

# Against the “Aversion to Theory”: Tracking “Theory” in Postwar Slovenian Ethnology

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## Abstract

*As elsewhere in Europe, disciplinary transformations of ethnology and folklore studies in Slovenia were embedded in the changing political and social map after the Second World War. In the postwar years, sporadic reflections on the discipline’s academic and social position anticipated the search for a new disciplinary identity. The first attempts to reconceptualize “folk culture” as a building block of ethnological research and the use of the name “ethnology” instead of “ethnography/Volkskunde” in the 1950s also reflected the approaching of “small national ethnology” to “European ethnology.” Only in the 1960s and 1970s, radical epistemological and methodological criticism anticipated the transformation of the disciplinary landscape. The article tracks paradigmatic shifts in the field of tension between empirically oriented and theoretically grounded research. The former regarded “theorizing” as superfluous or the opposite of “practice.” It more or less reproduced the “salvage project” and the positivist model of cultural-historical and philologically oriented research. The new agenda proposed a dialectical genetic-structural orientation that advocated for a “critical scholarship.” It insisted on the correspondence between the discipline’s subject and the empirical reality that reflects the socio-historical dynamics inherent to culture and everyday life. It introduced “way of life” (everyday life, everyday culture) as a core subject of research that expanded research topics, called for new methodological tools, revised affiliations to related disciplines, recognized discipline’s applied aspects, and addressed the re-reading of disciplinary legacy.*

**Keywords:** ethnology; history of ethnology; theory; methodology; Slovenia

## Introduction

I began my studies of ethnology in the mid-1970s at a relatively small ethnology department in Ljubljana. A seemingly clichéd saying of the older of the two professors Vilko Novak (1909–2003) was “you get to know the discipline best by studying its history.” At the beginning of a new course, he spent a few weeks familiarizing students with scholars involved in research on prominent ethnological topics and their work; we ended up memorizing long lists of authors and titles in almost all European languages. The younger of the two professors, Slavko Kremenšek (1931), later my mentor and supervisor, was the initiator of something my generation experienced as a disciplinary revolution that began in the early 1960s. He started most of his lectures in media res: he would present a specific topic or problem by critically discussing it in terms of epistemological and methodological controversies. Thus, I was challenged by

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two differing and competing (but coexisting) styles of thought, teaching, and practice in ethnology: a more traditional and a contemporary one. Both had their merits and shortcomings. I accepted them without knowing some of the essential tools available at the time, such as the analytical distinction between the otherwise consistent historicist and presentist approaches (Stocking 1968). Moreover, I did not reflect more deeply on the fact that they represented not only two styles of conceptualizing the history of the discipline but also differing models of knowledge transfer—i.e., teaching and communication with students, styles of discussion—as well as a different academic and personal habitus. They delineated, above all, different visions of the discipline.

These experiences were the formative background of my interest in studying developments in Slovenian ethnology. Today, I find the terms changes, transformations, and shifts more apt than development. Namely, research on the history of science and the individual disciplines reveals different perspectives on how scientific knowledge unfolds. Is it characterized by linear progression or a change of paradigms (in terms of Thomas Kuhn’s scientific revolutions), by evolutionary stages, or by epistemological breaks that separate the pre-scientific (ideological) from the scientific (Bachelard, Althusser)? Or, are its paths more complex and crisscrossed and identified with innovations, but also with standstills, dead ends, obstacles, and detours? It is distinctive for the humanities and social sciences that new theoretical frameworks, concepts, and interpretations summarize and illuminate the knowledge already acquired. Above all, they open new avenues for understanding and reflecting on new problems arising from the complexity of the human world. Metaphorically speaking, theories are “a coral reef, where the living corals literally build upon the achievements of their deceased predecessors” (Eriksen 2017, 60). In this sense, knowledge production is a cumulative process, although the “rhetoric of discontinuity” (Darnell 2001, xvii) often dominates its interpretations. Furthermore, in postmodernity, the pluralism of concepts and methods shapes the topography of knowledge. It is implausible to imagine that a single research model or research program can dominate the entire disciplinary field.

My research on changes in Slovenian ethnology started in the late 1980s and was influenced by current debates on the relationship between ethnology and anthropology. This entanglement was not novel, as it raised new issues, postulated new agendas, and agitated our scholarly community in much the same way as the debates in the 1960s. My research aimed to examine the disciplinary landscape in the twentieth century from the perspective of knowledge production in a “small national ethnology,” and it was informed by comparative European perspectives and the newly introduced anthropological orientations. It also reflected on diverse disciplinary legacies, their practitioners, the institutional building and institutional agendas, ties with related disciplines, delimitations of the research subject and research methods, and the delineation of ethnology’s scope and aims (Slavec Gradišnik 2000). Furthermore, this perspective acknowledged the common constructivist understanding of disciplinary history as a field of continuous re-writing, re-positioning, and re-evaluation of past knowledge, as an ongoing dialogue between the discipline’s present and past, and the future as well.

### A Comment on the Title

The term *theory* may sound pretentious because its meaning in the humanities does not overlap with the strictly scientific definition of the term. Instead, it involves the formulation of generalizing statements that “describe and explain” individual cases or a “general idea that can be applied to many specific instances or particular cases” (Salzman 2001, 1; cited in Muršič 2011, 163). The theory is needed to addressing problems in a discipline and dictates its methodological orientations; it frames researchers’ perspectives, shows them suitable research lines, and provides them with instruments for empirical studies (Muršič 2011, 163–164). In this respect, theories are building blocks because facts become meaningful when defined and organized within a theory as a coherent set of conceptual and pragmatic principles that provide a general context for the research field.

In this article’s context, one can also refer to the original meaning of the word *theory*: observation—typical of the essential research practice of ethnological fieldwork, including a broader sense of observation (Sera-Shriar 2016, 1–20). The latter primarily comprises desk-research practices, such as studying reference literature, collecting other sources, and various analytical methods (e.g., classifications, comparisons). Observation in the narrower and broader sense depends on *what* the researcher is interested in (the research question(s)) and *how* (the methods) she or he intends to present and explain the research problem. Observation is the core of humanist epistemology, constituted by the specific interest in human matters and the unique relationship between the researcher and the researched, which depends mainly on the observation point. No eternal principles and laws govern “human matters”: Aristotle already noted that things in this sphere might be seen from many angles. The human world is not a homogenous field, and therefore, according to Giambattista Vico, the topical (old, “humanist”) method is best suited for it. In addition to a homogenous field, the principle (or law) of non-contradiction and consistency with evidence is crucial in science. In contrast, in the humanities, “facts” are contested, relative, and depend on the interpretation schemes that are not necessarily evident (Močnik 1990, 227–230).

