both terms, *nation* and ethnicity (*ethnos*), when used together, fit well in the classic Herderian understanding of the *nation* as *folk* but here, the dimension of the folk was changed into *ethnicity*, recalling the stateless situation of Lithuanians during the communist period. In reality, this singled out *one* culture of an entire nation due to the majoritarian conceptualization of the 'ethnic culture' monopolized particular cultural resources, that is, the local cultures of Lithuanian ethnographic regions, which had come to be seen as parts of the *Lithuanian* ethnic culture (cf. Law of 1999).

Through this judicial act, the national cultural heritage and tradition came to be defined and legitimized as 'ethnic culture' (in the singular). Thus, in the ethnic-national sense, the 'Lithuanian heritage' was assumed to be both ethnically Lithuanian and nationally Lithuanian by definition. The stress in the Law on 'the uniqueness of the ethnic language' (ibid.) and the 'uniqueness of ethnographic regions' (ibid.) as 'the essence of national existence' (ibid.) appears as a categorization of nativism which left no room in Lithuania for minority cultures-such as Polish or Jewish (Yiddish)-to prove themselves as 'unique' and ethnographically rooted.

Thus in this way, the notion of 'ethnic culture' became a model for the normative understanding of 'tradition', 'heritage' and even 'national culture', as was made particularly explicit in public discourses about 'true' Lithuanian identity.

c) *Label of 'ethnic culture' studies: ethnification of Lithuanian ethnology*

The category of *ethnic culture* was introduced as a scholarly term in Lithuanian ethnology in 1989 and defined, at least in the narrow sense of the term, as a synonym with the terms 'folk culture' or 'traditional culture'(Kalnius 2011: 75).

During that time, the entire field of 'Lithuanian traditional folk culture' studies came to be labelled 'ethnic culture studies', while the disciplines of ethnology and folklore studies were recognized as strategic for national identity politics. Eventually, the disciplines of the Lithuanian language, Lithuanian literature, and Lithuanian history also were reinforced by their role as 'cornerstones of identity' and were regarded as the most resourceful disciplines in Lithuanian studies. This was an outcome of Zeitgeist of the late 1980s and early 1990s, during and just after the Singing Revolution.

Accordingly, *Zeitgeist* ethnologists and folklorists of the period were expected to act as academic experts in defining 'authentic' Lithuanian culture against what was considered as sovietized or face culture. This also meant playing a key epistemological and methodological role in handling Lithuanian studies. It was a time in which ethnologists and folklorists, along with other Lithuanian studies professionals – historians, linguists, and literature specialists – began to 'act publicly', and there were many offers from the increasingly free media to write an article or speak out on issues surrounding the vogue term *Lithuanian ethnic culture*, instead of 'traditional culture'. This new label came to be used for branding the idea of a 'core nationhood', in other words, rooted in ancient Lithuanian mythology, rituals, symbols, and traditions, and to be singled out as genuine ethnic.

Actually such ethnification of culture was already used in the period of the First Lithuanian Republic of 1918-40, also gaining further usage during the Soviet period in the disciplinary field of Soviet ethnography. During the inter-war period *national ethnography* or 'national ethnology' first became established as a field of studies in the country at the Department of Ethnica (Etnikos katedra) at Vytautas Magnus University in 1934 (Ciubrinskas 2001). It appeared there as a version of *Volkskunde* by predominantly using cultural-historical paradigm (Kulturgeschichte), descriptivism and 'culture collecting' (for archives and museums) along with 'salvage ethnography' (Gellner 1996: 115–6). Next was the ethnification of Lithuanian ethnology during the Soviet period which was heavily grounded in the 'theory of ethnos' of the Soviet ethnographer Yulian Bromley who was extremely influential throughout the 1980s. Thus the post-Soviet focus on 'ethnos' could be regarded as just a continuation of the Soviet Russian ethnography school of thought. Here studies of groups of people were seen through the category of 'ethnicity' as a major systemic marker, expecting to deal with humanity by making it an ethnic categorization, even approaching whole nations as entities of 'ethnos' (Bondarenko and Korotayev 2003).

