

# Historical and current developments in ethnology and anthropology of Serbia



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## Abstract

The article sets to present the historical and current developments in ethnology and anthropology of Serbia. The first part is devoted to the historical overview which portrays the development of the discipline from the late 19th to the early 21st century. It ends with an explanation of the use of the concept “ethnology” and “anthropology” in present-day naming of the discipline. In the second part, the most important institutions, professional societies, and anthropological journals are presented. The third part is devoted to the advancements of the University of Belgrade Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, focusing on the period since 2006, when the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms started in Serbian universities and when the significant publishing activity was invigorated. This part presents major projects, conferences and publishing activities, as well as the course curricula implemented in the 2014–2022 period by the Department at the undergraduate, master’s and doctoral levels.

**Keywords** Ethnology and anthropology · University of Belgrade · Serbia · Disciplinary history · Current developments · Course curricula

## Introduction

An invitation to participate in the conference devoted to the current state of the art and new trends in ethnology and anthropology, and in ethnic studies, organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was an honor that I could not decline. I

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saw the participation in this conference as an opportunity to present the development and the present-day vibrancy of Serbian ethnology and anthropology. It was also an occasion to learn about paths our discipline has been taking in mutually distant world regions, that is, in countries such as China, Japan, India, Iran, Canada, and Poland. I was sure that search for commonalities and differences in these varied paths could teach us useful lessons about how specific socio-political circumstances and cultural frameworks influence our discipline.

Due to temporal constraint that all the conference presentations need to accommodate, I made a choice to concentrate on the subdisciplinary scene as represented in the existing curricula of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. When conceptualizing the text for this thematic issue, entitled “Anthropology or Ethnic Studies Around the World”, I decided to stay within the boundaries of the development of our department, whose activity I have participated in and observed since 1988. This decision was also based on the fact that this is the home educational institution of our discipline since the inception of ethnology as a university study and is the only such exciting institution of the kind in Serbia so far. In addition, it is the only institution that unites teaching and research in ethnology and anthropology in the country at all three educational levels, namely at the undergraduate, master’s and doctoral levels.

Therefore, the text sets to present the state of the art and new trends in ethnology and anthropology in Serbia within its historical and institutional contexts of humanities and social sciences. The first part is devoted to the historical overview which portrays the development of the discipline from the late 19th to the early 21st century. It ends with an explanation of the use of the concept “ethnology” and “anthropology” in present-day naming of the discipline. In the second part the most important institutions, professional societies, and anthropological journals are presented. The third part is devoted to the advancements of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the University of Belgrade, focusing on the period since 2006, when the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms started in Serbian universities and when the significant publishing activity was invigorated with the revival of one and establishment of another department journal. This part presents major projects, conferences and publishing activities, as well as the course curriculum presently implemented by the Department at the undergraduate, master’s and doctoral levels.

### **Short overview of the development of ethnology and anthropology in Serbia (late 19th – early 21st century)**

Since its inception, the Serbian ethnology has been developed as a “national science”, with the underlying purpose of “nation-building” (Stocking 1982), the essence of which had been kept throughout the periods of monarchy (1882–1941) and socialism (1945–1992). “Nation” was the *longue durée* political context and epistemological frame of reference of this “national ethnology” (Mihailescu, Iliev, Naumović 2008). It was founded on the intellectual traditions of Romanticism which prevailed over the ideas of Enlightenment (Kovačević 1981). Born

as a reaction to Industrial Revolution, Rationalism and Classicism, Romanticism was a new cultural movement in Europe, characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism, idealization of nature, suspicion of science and industrialization, and glorification of medieval past. It had large impact on arts and literature, human and social sciences, as well as on the political sphere. Romantic nationalism provided a new key for a growing number of activists to “re-imagine” their national community, reaching beyond the traditional frameworks of identification, such as “political nation”, “regional patriotism”, or Christian universalism (Trencsényi, Kopeček 2007).

Serbian Romanticism encompassed a few basic assumptions. First, every nation is characterized by a particular *Volksgeist*, and thus the contribution of every *Volk* (Folk) to the treasury of the humanity should be measured by the richness of *Geist* (Spirit), and not by the role it had in the making of political history. Second, the *Geist* is not distributed equally among all of the members of the community – peasantry, the simple folk, is the principal possessor and guardian of the Serbian *Volksgeist*. And third, the *Volksgeist* expresses itself primarily in language, but also in various forms of popular culture, and particularly in oral folk literature and folk customs, which need to be meticulously written down and preserved, for it is on them that a culture of a nation should be founded (Naumović 2008).

“The romanticist intellectual heritage of its most influential predecessor, the linguistic reformer and folklorist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, further developed in the theoretical conceptions of two other romanticist-inclined minds, the legal scholar Valtazar Bogišić and geographer, geologist and anthropogeographer Jovan Cvijić, and reinforced by tumultuous historical developments and related social expectations, pushed Serbian ethnology in the direction of a national science with substantial applied tasks.” (Mihailescu, Iliev, Naumović 2008).

Institutionalization of the discipline can be traced back *de jure* to January 1880, when Comparative Geography and Ethnography was introduced as an obligatory course at The Great School (*Velika Škola*) in Belgrade (the predecessor of the University of Belgrade, which included Faculty of Philosophy), and *de facto* to 3 January 1885, when the inaugural lecture of this course was held at the same institution. The Cathedra (Chair) of Ethnology was founded in 1906, while the institutionalization was completed in 1922, after the devastations of the First World War were remedied, with the Cathedra transformed into Department of Ethnology (Kovačević 1990).