Following this line of argumentation, ethnology is not a highly formalized and structured, conceptually precise, and methodologically rigorous discipline. Its scope may be represented by what in ethnology and folklore studies is referred to as “middle-range” (Wiegelmann 1991) or “meso-level theorising” (Macdonald 2013, 7). Dorothy Noyes (2008, 2016) proposed the term “humble theory” that “informs and is informed by ethnography and practice. It addresses how- rather than why-questions: the middle ground between lived experience and putative transcendent laws” (Noyes 2008, 37).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the term *theory*, in short, stands for the quest for new concepts and methods or self-reflexive knowledge production: “[H]umble theory recognizes that all our work is essay, in the etymological sense: a trying-out of interpretation, a provisional framing to see how it looks” (Noyes 2008, 40).

It is not only about the distinction between the “scientific” and “interpretative” approaches, the nomothetic and ideographic methods, or the strict application of deductive versus inductive procedures, which are intended to distinguish the “proper”

sciences from the humanities and, to some extent, the social sciences, but also about the development of science as a whole and of individual disciplines. From this perspective, theoretical and methodological reflection in European national ethnologies only took on a more explicit and delimited form in the decades after the Second World War. The shifts can be traced back to several factors, particularly to the disciplines' academic and social position and their disciplinary legacies. Besides, international links between national ethnologies in Europe and the more intensive dialogues with social and cultural anthropology played a significant role. Not least because of the diversity of national professional traditions and changes on the political map, these general processes took place in a localized manner.<sup>2</sup> Also current was the assumption that historically and philologically oriented national ethnologies ('ethnography' or German *Volkskunde*) in Europe, as well as folklore studies, understood as a specialist field,<sup>3</sup> contributed only a few theoretical concepts (Hultkrantz 1967; Haring 1998; Noyes 2008)<sup>4</sup> and lacked a comparative scope (Kuper 1996, 192).

If we relate this fact to a highly generalized ideological characterization with virtually no basis in evidence and context, Slovenian ethnology may also be labeled a “small national ethnology.” This characterization suggests “a central and east-European provenance,” where national ethnologies “are nothing other than an expression of romantic national movements and small-nation statism” and are held

to be predetermined to exhaust themselves in inventing (if not forging) a national culture, codifying its corpuses, sublimating dialects into literary languages, determining the boundaries of ethnic territories, etc. For this reason, they are not scientific. At times, it is also presumed that ethnologists from that part of Europe lack any theoretical background, belong to no intellectual traditions; they may be imagined as sheer anti-intellectual populists. It is further presumed that they are interested only in their own *gemeinschaft*, therefore indifferent to any other culture. (Baskar 2008, 65)

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, Slovenian ethnology in the first half of the twentieth century distinctly relied on the methodologies used in other disciplines, especially the study of languages, literature, art, history, archaeology, and geography (Novak 1956; cf. Slavec Gradišnik 2010a, 2013, 2019). This practice was rooted in a two-layered understanding of the concept of culture (i.e., high vs. low culture). At the beginning of the twentieth century, academic specialization contributed to the academic institutionalization of the disciplines, notably at the university: literary studies dissolved into a study of *belle-lettres* or literature in the narrower sense on the one hand and oral literature on the other; the former was appropriated by literary history, the latter was reserved for folklore studies.<sup>5</sup> Even before the Second World War, folklore studies began to draw closer to ethnology and, in particular, its cultural-historical school founded on diffusionism,<sup>6</sup> which also dominated studies of material and social culture. Locally specific was the academic marginality of ethnography (Sln. *narodopisje*);<sup>7</sup> the late institutionalization of ethnology at the University of Ljubljana bears witness;<sup>8</sup> there, professional education only began after the Second World War.

The fragmented field of ethnological knowledge was one of the first challenges

immediately after the war: it required institutional consolidation and self-reflection on the part of researchers, which took place in parallel. The world of folk culture—the subject that distinguished ethnography from other disciplines—dissolved before the researchers' eyes.<sup>9</sup> Reflection on this process was also differentiated, taking into account the discipline's past and science policy (cf. Balaš 2018). Researchers' personal trajectories and their different academic habitus—immediately after the war, the sparse professional core in Slovenia consisted of researchers with a limited ethnological educational background—can explain why, despite the new political system and ideology, there was no sudden radical change in ethnography.<sup>10</sup>

In the following decades, views on the discipline were the subject of broad and intense discussions. The first and far-reaching step was transforming the disciplinary landscape, which manifested itself in disciplinary self-reflexivity and created a vibrant interinstitutional and intergenerational culture of discussion. From today's perspective, this may be more important than the criticism that “(especially Slovenian) ethnology (as it seems) has neither its own (albeit ‘adopted’) theoretical corpus nor (perhaps) thoroughly clarified methodological premises” (Muršič 1994, 12).

This article debates researchers' views on the discipline, especially from the 1960s to the 1980s, when discussions on “theory and practice” were most intensive.<sup>11</sup> It observes the disciplinary landscape in terms of the attitudes that researchers expressed through their understanding of theoretical and methodological problems. These are, of course, only one cognitive dimension of the broader “structure” of the discipline.<sup>12</sup> The argumentation of Alan Barnard in the study of anthropological theories is very similar:

I have toyed with arguments for regarding anthropological theory in terms of the history of ideas, the development of national traditions and schools of thought, and the impact of individuals and the new perspectives they have introduced to the discipline. I have ended up with what I believe is a unique but eclectic approach, and the one which makes best sense of anthropological theory in all its variety.

My goal is to present the development of anthropological ideas against a background of the converging and diverging interests of its practitioners, each with their own assumption and questions. (Barnard 2000, ix)

The terms *theory*, *theoretical orientation*, *theoretical perspectives*, *theoretical dimensions*, used in this article refer to a coherent and reflective view of the discipline composed of questions, assumptions, methods, and evidence (Barnard 2000, 5).

In keeping with the focus on “fear of theory,” the material used in this article are texts that explicitly address theoretical questions in the form of comprehensive outlines of crucial disciplinary cornerstones. These texts are of central importance in shedding light on the well-founded critique that aims at an imperative transformation of research practice. This choice in material does not imply that other writing genres or other sources that can confirm disciplinary transformations (articles and books on various topics, personal communication, diaries, letters, etc.) are not relevant. Their theoretical focus, however, is in some way in the background, implicit or hidden, i.e.,

they are less explicit in the discussion of “what” and “how” a group of professionals does or should engage in (Slavec Gradišnik 2000, 19–22).

The term *aversion* points to the reluctant attitude towards theoretical issues expressed by the majority of Slovenian scholars from the 1940s to the 1970s, who prioritized concrete research tasks without explicitly backing them up with theoretical and methodological statements—or only sporadically.<sup>13</sup> They considered “theorizing” as something superfluous, or even more: as the opposite of practice or something that hindered them or squandered time when it was still possible to capture in the field what, in their opinion, was relevant material.