2. (Re)Westernization of academia: anthropology popping up in 1990

By paving the way for the adoption of 'Western standards,' The Singing Revolution also ushered in an 'opening up to the West'. In higher education this meant primarily the appearance of 'new' fields and disciplines. Such disciplines, 'unknown' in the Soviet period, as political science, religious studies, and social and cultural anthropology were welcomed in the academies of the new nation states. Teaching the 'new' disciplines formed part of the (re)Westernization of totalitarian societies brought mostly to Lithuania in the form of social remittances from fellow nationals, expatriates in the West, mainly in North America, where the main wave of refugees from the Baltic States, who had fled communism, moved to in the late 1940s. They were now expected to return from the diaspora in a philanthropic spirit. The 'rebuilding of education' in the wake of the ending of Soviet rule can be seen as an element of diaspora identity politics that was 'transplanted back' to the homeland (Ciubrinskas 2018). This is not surprising, since the forced migrants of the generation of the Displaced Persons' Camps (DP) took education especially seriously. Already in the DP camps in Germany, they had managed to establish a Lithuanian high school in Spakenberg-Geesthacht, later relocated to Hüttenfeld, as well as a Baltic University in Pinneberg, near Hamburg (Tumosiene 1995: 7). Later, a complete network of Lithuanian Saturday schools was established in the U.S. In 1989, months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the re-launch of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in Kaunas, which had been closed in the early 1950s by Stalin, stood as a remarkable example of the philanthropic efforts of returning emigrants. The VMU's reopening was representative of the results of diaspora economic and social remittances sent to and brought back to the homeland (Ciubrinskas 2018).

VMU, formed as the first such institution in the country to be independent of Soviet authority, became a prime example of how the importation of Western standards challenged the whole of the Lithuanian education system and the totalitarian state at the tail end of the Soviet era. VMU's first two presidents were Lithuanian-Americans who set up a system along the North American line. That meant a strong 'Anglo-Saxon' emphasis with English as the language of tuition, an open attitude towards foreign academic staff based on a flexible system designed to accommodate visiting professors (Vastokas 2005), as well as adherence to the principle of liberal arts (*Artes Liberales*). VMU became known as a 'Lithuanian diaspora University", the first autonomous university in the whole of the Soviet Union at that time, and certainly open to novelties.

The best example of such novelties was the establishment of cultural anthropology and the Department of Anthropology, launched in 1990, based on

American four-field anthropology, and led by Lithuanian-American professors. It was a 'product of Westernization' which came to the country as studies of the global human condition in comparative perspectives, 'untouched by Marxism or nationalism' (Buchowski 2004:10).

The field of anthropology at the 'diaspora University' was greatly appreciated by students, even attracting students from Latvia, despite this, anthropology succeeded in acquiring its own department, and no anthropology study program was developed. And in less than three years, of those wanting to study the subject of anthropology, the program was divided between 'Lithuanian ethnic culture' studies and anthropology, the so-called 'American concoction' (Vastokas 2005). Obviously, in this, priority was given to a 'national ethnology', which by 1993 had already taken over anthropology through the efforts of the local ethnologists and folklorists – 'ethnic culture' specialists. In the same year, instead of anthropology, the Department of Ethnology and Folklore Studies was established. (Anglickiene and Senvaityte 2001). Such 'restructuring' was a victory of the academic politics, which was again, guided by the *Zeitgeist* of ethnic nationalism dominant post-Singing revolution period well illustrated by the statement of the one of folklore professors:'We don't need to be taught about Africa: there is an urgent need to learn about our traditions instead. Even more so, we should learn more about our traditions because they are dying and the former Soviet regime was not in favor of studying it' (Sauka 1999).

Such a position was perfect grounds for the field of *national ethnology* to stay in its *Volkskundian* shape; which stayed that way for a while, eventually undergoing significant changes.

3. Lithuanian ethnology: change of label and paradigm

Since the 1990s, heavily influenced by the Singing Revolution's identity politics of ethnification and carrying the label of 'ethnic culture studies', the field of ethnology continued with 'patriotism,' a strategy inherited from the Soviet period. The ethnologists of the main ethnologic institution in the country – Department of Ethnography of the Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of Lithuanian SSR – were implicitly keeping the continuity of interwar ethnographic scholarly tradition (Čepaitiene-2016:172).

The same 'continuation' happened at VMU – the only university in the country which already since the 1990s, started offering the BA and MA study programs in ethnology ('ethnic culture') and the PhD program in ethnology. Initially, the previously mentioned Department of Ethnology and Folklore intended to continue the paradigmatic tradition of ethnic studies of interwar period VMU

(Apanavicius 2009, from Čepaitiene 2016:17) given at the Department of Ethnica. In its curriculum were a significant selection of courses on 'ethnic culture' but also including subjects in anthropology, i.e. introduction to physical and cultural anthropology, world cultures, culture and personality etc., that was absent from the curriculum of the Department of Anthropology. By the end of 2000s most anthropology subjects became replaced with subjects in history, medieval studies, modern philosophy, political and social theories, semiotics, cultural theory and cultural studies; direction towards the field of cultural studies became clear. They considered supplementing the ethnological studies with the subjects from anthropology, cultural studies, history, sociology, and religious studies established more possibilities for the field (Apanavičius 2009 from Cepaitiene 2016: 173). But in reality, it became a sort of bricolage, in 2012, ending with a changing of the title of the department into the Department of Cultural Studies and Ethnology by approving the label of cultural studies.

Change of label was even more visible on the usage of 'anthropology' which impacted the former ethnological and ethnographic institutions of the former communist Central Eastern European region: they started to change their names into departments of *ethnology and cultural anthropology*. Folklorists and ethnographers gave up their identities overnight and began to call themselves 'anthropologists' (Godina 2002: 13). The new label recognized the fact that anthropology, as of late, became fashionable along with other trends in Western scholarship and had been adopted in Central and Eastern Europe throughout the post-socialist period of change as 'products of the West'. In Lithuania, in 2016, the leading institution of ethnological research at the Lithuanian Institute of History changed its name to the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology. According to Peter Skalník, it could be considered 'late opportunism,' comparable to the name change in the Slovak Academy of Sciences – Department of Ethnology and Social Anthropology (Skalnik 2016).

Paradigm shifts occurred as well. First coming with a rethinking of historicism and 'tradition' as main paradigms. On one hand, methodology of historicism still appears to be the most popular methodology among the Lithuanian ethnologists as 'historical-comparative analysis is the most broadly used' in dealing with 'local history studies' and in revealing the 'localism of ethnic culture' (Savoniakaite 2011: 131).). Here the paradigm of 'culture' is included in the package of 'culture-as-tradition' by using an old paradigm of 'culture' as a bounded and transmitted (transmit-able) tradition, which is still regarded as valid in contemporary research. On the other hand, attempts were made to add a synchronic perspective to diachronic analysis. Zilvytis Saknys, in his introduction to the first volume of the *Atlas of Customs* (where the paradigm of 'area studies' and

the cartography of cultural patterns is the focus), emphasizes that previous area-based research – for example, in the Baltic Ethnographic Atlases of the mid-1980s – 'diachronic culture expression' prevailed. While in the new program of 'the Lithuanian Atlas of Ethnic Culture: Customs', for the first time in Lithuania, analyses of local patterns of culture were conducted using a synchronic perspective in approaching present-day cultural representations (Saknys 2007: 12).

The paradigm of 'tradition' was beginning to be replaced by 'identity' in research on patterns of regional and local belonging, particularly in Lithuanian minority studies abroad (cf. Merkiene et al. 2005). In this sense, 'tradition' is approached from the 'identity' perspective, while 'ethno-cultural identity is understood as a continuity of cultural patterns, including innovations' (Merkiene and Savoniakaite 1999). In this way, 'identity' is conceptualized as something ascribed, which, according to Clifford Geertz, can be assumed to be a 'primordial loyalty' (Geertz 1994). According to this concept, local life worlds are seen as shaped by long-term social relationships, while notions of belonging and identity practices are experienced as a 'natural' extension of the past into the present.