### **Positivist Ethnography: What and Where is Theory?**

The attitude of Slovenian ethnologists towards theory and somewhat less towards methodology (in the sense of a set of methods) was expressed almost symptomatically by not using the term *theory*. The Slovenian ethnographic bibliography for the years 1945–1950 (Novak 1951) did not even contain a “theory” section (it could be located under “General publications”), nor did the bibliography for 1951 (with a supplement for 1945–1950; Jagodic 1954). On the other hand, it would have been very unusual for researchers not to have a framework or corpus of premises to study, explain, and present their research field. The “absence of theory” had more to do with empirically conceived research primacy: priority was given to a positivist approach to empirical data.

This sort of emphasis was by no means a unique Slovenian feature, but a characteristic of ethnography and folklore studies in general, which are predominantly<sup>14</sup> the study of cultural phenomena in the context of local or national cultures. The ethnographic paradigm, with its emphasis on ethnicity<sup>15</sup> (or the ‘national’), was a rescue mission to salvage what was disappearing against the backdrop of modernization. Working with ethnic meanings (encapsulated in a people and/or a nation) as well as structures of permanence and the elemental brought stability to a changing world with its friendly coloring and a tendency towards social, cultural, and ultimately ideological homogenization, achieved through the nationalization of culture (Köstlin 1994; Löfgren 1989, 1990). For this political and ideological project, the relatively loose concept of cultural history, in which assumptions of evolutionism and diffusionism overlapped, and the positivist methodology of historical-geographically oriented comparative studies seemed sufficient. Scholars uncovered the origin, evolution, and distribution of individual cultural phenomena and their typologies (e.g., of vernacular architecture, folk art, oral literature) using the comparative method to varying degrees. The emphasis on the social context was relatively exceptional.

The combination of external factors mentioned above (weak institutional background, lack of a critical mass of researchers, and personal continuity) and characteristics of the discipline itself (ethnography as a historical discipline; the predominant romantic ideological basis; the main subject—folk culture—defined in terms of a two-layered cultural typology and based on distinctions between high and low culture or civilization, urban and rural areas; the descriptive definition of folk culture; and the

positivist method) also reveal aspects of a “spontaneous philosophy of scientists” (Althusser 1985) located in the burning controversies between science and ideology.

In the interwar period, the first comprehensive review of Slovenian ethnography appeared (Ložar 1944a),<sup>16</sup> confirming and problematizing the practice, which did not require a systematic and continued self-reflection but relied on generally accepted findings. The editor’s essay, titled “Ethnography, Its Essence, Tasks, and Relevance” (Ložar 1944b), and the first historical review of Slovenian ethnography (Kotnik 1944) framed detailed chapters on individual cultural elements.<sup>17</sup> Ložar’s preface was received both positively and negatively, both at the time of the book’s publication and later.<sup>18</sup> The first reviewer observed that the author “clarified many terms that were not always clear even to ethnographers themselves” (Bohinec 1944, 119). A few decades later, subsequent reviewers noted that the work represented “the first theoretical examination of the tasks and methods in Slovenian ethnological research” (Novak 1985, 197). They considered that the thoughts of the author’s predecessors were “either unconnected or without any theoretical depth, which in Ložar’s case was at the level expected of Central European ethnology at the time” (ibid.), and that was “already from the outset a systematically conceived contribution to the theory of Slovenian ethnology” (Stanonik 1988, 59).

The above is only conditionally valid, for from the text we can only deduce how Ložar saw the “theory”.<sup>19</sup> He defined *narodopisje* (‘*Volkskunde*, ethnography’) as a discipline that studies the people<sup>20</sup> and the forms of its culture. However, for ethnography, it is not the people who create a high culture that is relevant, but an “ethnographic people” or “folk” that produces a specific—folk culture. “The man whom ethnography explores and who is its main subject creates almost the same cultural values as a man of high culture, just differently” (Ložar 1944b, 8).<sup>21</sup> Differently, because the folk lives in communities (*Gemeinschaften*) that follow the principles of tradition; folk’s spiritual life is connected with nature, and the folk is not familiar with the problems of civilized people: “In short, [...] a man of the folk [is] a man of *nature* and a man of the nation is a man of *culture*” (Ložar 1944b, 9). In the modern world, *rural folk* (peasants), “who are the only ones that have preserved the prehistoric ethnological character of the former bearers of culture, while in other social strata it has already completely disappeared” (Ložar 1944b, 11), best preserve these characteristics. Ložar relied on the three-layered structure of culture introduced by Wilhelm Schmidt;<sup>22</sup> the lowest stratum “from the pre-literacy historical period of the people” is the most important for ethnography” (Ložar 1944b, 10). Ethnography studies the folk based on its “external image” or “cultural forms.” Ložar analytically classified these forms into material, social, and spiritual culture (Ložar 1944b, 13), referring only to those cultural strata that are still connected with prehistory and are characterized by “irrational creativity,” “typical beliefs,” and a solid attachment to community and tradition. Due to the influences of civilization, all this is most subject to disintegration. In turn, the urban population and its culture have not developed organically, but are a product of the “mechanical and civilizational laws” of modern life and are therefore of no interest to ethnography. Ložar attributed “social and national goals” to ethnography: ethnogra-

phy shows social, ethical, biological, and cultural values that are the driving forces in the life of folk or nation, and brings back the “organic culture of the old folk world” to “modern humanity” (i.e., “a mass of modern cities and metropolises”, Ložar 1944b, 20).

From Ložar’s antiquarian perspective, ethnography was a historical discipline – in line with the understanding of the term prevalent among historians and archeologists. He saw the most significant dilemmas in deciding whether to prioritize studying a folk or its cultural forms (i.e., folk culture).<sup>23</sup> The recommended method was founded on a systematic and exhaustive collection of sources (if there were no sources, they would need to be reconstructed), and their interpretation had to be consistent with the facts. He understood “interpretation” as “giving meaning,” which locates facts into “logical and genetic relations,” and as being capable of “understanding folk psyche” and analyzing form and content—i.e., typologically (Ložar 1944b, 15). Among the essential methods are comparisons with neighboring areas and cultures based on accurate chronological and spatial data. Finally, the synthesis depends on the “character, meaning, and goal set by the ethnographer” (Ložar 1944b, 15).<sup>24</sup>

Ložar, of course, must be credited with ambitious efforts to consolidate the subject and define its methods and goals. However, in many respects, the ethnographic practice has already outstripped Ložar’s conception,<sup>25</sup> even though *narodopisje* retained the characteristics of “peasantology” (“peasant studies”, Germ. *Bauernkunde*).<sup>26</sup> Above all, Ložar’s conceptualization had nothing in common with the postwar reality of life. It did not correspond to the newly propagated Marxist scientific goals of contributing to “building our homeland” (Orel 1948a, 5). Thus, academic rhetoric had to change, albeit more in words than in deeds: political ideology required a reflection on how “ethnography and folklore” can also benefit society as “a science that explores the cultural formations of our folk in their laws of development” (Orel 1948a, 6). Therefore, ethnographers highlighted their contribution to “political and cultural reeducation [...] of the folk” and “general cultural progress” (Orel 1948a, 5), as well as the need to make up for “missed ethnographic and folkloristic works” and to replace their random character of research with systematically planned organization and thoroughness.