According to David Sutton, a specialist in the anthropology of Europe who did two decades of research on the Greek islands, this extension of the past by 'preserving tradition has become an increasingly private affair as existential memory practices' (Sutton 2009). One might add that handling 'tradition', by contrast, remains a public and political affair and, as pointed out earlier, the legitimization of 'tradition' in contemporary post-communist Lithuania was repackaged as 'ethnic culture' and institutionalized as intangible heritage and a 'living tradition'. As the *Law on Ethnic Culture Protection* states, 'the living tradition of ethnic culture is the transmission of inherited national culture, its creation and renewal' (Law of 1999).

While some Lithuanian ethnologists, eager to study 'traditionalization' and detraditionalization as a paradigm and reworking of 'tradition' goes along with questioning of its recognition it is not always clear whether they are taking it from a positivist or a constructivist perspective.

4. Anthropology in Lithuania: complicated academic establishment and developments

During the first try, in the early 1990s, the establishment of anthropology in Lithuania heavily depended on diaspora professors (many of whom have stayed at VMU only temporarily), and even more so on post-Singing Revolution curriculum development politics. The second try to establish anthropology was at Vilnius University and faced the same challenges.

Starting in the mid of 1990s, where an introductory course in social anthropology was given at the School of History (Faculty of History) for the history and archaeology program students (taught by the author), VMU grew, reaching six anthropology courses by the end of 1990s. The co-operation with social anthropologists at Lund and Copenhagen universities, student and professors' exchange programs, and the first Nordic-Baltic school of anthropology for research students, organized in 1996, made a considerable impact on the development of the discipline, even contributing to the 'anthropologization' of ethnology, history and political science graduate students and young researchers on a large scale (Ciubrinskas 2015, Cepaitiene 2016). Unfortunately, after a few years, beginning in 2000, the field of anthropology was accused of 'competing' with the field of history by attracting an increasing number of students, with the dean of the School of History deciding to drastically reduce the number of courses in anthropology. This serves as another example of academically political 'manipulation' of the field of anthropology. The BA Program in Cultural History and Anthropology, launched at the School of History in 2001, by taking the label of 'anthropology,' attempted to attract increased enrollment for its history studies. The program is situated in the academic category of history but uses the label of 'anthropology' by offering only one or two introductory courses in social anthropology. Currently three anthropologists-with PhDs in anthropology from UK and USA universities-work at Vilnius University, teaching introductory courses in social anthropology for history, psychology, and Asian studies. Actually, the number of anthropology courses is growing again but the future of the field remains unpredictable.

The third try to develop anthropology in Lithuania occurred in 2004, again at VMU. This attempt was the first Masters' Program in Social Anthropology in the Baltic States-which follows the 'British-Scandinavian model' of social anthropology-launched at the Department of Sociology, remains the only program of its kind in the country. The Masters' Program developed its focus considering there were no national models of social or cultural anthropology academic programs any Central Eastern European postsocialist countries and the discipline in some universities in the region, for example, the Central European University in Budapest and the University of Krakow, anthropology, are modelled in a disciplinary relationship with sociology. Much later, in 2015, another program – the BA in Sociology and Anthropology – was developed in close parallel. Placed in the field of sociology the degree program and could be easily labeled as 'sociologization' of anthropology (cf. Cepaitiene 2016). Nevertheless, the program offers six to seven obligatory courses in social anthropology and could be seen almost as a double degree program.

The Master's Program in Social Anthropology started in Kaunas with three university professors having PhD in anthropology; one from Lund University

(Sweden), the other from University of British Columbia (Canada), the last with a PhD in ethnology from Vilnius University. Later, they were joined by two visiting professors, one with a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, the other from the University of Marburg (Germany). In 2010 the Program received international recognition through its American partnership. The Southern Illinois University (SIU) Certificate program: *Intercultural Understanding*, taught by visiting faculty from the SIU became part of the degree with the SIU Certificate issued alongside the VMU Master's Diploma.