This shift in rhetoric was evident, for example, in activities plans of the Ethnographic Museum (Orel 1948b) and the Commission for Slovenian Ethnography established in 1947 (Kuret 1972), the practice of monument conservation (Orel 1948c), and the safeguarding of material in Slovenian museums. The main points to be deduced from these plans are: ethnographers failed to revise the concept of folk culture; methodological tools and procedures underpinned scientific standards;<sup>27</sup> methods substituted theory, following the generally accepted opinion that ethnography is a distinctly empirical discipline. The director of the Ethnographic Museum, Boris Orel, argued that “complete material collected in the field is already half of the success.” To reach “objective scientific conclusions,” he recommended that “the correct scientific method” be used to study “all characteristics of folklife”—“one must master the method of dialectical materialism” (Orel 1948a, 8). He saw this method—or rather, methodology—as a tool for achieving the goals of “ethnography and folklore as a historical dis-



cipline,” which should reveal “the laws of the material essence of society and explain its spiritual life based on an understanding of its material development” (Orel 1948a, 8). However, his reference to dialectical materialism did not express a comprehensive reflection of scientific ideology or the Marxist understanding of science. He referred to the widespread declarations of the new society’s goals, to the orientation of concrete social practices, and, as far as the research itself was concerned, above all to its applied and systematic facets.<sup>28</sup> Even with frequent mentions of the method used, ethnographers essentially did not distinguish between the methods of material collecting and the methods of explanation; priority was given almost exclusively to the former, without considering that “creating collections is not an innocent form of representation” (Anttonen 2005, 52). It was the pattern of a “collecting science”<sup>29</sup> and at the same time the design of traditional science. One of its features was that whoever sufficiently grapples with the particularities and details of any subject (subject area) also arrives—more in a kind of intuitive insight than by formal inductive reasoning—at structural connections that can then be formulated from established principles; that is, that such a leap is born with sufficient experience.

Given the need for disciplinary reflection, such a practice was only problematized in the 1950s. The philologist and ethnologist Vilko Novak, an assistant professor at the university, addressed the two-headed character of the discipline.

In both the Slovenian and the other Yugoslav specialist literature, too little attention is paid to theoretical questions about the essence, tasks, and methods of ethnography. [...] Although the work itself is most important, without clear bases the work is not possible and cannot be correctly oriented. It is the lack of theoretical debate that is responsible for so many incorrect views on ethnography. (Novak 1956, 7)

Novak’s thoughts arose from university education’s needs and his familiarity with contemporary European ethnology (for more on this, see Slavec Gradišnik 2019, 43–48). He discussed questions and answers on this topic in his article “On the Essence of Ethnography and Its Method” (Novak 1956). Because of the terminological confusion with the Slovenian and international names of the discipline, he proposed the uniform term *ethnology*,<sup>30</sup> taking his clue from international debates. The intention underpinning this uniform designation was to blur the discipline’s descriptive (“ethnographic”) and generalizing aspects as well as the epistemologically flawed separation between the study on folk cultures in Europe and “primitive” cultures outside Europe: “[K]nowledge of ethnological theory and systematics, as well as knowledge of primitive cultures [is] an inevitable complement in the complex study of European or regional ethnology” (Novak 1956, 9). Studies on ‘primitive’ and European cultures also share the same object of research: “a man as a cultural being and the content and form of his culture” (Novak 1956, 9) or, in a somewhat broader definition: “The task of ethnology is to analyze and conduct genetical-comparative research on the cultures of primitive peoples and the folk culture of civilized nations, on the basis of which it can determine the general principles of the development of human culture” (Novak 1958, 3).

From today’s perspective, this definition reads anthropologically—that is, as a comparative study of cultures, emphasizing the origin and development of a particular culture and the contacts between different cultures in the past and present (cf. Slavec Gradišnik 2000; Muršič 2010). Novak’s legacy also includes the understanding of the concept of the *folk* in a social and psychological sense; the emphasis on the functionalist method, which highlights the relationship between people as carriers of culture and their culture, and the interdependence of individual phenomena within the cultural structure; and the expansion of the subject of ethnology to modern cultural phenomena and processes.

### Contours of a Theory in Practice

Novak’s reflections belonged to a period when the ethnographic paradigm had served its time, or, to put it another way: “Whenever ethnological thinking moved away from fundamental social issues, it fell into crisis” (Kremenšek 1980, 17). Embedded in the new epistemological and methodological framework was precisely the need for correspondence between the subject of the discipline and the empirical reality to which it refers. From Ložar’s perspective on folk culture, this correspondence was minimal. After Ložar, ethnologists did not deconstruct the folk culture concept; however, they conceived it in less antiquarian terms—preserved rural culture and not just a sum of prehistoric relics. After Novak’s intervention, it was no longer possible to substantiate its specific features solely by the systematic study of folk culture as a sum of cultural elements, without considering people as the bearers—or, in today’s parlance, as producers and consumers—of culture.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many European ethnologists were critical of how folk culture was conceived and studied. Clear evidence of this criticism is the watershed book *Folk Culture in the World of Technology* by Hermann Bausinger (original in German 1961, English translation 1990), which also proposed a different historicity concept. In Slovenia, discussions along these lines paved the way for a different delimitation of ethnology. Slavko Kremenšek<sup>31</sup> addressed two levels of historicity: that of the subject itself and that of methodology. The main question was whether folk culture was merely a phenomenon of the past or also of the present. The predicament expressed itself in the simplified dilemma of whether ethnology is a historical discipline (i.e., a discipline that studies the past) or (also) one that explores the present. Folk culture was thus the crucial epistemological obstacle in Bachelard’s sense.

Kremenšek provided a new reflection on the concept of folk culture. He argued that ethnology’s predominant line of questioning is ahistorical and wrapped in a vague image of community and tradition (Kremenšek 1960a, 13); folk culture is an antiquarian concept, essentialized in principle and reified in practice. In his article on ethnography and historiography, Kremenšek highlighted the following points: 1) the successful development of any scientific discipline, including ethnography<sup>32</sup> as social science, depends on inductive research and the degree which theoretical thought has reached; 2) research must follow scientifically reliable “conceptual and methodological principles”; and 3) the refinement of scientific theory results from concrete research,

which is in turn inevitably connected to the development of theoretical premises—a dialectical and non-hierarchical relationship exists between the two (Kremenšek 1960b, 7). Theoretical treatises should be supported by historical evidence, because each discipline “depends on the current state of social development and solves the questions posed by life” (Kremenšek 1960b, 7); therefore, their epistemological goals and research orientations change. This line of thinking resonates with the idea that “knowing what and how we know is a practical, not just a theoretical, problem” (Fabian 2012, 439).

In ethnology, it is impossible to tear folk culture out of the socio-historical context (Kremenšek 1960a, 13; 1960b, 9). In this context, criticism pointed at the cultural-historical and psychological conception of culture, which blurs its social foundations. According to Kremenšek (1960b, 11), ethnography explores “historical developments among the broadest folk strata within an ethnic unit,” including “material living conditions, relationships, and a wide range of forms of social consciousness typical of broad sections of the population.” A research field defined this way complements historiography<sup>33</sup> by exploring “human society in all its manifestations.” From an epistemic perspective, studying the present is part of a continuous socio-historical process that undoubtedly makes the entire ethnological undertaking historical. From a historical-materialist perspective, it is impossible to advocate any particular ethnology of the present. However, it is necessary to include in the ethnological horizon all the social groups and milieus that previously did not form parts of it, such as workers’ culture and culture in cities and industrial settlements (Kremenšek 1961, 8).

In defining ethnology, Kremenšek avoided folk culture<sup>34</sup> or controversial views on it, ranging from the outdated strata-based definition<sup>35</sup> to equating it with the mass culture of the present.

Ethnology is [...] a specialized discipline of a historiographic character that focuses on everyday, customary, or typical cultural forms and contents of the everyday life of those social strata and groups that give a specific character to an ethnic or national unit. (Kremenšek 1961, 7)

Historically—epistemologically and methodologically—oriented ethnology does not risk losing its object of research.<sup>36</sup> At all times and adapting to economic, political, and social circumstances, people try to make ends meet; they live somewhere, dress, eat in a certain way; they are actors in the social fabric, have their faith and their fun. Kremenšek was genuinely interested in the correspondence between the broader historical and social process and the micro-level of everyday life or the chronologically and spatially informed complexity of different population groups’ lifestyles.<sup>37</sup> Following Novak, he spoke about ethnic and national groups in general: this provided space for comparative and not only regional interests and a dialog with general ethnology. His arguments were theoretically firmly anchored in international debates (Kremenšek 1962, 1963, 1964b, 1966, 1968a).<sup>38</sup> From this perspective, ethnology in Slovenia was explicitly internationally oriented and informed, while field research concentrated on Slovenia. Research “at home,” familiar with international debates, was a general fea-

ture of national ethnologies in Europe (cf. Čapo 2019) that was later often equated with methodological nationalism (this was one of the reproaches by the advocates of the anthropological shift almost three decades later). From Kremenšek’s viewpoint, however, lifestyle or way of life and culture were defined by a material basis and social structure rather than ethnic affiliations. In Slovenian ethnology, it was necessary to examine these processes and characteristics first in the local and national context.

When discussing contemporary ethnological theory trends (1962), Kremenšek blamed European ethnography for being an assemblage of positivist, often nationalistic, and even politically biased ethnographic traditions. The way out of crisis pointed at diverse routes, just as there were unique tracks of development in different countries: they differed in their methodological orientation and their extra-professional motives (i.e., in terms of political and ideological bigotries).<sup>39</sup> He observed a commonality in the tendency for a unified study of European and non-European peoples’ culture. Still, the fusion into a single discipline did not yet resolve divergent ideas about its subject matter. In this respect, socio-cultural anthropology had no problem since it did not deal with folk culture and folk character (cf. Bendix 1997). Kremenšek outlined the definitions and studies of folk culture that moved from the paradigm of *vulgus in populo* or the search for primordial culture and its relics, to a more socially or psychologically conceived folk character, thus expanding the field of research to all social strata of the population, including the present.<sup>40</sup> Epistemologically decisive in this context was the shift from cultural elements to people who enact their lifestyles in specific relationships to cultural phenomena. For the newly defined subject of ethnology, he proposed a genetic-structural methodology, which he considered the most appropriate for studying the entanglements and interdependences of all socio-cultural phenomena in any historical period (Kremenšek 1961, 7).

In his dissertation (Kremenšek 1964a), he pursued these questions even more thoroughly: his study of daily life in the suburban workers’ settlement of Ljubljana (see also Kremenšek 1968b, 1970) was a pioneering ethnological urban research in Slovenian and Yugoslav ethnology and comparable to studies of worker and (sub)urban culture carried out abroad.<sup>41</sup> Kremenšek pointed at the conceptual inadequacy of folk character, community, and tradition, and at intolerable polarities urban vs. rural, past vs. present. His study expanded the subject of ethnology, placed the individual as the “bearer” of culture in the foreground by using the concept of lifestyle at the level of everyday life, and opposed the focus on individual cultural elements detached from their historical and social context. Without this frame, it is impossible to understand (folk) culture: it has to be seen as a process in the perspective of functionally and structurally intertwined cultural phenomena. In other words, folk culture is not an autonomous cultural structure, but a specific and dynamic structure in a *longue durée* socio-historical process; it has coexisted and interpenetrated with the culture of the nobility and the bourgeoisie since feudalism and has contributed to the existence of “high culture,” above all through economic exchange between the rural and urban settlements. For this reason, and ultimately because of the extensive disciplinary practice and expert discussions<sup>42</sup> triggered by the new theoretical and methodological orienta-

tions, Kremenšek (1973, 123–124) later reintroduced folk culture into his definition of ethnology, using both concepts—“way of life and folk culture” (Kremenšek 1983).

The first Slovenian textbook on general ethnology (Kremenšek 1973) was also essential for ethnological theory. The work offered students a general theoretical framework for understanding regional ethnology (i.e., in Europe and elsewhere) and an in-depth presentation of ethnology as a scholarly discipline. It included an introduction of the “the basic concepts and premises”<sup>43</sup>; chapters on the history of ethnology from Classical Antiquity to contemporary trends in European ethnology and US (up to neo-evolutionism), British and French anthropology, and Soviet ethnography; contemporary theoretical principles; the systematization of cultural development; cultural elements and lifestyles; and ethnological sources and methods. This handbook was excellent reading material for students for many years. It demanded a uniform understanding of regional and general ethnology and encouraged students to study both Slovenian and international literature on the one hand and conduct their research on the other.<sup>44</sup>

### **Challenges of the New Research Program**

The new research program—to use Imre Lakatos’ term—was distinctively historical (Muršič 1995). However, not everyone understood it in the same way as its proponent. Older folklore specialists, in particular, believed that the redefinition of the research subject represented a complete turn to the ethnology of the present, labeling it “ethnosociology.” It was a profound misunderstanding. Opponents denounced superfluous theorizing and argued that it “paralyzes research,” “that our discipline will sink in quicksand,” “that it is just easier to theorize than do strenuous fieldwork” (Kuret 1966), that theorizing is detrimental to the urgent study of folk culture, which disappears before the researchers’ eyes. It was undeniable that certain specialists in “traditional” ethnological subjects (e.g., narrative and musical folklore, festivals, and rituals) did not feel the need to revise the well-established practice of documenting and analyzing traditional culture. Their detailed thematic research succeeded in preserving a research niche and coexisting with the reformed concept of ethnology. Their scholarly value has been recognized in favorable assessments, especially in recent decades when interest in cultural heritage research has increased significantly.