Thematic focus of the Program has been put on transnational mobility, contested cultural practices of inclusion and exclusion, and the state transformation. The anthropology of postsocialism, with a regional emphasis on Eastern Europe, stood here as a prime example of the Singing revolution's impact on societies having undergone rapid social change and crisis over recent decades, from socialism to post-socialism with ethnic nationalism and eventually to neoliberalism and austerity.

The Program was a 'post-socialist novelty' clearly separated by the disciplinary line from 'ethnic culture' or cultural studies in the shape of *national ethnology*. This seems palpable when teaching 'social change' through the lens of anthropology of socialism and postsocialism. It challenges methodological nationalism by tackling the categories of 'uncertainty', 'politics of memory', 'emotion of nostalgia' etc. All this helped students to confront reification of culture, its essencialization and ethnification as 'past' seen here as constructed, with the definition of 'national culture' appearing as a good example of many reifications of culture.

One of the strategic focuses in Lithuanian anthropology in general is on political anthropology and post-communism studies. Here research is mainly carried out in the form of doctoral dissertation projects by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Lithuania and other post-socialist countries. In the period from 1997–2020 seven doctoral dissertations in anthropology, based on fieldwork in Lithuania, were defended by Kristina Sliavaite (Lund University), Neringa Klumbyte (University of Pittsburgh, USA), Pernille Hohnen (Copenhagen University), Asta Vonderau (Humboldt University, Berlin), Ida Knudsen (Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany), Gediminas Lankauskas (University of Toronto), Lina Pranaityte-Wergin (University of Martin Luther, Halle, Germany). Another five dissertations were defended in the fields of the anthropology of religion, post-socialism and migration – Donatas Brandisauskas (Aberdeen University, Scotland), Renatas Berniunas (Queen's University, Belfast), Vitalija Stepusaityte (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh), Kristina Jonutyte (Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle Germany) and Eugenijus Liutkevicius (University of Birmingham, UK).

The Center for Social Anthropology (CSA), an anthropological research unit established at VMU in 2005 has been the only one in the country since that time.

From the very beginning, it built a library, ran anthropological and interdisciplinary research projects, hosted visiting doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows (four of them were coming on a Fulbright program from the US), and organized conferences and research seminars. In both 2005 and 2009, two international conferences were co-organized by the CSA and the Institute of the Baltic Sea Region at the University of Klaipeda; the first on regional studies and borderlands, the second on identity politics, migration and multilingualism (Ciubrinskas and Sliuzinskas 2006a, 2006b, 2009, 2010).

Anthropological research at CSA is carried out in two main directions. First, by exploring "anthropology at home" from the perspective of identity politics, (trans)nationalism and the anthropology of post-socialism. Secondly, a diaspora and migration studies mainly focusing on Central East European out-migration to North America and Western Europe.

In 2005, the first research project was conducted at the CSAwas in 'anthropology at home,' challenging methodological nationalism by exploring the variety of frameworks of Lithuanian national identity and investigating the manipulation of identity under conditions of globalization in comparative perspective (Ciubrinskas and Kuznecoviene 2008). Since 2007 research projects on migration and (im)mobility have been prominent at SCA. For example, during the period from 2007–2009 research was focused on identifying models of belonging among East European labor migrants in response to assimilation and identity politics in the host countries: England, Ireland, Norway, Spain, and the USA (Ciubrinskas 2011). Another project conducted from 2012-2014 investigated an impact of globalization and transnationalism as marked processes of fragmentation of the state in reshaping national loyalties and belonging of ethnic minorities (Russians in Lithuania), borderlands (Polish population in Lithuania) and diaspora (Lithuanians in UK and the US) (Ciubrinskas et al. 2014). From 2020, two research projects have been conducted in migration and memory studies. One project is focused on remigration and social remittances by exploring Croatia, Poland, and Lithuania cases in comparative perspective, the other on social memory studies of forced migration diasporas in Kazakhstan and Trans-Volga Russia.

In line with the research direction of the CSA, six doctoral research projects based on ethnographic fieldwork were conducted from 2009 to 2013 by exploring patterns of East European labor migration (in Northern Ireland, Norway, the USA), refugees (from a anthropology of medicine perspective), and minorities (Roma). All six dissertations used anthropological perspective but were defended in the field of sociology (VMU) as anthropology was (and still) not recognized in Lithuania as a separate discipline for the awarding of a PhD. Meanwhile, attempts have been made in this direction.