The “new” ethnology confronted research practice with more questions and dilemmas than immediate answers. The fact that research and its self-reflexivity are parallel processes became apparent in the steady search for answers to several questions: it was still necessary to problematize positivism; to provide arguments for the ethnological study of the present; to reflect on what the elements of culture—traditional and new—reveal about people; to assess the methodological particularities between ethnology and folklore studies; to critically review and re-read the history of the discipline; to consolidate the status of ethnology in museums and monument protection institutes<sup>45</sup> as well as among similar fields in the humanities and social sciences, and ultimately to address the relevance of ethnological knowledge for society in general.<sup>46</sup>

Kremenšek’s vision outlined new themes and locations: local (urban, suburban,

rural) culture, workers’ culture, the everyday life of various territorial, occupational, social, and other groups, migrations, and ethnic issues. In the 1970s, two major research projects were launched, involving many professional ethnologists and enabling students to gain professional experience: the “Ethnological Topography of Slovenian Ethnic Territory” and “The Way of Life in the 20th Century.” Project researchers prepared ten sets of questionnaires for thematic and methodological orientation. They included presentations of “old” and “new” topics, topical references, and questions to aid fieldwork.<sup>47</sup> This formed the basis for many books and eighteen topographical studies dealing with the processes of cultural change in Slovenian municipalities.

### **Conclusion: Theory in Slovenian Ethnology in Retrospect**

In the decades before the Second World War, the theoretical basis of ethnographic research was poorly articulated, but this does not mean that researchers could do without theory. It was adopted from other disciplines and from cultural-historical ethnology, and it was suitable for investigating the origins, development, distribution, continuity, and disintegration of cultural elements in ethnic and comparative terms. In the first postwar years, when the discipline was compelled to adapt to new living and academic conditions, its systematic research program across all Slovenian territory aspired to fill blank fields of previous research. Moreover, its descriptive character and positivist methodology resulted from a firm recourse to the disciplinary legacy and the absence of novel approaches. “Do not theorize, do research” was the leading and persistent motto. It is possible to identify an innovative aspect in more systematic and organized practice and more diversified research methods. Ethnographers accepted methods rather than theory (cf. Grand Theory 2008). However, at that time, ethnography was “traditional” or “positivist” in the sense of a “spontaneous philosophy of scientists.” In addition to its extra-scientific element,<sup>48</sup> scholarly common-sense depends on three hypotheses that are intrinsic to science: 1) the belief in real, external, and material existence of the *subject* of scientific research; 2) the belief in the existence and *objectivity of scientific findings* on this subject; and 3) the belief in the accuracy and effectiveness of scientific research procedures or the scientific *method*, which is capable of producing scientific findings (Althusser 1985, 92–93).

The turning point agenda introduced in the 1960s and 1970s was based on a thorough deconstruction of the discipline’s subject (which is dynamic, variable, and dependent on the specific interests of researchers in different periods); it took into account the researchers’ worldview bias and recommended the use of the dialectical method. The objective of the key protagonist, Slavko Kremenšek—to study past and present ways of life through which individuals and groups deal daily with large-scale processes—was grounded in his personal experience, solid historiographic knowledge, criticism of ethnographic legacy in Slovenia, contemporary ethnological and anthropological theory, and international research. His assessments were often expounded from an explicitly presentist stance to elucidate better the differences between the “old” and “new” thinking and doing ethnology. Presentism also had a recursive effect: a paradigm’s establishment of a new, different perspective on what and how is being studied

results in a different evaluation of the discipline's past. By deconstructing the concept of folk culture, providing arguments for research into everyday ways of life, and furthering interdisciplinary comparisons and comparative studies of intellectual legacies in Europe, Kremenšek also outlined a different history of the discipline<sup>49</sup> by assimilating the discipline's past into its present. He drew not only on sources that had previously not been considered ethnologically relevant but also on "new" concepts that provided a framework for a better insight into the relevance of institutional histories, the trajectories and intellectual biographies of researchers, and the role of followers and opponents. All this creates specific knowledge production networks in academic centers or on their margins, which always reflect the general interests of a particular time and society (cf. Gerndt 2015, 16). In the interplay of all these actants, knowledge production is an intellectual and social practice; its driving force is theoretical reflection. The permanent self-reflexivity or confrontation with questions of theory and interpretation was the basis on which ethnology in Slovenia, too, was transformed in the following decades into an open and diversified humanistic discipline.

### Notes

- 1 Alan Barnard (2000, 1) shares a similar view concerning theory in anthropology: "Anthropology is a subject in which theory is of great importance. It is also a subject in which theory is closely bound up with practice."
- 2 In Europe, the most striking was the difference between the communist East and the rest of the continent (notably between East and West Germany; cf. Jacobeit, Lixfeld, and Bockhorn 1994; Moser, Götz, and Ege 2015), but dissimilarities were also tangible between countries within these blocs. The extensive literature on European ethnology and the history of national ethnologies in Europe, including their relation to sociocultural anthropology, attests to this (cf. Hofer 1968; Stocking, Jr. 1984; Bendix 1997, 2004; Godina 2002; Köstlin, Niedermüller, and Nikitsch 2002; Kaschuba 2006; Hann, Sárkány, and Skalník 2005; Kürti 2008; Kiliánová 2012; Čapo 2014, 2019). Studies of the history of anthropological theories also observe divergencies between various national traditions (e.g., Darnell 1977; Barnard 2000; Barth et al. 2005), taking up the issue of knowledge production from the perspective of power relations between marginalized local traditions and postulated knowledge-production centers.
- 3 In Slovenia, a distinction was made between ethnographers or ethnologists as explorers of the material and social aspects of culture on the one hand and folklore scholars, who focused on oral poetic tradition, folk art, and mythology, on the other. Elsewhere in Europe, where the two disciplines were usually institutionally separated, folklore may have been conceived differently.
- 4 This view demands special consideration of strong or weak disciplinary autonomy and the social position of ethnology in Europe before the Second World War, and on diverse theoretical frameworks. Some of them had an impact only or primarily in the local academic community and were not included in the international circulation of knowledge, with some of them became inspirational or reassessed only decades later.
- 5 Something similar happened with language: linguists studied the standard language, while dialectologists and ethnographers explored its vernacular versions; fine arts were