Since 2014 a joint doctoral program in social anthropology has been under development by the four Baltic States' universities running MA study programs in anthropology and ethnology. They have created the Baltic Anthropology Graduate School (BAGS), which, besides VMU, includes the University of Latvia, Riga Stradins University, Tallinn University and Tartu University in cooperation with Manchester University, Southern Illinois University and Copenhagen University. It was funded by an institutional development grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Despite continuous efforts with the PhD program eventually becoming fully prepared in 2018, it did not go into full operation due to not being approved and recognized by the higher education authorities of all three Baltic States. Despite significant differences in accommodation of PhD studies in all three states in general, the major obstacle has been non-recognition of the field of anthropology as a separate field for doctoral studies. With this in mind, BAGS became enacted in the framework of two-three day sessions or 'schools' organized at each of the partner universities in cooperation. In 2015, BAGS began as a winter school in Tallinn, with Riga soon following, and finally, in the fall of 2017, it came to VMU in Kaunas. Here it was attended by more than a dozen of PhD students who shared their research experiences in using anthropological approach and fieldwork methodology. Lectures were given by the speakers from the institutions in cooperation with BAGS – Jonathan Hill (Southern Illinois University), Jeanette Edwards (Manchester University), Robin Cohen (University of Oxford), Christian Giordano (University of Fribourg) and Steven Sampson (Lund University).

BAGS schools as well as workshops provided a significant impact on graduate students of anthropology in Kaunas, with some even enrolling in doctoral studies in anthropology abroad. Four graduates of the Program have already received their doctoral degrees in anthropology from the UK and German universities, with others preparing their doctorates at University College London (SOAS), the City University of New York, Ludwig-Maximillian University in Munich etc.

Conclusions

Two disciplines in the field of studying peoples appeared on different sides of the Singing Revolution-governed post-socialist panorama of social change in Lithuania. On one side was *national ethnology*, which was developed by using a descriptivist cultural-historical methodology, eventually became a strategic field of political importance amid the post-Soviet changes. This was due to its expertise and instrumentality in 'revealing the nation's original character' in terms of the social engineering of the 'cultural tradition'. This discipline is still, at least partly, engaged in the paradigm of 'ethnic culture'. In fact, nowadays its approaches are

taken increasingly from the constructivist perspective, employing the paradigm of 'identity' instead of 'tradition'. Although their topics of research, in terms of the geography and epistemology are still largely framed by the *Lithuanian studies*, this is one of the state supported prioritized fields of research vulnerable to methodological nationalism. Even more, the disciplines of *Lithuanian studies* are keen to use a label of 'anthropology' which makes, for example, the study field of (Lithuanian) history (through the name of the study program) and the research field of *national ethnology* (through the change of the department name) more attractive.

On another side, a significant impact of the Singing Revolution on the scholarly field in Lithuania was the appearance of social and cultural anthropology as a discipline. It arrived as a novelty and a product of the post-socialist Westernization of Eastern Europe. From the beginning, in the early 1990s it came in the form of social remittances transferred by the diaspora expatriates from North America. Later, having difficulties of its establishment and recognition as a separate field of studies, it tried to find its place 'under the sun', but became manipulated by the 'big brother' disciplines of history, sociology, and the state patronized field of "ethnic culture' studies, nicknaming it an 'American concoction'.

Anthropology came into the field of humanities and social science in Lithuania during the upheaval of Singing Revolution nationalism by resisting methodological nationalism and deconstructing ethno-nationalist research strategies. It provided a clear substitute and alternative to 'ethnic culture' studies, opening new ways of approaching issues of 'traditional culture', 'ethnicity', 'nation', territorial in-rootedness etc. by employing such analytical perspectives as constructivism, global comparativism. transnational mobility and (de)territorialization. Not speaking about its methodological impact with an imperative of doing a long stay ethnographic fieldwork and an emphasis on using *emic* approach.

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