- studied by art historians and folk art by ethnographers.
- 6 For example, the literary historian Ivan Grafenauer described his decades-long search for a suitable approach to the study of folk poetry and mythology as follows: “The cultural-historical direction in the ethnology of primitive cultures has shown me a new path. [...] By studying primitive cultures, I applied this cultural-historical method to the study of the ethnography of Slovenian high culture, and combined it with the comparative method of literary history. This cultural-historical method and comparative-literature method, which has not yet been applied in world ethnography, has produced quite good results in the study of Slovenian folk songs” (Grafenauer 1951, 431).
  - 7 *Narodopisje* is a Slovenian term introduced on the Czech model (*národopis*) and semantically corresponds to German *Volkskunde*, or ‘ethnography’—meaning regional ethnology. In this article it is translated as ‘ethnography,’ though this does not correspond to its present meaning in English.
  - 8 This happened as late as 1940, when the ‘Chair for Ethnology with Ethnography’ was established at the University of Ljubljana (founded in 1919). Ethnology was based in the Ethnographic Museum (established in 1923). In 1934, the research Institute for Slovenian music folklore or the Folklore Institute was established and centered around one man, France Marolt. However, it should be noted that the first professor of ethnology, Niko Zupanič, designed his syllabus in a very broad and comparative way (Muršič and Hudelja 2009).
  - 9 What is primarily meant here are the dynamic changes in the demographic, social, and occupational structure associated with the industrialization of Slovenia; the parallel processes were accelerated urbanization and depopulation of the countryside, which ethnographers regarded as the home of folk culture.
  - 10 Until 1991, Slovenia was a republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For more on the relationship between political ideology and ethnology, see Fikfak 2011; Slavec Gradišnik 2013.
  - 11 On disciplinary innovations during the 1950s, see, for example, Slavec Gradišnik 2013, 2019. Towards the end of the 1980s and later, discussions focused mainly on the relationship between ethnology and (cultural) anthropology; this relationship is a significant topic that sheds light on earlier debates of theoretical character.
  - 12 In addition to disciplinary theories and methods, the discipline’s structure includes research programs and academic curricula, teaching conventions, and immanent traditions of the disciplinary subjects’ content that are passed on from one generation to the next (Kump 1994, 83), and this structure depends on the broader ideological and political contexts. Fredrik Barth (2002, 1) summarized it as follows: “[K]nowledge always has three faces: a substantive corpus of assertions, a range of media of representation, and a social organization.”
  - 13 This means that they are hidden or scattered across smaller genres (e.g., book reviews and reports), and were presented at numerous conferences (the most important being documented in journals), or they circulated informally. According to the classification of Alex Golub (2018) into curricular, disciplinary, and scholarly history, the discipline’s oral history could be placed in the second category. It circulates informally and refers to narratives that convey the personal experiences of practitioners.
  - 14 This article deliberately omits the reflections of a handful of individuals who, even before the war, perceived ethnography beyond the scope described. They were different, marginal, and overlooked, and it was only decades later that they were reassessed from fresh perspectives and with diverse interests invested in the re-reading of disciplinary legacy.



- 15 The term “ethnic” was not in general use in Slovenian ethnology until the second half of the twentieth century: researchers spoke or wrote about the culture of peoples or nations, folk culture, and civilized and primitive nations or people. In the absence of any particular theorizing, the term “ethnic” was used as an attribute for regional cultural differentiation (in the Slovenian case, for the Alpine, Mediterranean, Pannonian and Central-Slovenian cultural areas), i.e., for ethnographically uniform units formed by geographical features and historical processes as well as the proximity and cultural influences of neighboring areas (Novak 1958). From the perspective of general ethnology we speak about cultures of ethnic groups which are, however, internally socially or in some other way differentiated and subject to change (Kremenšek 1973, 13).
- 16 *Narodopisje Slovencev* (Ethnography of Slovenians) was published in two volumes: the first, edited by Rajko Ložar, appeared in 1944, the second, edited by Ivan Grafenauer and Boris Orel, was published only in 1952. Ložar (1904–1985) was an archaeologist and art historian. He first worked as a curator at the National Museum, and from 1940 to 1945 he was director of the Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana (Slavec Gradišnik and Ložar - Podlogar 2005).
- 17 In the first volume (352 pages with illustrations): Settlement and Land, Rural Homes and Farmhouses, Food Production and the Economy, Traditional Food, Outline of Legal Ethnography, Slovenian Folk Customs; in the second volume (267 pages with illustrations, a list of illustrations, indexes of subjects, places, and names): Vernacular Language, Folk Poetry, Slovenian Folk Writers, Poets, and Singers, Religious Folk Drama, Slovenian Folk Customs (a continuation of the chapter in volume one), Slovenian Folk Dress. Contemporary reviewers missed syntheses on specific topics already well-studied, such as folk music, folk dance, folk arts and crafts, and criticized the edition in general for its overall descriptive character.
- 18 Later, this reception was associated above all with ideological and methodological criticism (Kremenšek 1978).
- 19 The word *theory* is placed in quotation marks because Ložar used it very sparingly, although he was referring to Eduard Hoffmann-Kreyer, John Meier, Eugen Fehrle, Adolf Spamer, Michael Haberlandt, Wilhelm Schmidt, and Arthur Haberlandt. Only in reference to Justus Möser’s claim that the peasant is the foundation of a nation, he wrote that “some consider it the first ethnographic *theoretical hypothesis*” and, in reference to Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, that “according to his *theory*, a nation is built of various strata and classes” (Ložar 1944b, 11).
- 20 Ložar uses the Slovenian term ‘*narod*’, meaning ‘folk’ and ‘nation’ in the Slovenian language.
- 21 Ethnography is not concerned with standard language, but with dialects and the unique features of colloquial language, not with literature, but with folk songs, stories, and sayings, not with painting and sculpture, but with self-taught art.
- 22 “Die moderne Ethnologie.” *Anthropos* no. 1, 1906; *Handbuch der Methode der kulturhistorischen Ethnologie*. Münster, 1937.
- 23 He also presented the main highlights of research on folk culture with the dilemma of whether it is the social and spiritual culture that to be studied, or material culture as well; his further dilemma of studying the folk was the distinction between individual and collective spirituality and a question of folk’s inherent creativity.
- 24 If a research focus is on folk, the researcher must use the findings of psychology and sociology, and, if the focus is on culture, he must draw on prehistory (archaeology); ancient and contemporary history; linguistics; literary, art, music, legal, and economic history; geogra-

- phy; and anthropogeography (Ložar 1944b, 15–19).
- 25 In *Narodopisje Slovencev*, the chapters on individual cultural elements did not merely explore the relics or remains of the postulated primordial cultural forms; even Ložar himself surpassed his postulates in examinations of settlements and land structure, rural architecture, economic activities, and traditional food.
  - 26 The main criticism pointed at this orientation was not that researchers insisted on exploring rural culture, but that they studied it disembedded from its social contexts and based on vague or contestable criteria (e.g., age, authenticity, and aesthetic value).
  - 27 In practice, this meant: a systematic collection of material covering *the entire* Slovenian countryside, carried out by “properly assembled field teams,” and thorough research of *everything* belonging to folk culture (Orel 1948b, 7). The core consisted of researchers from the Ethnographic Museum and a few scholars from other institutions, who were extensively instructed in various documentation techniques and the appropriate communication with local people.
  - 28 In Slovenia, more comprehensive articles on Marxist-oriented science appeared somewhat later (from the 1950s; for more, see Slavec Gradišnik 2010b, 2013). A brief explanation can only be found in the following statement: “From a dialectical perspective, the whole world is a lawful process that needs to be examined in terms of its constant movement, change, transformation, and development or, in other words, historically” (Orel 1948a: 8).
  - 29 To illustrate: “The historical branch of the discipline and the situation [...] demanded not only the collection, but also a real rescue of ‘old’ material. The disappearing tradition had to be preserved in archives” (Kuret 1973: 24).
  - 30 He highlighted the past and present differences in the distinction often made in Europe between *ethnography* and *ethnology* (Germ. *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*), between regional and general aspects, and between description and generalization. In Slovenia, the term *etnologija* (ethnology) became established in the name of the university department in the second half of the 1950s. In 1975, the Slovene Ethnographic Society was renamed to Slovene Ethnological Society, while other institutions (e.g., the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the Institute of Slovenian Ethnography (in Eng. Institute of Slovenian Ethnology), and the Institute for Musical Folklore (in Eng. Institute of Ethnomusicology) have kept their original names until today.
  - 31 Slavko Kremenšek (1931) entered ethnology as a historian, first as Vilko Novak’s assistant for ethnology. He taught at the Department of Ethnology in Ljubljana until his retirement in the mid-1990s. His bachelor’s thesis *Ethnological Issues of Slovenian Towns* (1959) and especially his doctoral dissertation *The Ljubljana Neighborhood of Zelena Jama as an Ethnological Problem* (1964), which for many was not an ethnological study, already indicated a radical research shift. He remained a versatile and actively engaged teacher, advisor, and organizer of research and professional work throughout his career.
  - 32 In this article, Kremenšek still referred to the discipline this way, even though he discussed ethnology in the sense Novak outlined before him.
  - 33 This emphasis should also be understood in the context of the fact that at that time Slovenian historians were (still) mostly concerned with political history.
  - 34 This only means that it was not specifically addressed, but it is clear that it was not excluded from “everyday cultural forms.”
  - 35 Folk culture constitutes the medium cultural stratum, which, according to Wilhelm Schmidt, draws from the simplest lower stratum and adopts elements from the higher one (Baš 1960, 1963).
  - 36 This was the conviction of some researchers who focused on the devolutionary paradigm

of folk culture or who had in mind the utopian image of a uniform “socialist culture”—that is, a culture without differences. Thus, Angelos Baš (1968, 274) later defined ethnology as a discipline “about the history of the way of life.”

- 37 In this sense, he came closest to the concept of everyday life developed by Henri Lefebvre his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947, 1961), even though Kremenšek did not refer to it. When he later focused on the concept of way of life, he drew attention to several levels of research: empirical studies of the everyday life of different generations, local, professional, and other social groups, embedded in generalizations about national, European, or even globally characteristic lifestyles (Kremenšek 1985, 1987).
- 38 Interestingly, in an interview with Kremenšek in 2010, he explained that his theoretical background can ultimately be traced back to his life experience and historiographical background, and that literature only served to confirm his observations. During the academic year 1960/1961, he studied in Moscow, where he not only became familiar with Soviet ethnography, but also read about American anthropology and European ethnological studies in the well-stocked library, and his mentor Sergei Aleksandrovich Tokarev gave him a completely free hand (Slavec Gradišnik 2010b, 2013).
- 39 Kremenšek was explicitly concerned with the ideological and political entanglements of ethnology and the views of individual researchers and orientations when he later examined in detail the development of ethnological thought (Kremenšek 1978) and relations with other disciplines (historiography, sociology, geography, philology). In this way, he paved the way for and strengthened reflections on complex relations between science, ideology, and politics in Slovenian ethnology.
- 40 For example, he mentioned Leopold Schmidt, Hanns Koren, Richard Weiss, Karl Meisen, Wilhelm Brehpohl, Josef Dünninger, Sigurd Erixon, Swedish ethnology, Soviet ethnography, and research conducted in the communist countries and the US.
- 41 The relevance of this study was confirmed by a later publication of an abridged and adapted version in the US (Kremenšek 1979).
- 42 Since the beginning of the 1960s, these discussions took place under the aegis of the Slovene Ethnographic Society, whose members were the majority of professional ethnologists and folklore specialists at various institutes, students and amateurs. In the following three decades, the Society offered a venue for intensive discussions on vital disciplinary issues, brought together specific expert and institutional interests in the form of working groups, and promoted joint research projects. Thus, it was a place where different, even very contradictory, scholarly and ideological views were circulated (cf. Kuhn 2010 on the Swiss Society for Folklore Studies). Kremenšek was among the leading promoters and inspirers of these activities.
- 43 Here various definitions of ethnology are collected and compared; attention is drawn to the distinctively comparative character of the discipline; definitions of ethnos, peoples, nation, ethnic group, culture, and civilization, as well as ethnography, (cultural and social) anthropology, *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*, folklore, and folklore studies. The names of the authors cited indicates that the work was very current: John Beattie, David Bidney, Paul Bohannon, Jean Poirier, Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, Walter Hirschberg, Åke Hultkrantz, Felix M. Keesing, Alfred Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn, Ralph Linton, Robert Lowie, Lucy Mair, Ondrej Meliherčík, Kazimierz Moszyński, George P. Murdock, Sergei Aleksandrovich Tokarev, and Charles Winick; the historical overview cites authors such as Ugo Bianchi, Alfred Cort Haddon, Marvin Harris, and Thomas Kenneth Penniman, and the following chapters also refer to Hermann Bausinger, Rudolf Braun, Wilhelm Brehpohl, Hanns Koren, Robert Redfield, Catherine Lutz, Richard Weiss, Renato Biasutti, Joel Halp-

- ern, Georg Buschan, Marshall Sahlins, Elman R. Service, Eric R. Wolf, and many others, including researchers from Slovenia, Yugoslavia, and other communist countries.
- 44 From the very beginning, Kremenšek encouraged his students to engage in research that followed the expanded horizons of the “new” ethnology. The bibliographies published from the 1970s onward clearly show the commitment and, above all, the later work of the students who graduated under him.
- 45 These were the institutions where most ethnologists worked and sought to introduce new perspectives to museology and conservation practice.
- 46 For a detailed analysis, see Slavec Gradišnik (2000, 379–508).
- 47 In this regard, it may be significant for the ethnological academic community that Kremenšek succeeded in attracting most specialists in particular topics to participate in these projects, despite considerable methodological differences between them.
- 48 According to Althusser (1985: 93), “the reflection of philosophical hypotheses about scientific practice” is of non-scientific-origin; it subjects a discipline to uncritical service of goals arising from practical ideologies.
- 49 Thus, for example, he found the origins of current ethnological interest in the Enlightenment, problematizing its Romantic origins; he saw “the Romantic motives” primarily as a pre-scientific stage of folklore studies. These issues were critically examined by Jurij Fikfak (1999).

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