Once established, the Department of Ethnology of the Faculty of Philosophy, unlike many similar institutions throughout South-East Europe, functioned continuously (apart from the tragic years during the Second World War) to the present day. In 1947, one new institution was added to those already existing – the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Ethnology reached its peak as an important national science between the two world wars, in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, founded in 1918, and renamed into Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. Ethnologists had a major role in defining the concept of the Nation in the period of and after the Balkan wars (1912–1913) and the First World War (1914–1918). After the establishment of

socialist Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1945, ethnology was degraded and placed under the patronage of other social sciences, such as history, sociology and philosophy. “In the 1950–1974 period, ethnologists were studying the Own as if they were Others. The idea of the Own in the national sense became blurred by the concept of Us, both in the sense of a diffuse working class and, more importantly, in the sense of ‘brotherhood-and-unity’ of the Yugoslav Peoples. Ethnology started to bloom again, this time with less ideological fragrance, while autochthonous intellectual traditions linked to the ideal of national science were being slowly deserted, without new paradigms to replace them.” (Naumović 2008). Some authors label this period as the “phase of empiricism” (Pavković, Bandić, Kovačević 1983).

In the 1974–1980 period, further liberalization of the Yugoslav society had its positive effects for ethnology in two major ways. First were the contacts established with foreign colleagues who were doing fieldwork in Yugoslavia and others made during the increasingly frequent study trips of Yugoslav scholars abroad. Second, foreign books and reviews were imported or translated in numbers inconceivable in the previous decades. Nevertheless, the political elite became interested in the application of scientific knowledge in key sectors, such as economy and social welfare, which resulted in sociology, economics and philosophy gaining new esteem vis-à-vis ethnology.

In this period, a certain internal distinction existed within the ethnological academic community. Differences among the faculty were based on their educational background and international affiliations. The faculty close to the Francophone traditions was leaning towards Western ethnology, and those more acquainted with the Slavic institutional networks leaned towards Eastern ethnography. There was also a generational distinction, thus more or less readiness to accept new theoretical and methodological concepts. On the one hand, the more traditionalist-oriented faculty focused on concepts such as folk culture and tradition, people-peasantry, and ethnos-ethnicity. The concepts in focus of the faculty more oriented towards modernist approaches developed with time. The first generation appreciated historical methods, and worked towards interdisciplinary syntheses, like those offered by legal and historical ethnology, or the studies of material culture. The second generation was using concepts like manifest and latent function, but were also working with concepts such as structure, binary opposition, process, strategy and context. In the battle between the “traditionalist” and “modernist” approaches, semiology, structuralism and British reinventions of Van Gennep’s *rites de passage* supplied the main theoretical frameworks of the project that was intended to “revolutionize” ethnology in Serbia, and direct it towards the standards of Anglo-American and French anthropology (Naumović 2008).

Three meetings of the Serbian Ethnological Society that took place in the 1984–1986 period gave birth to the first modernizing research topics, namely: “The Urban and the Contemporary”, “Contemporary Position and Role of Women”, and “Culture of the Working Class” – topics dedicated to the modern urban society of Serbia. The research of urban society was thus one of the main factors that led to breaking away with the traditionalist ethnology. This modernization movement in Serbian ethnology simultaneously gave birth to an original and autochthonous anthropology of socialism (Kovačević 2015). And yet, during the 1980s, “the strange

twist of the fate of Serbian ethnology fully revealed itself – the ‘voice of the Nation’ in what once used to be a ‘national science’ was finally silenced” (Naumović 2008).

The 1990s were characterized by continuation of ethnological traditionalism, progress of ethnological/anthropological modernism, and appearance of critically oriented political anthropology. While the traditionalist orientation prevailed in the scholarly output of the Institute of Ethnography, based on a belief that in a situation of crisis, revitalizing forces could be mobilized by returning to the founding ideas and themes of Serbian ethnology, the Department pushed forward the modernist approach, with the aim of “anthropologisation of ethnology” (Naumović 2008). Political anthropology approach was ignited by the aggressive infiltration of politics into all spheres of life in Serbia during the late 1980s and particularly in the 1990s. It engaged in study of contemporary political processes and dominant ideologies, but also with their historical roots. Among the factors that were decisive for the reinvention of the discipline in this period are the increasing reflexivity of the authors, the rapid diversification of their attitudes towards “being native” in a polity torn by internal social conflicts and civil war in former Yugoslavia, and the intensifying demand to openly position themselves politically and ideologically (Naumović 2002).

By the end of the 20th century, ethnology was transformed in many ways. The anthropologization of the discipline implied a break with the political instrumentalization of the discipline within national projects, which aimed at establishing ethnic, and thus national borders. At the same time, this rupture meant a departure from “ethnogenetic” studies on the “origin of peoples” that were based on compiling fragments of paleolinguistics, archeology and history, as well as anthropogeography that dealt with the long-term migrations in the Balkans (Kovačević 2015).

The extensive collections of ethnographic material, which speak of “traditional society” remained the subject of anthropological pursuit, now no longer used for the creation of a static construct and its further preservation, but as a fundus of facts that are subject to interpretation. At the same time, ethnicity has become just one of numerous other cultural elements that anthropology deals with primarily in multicultural environments. On the other hand, the shift of research to urban environments was accompanied by innovative strategies (explanation, interpretation, understanding) and innovative procedures (historical analysis of diffusion, functional analysis, structural-semiotic analysis) applied to both rural and urban areas (Kovačević 2015).

The application of post-modernist (deconstructionist) and other approaches, with rhetoric on the construction of anthropological texts and the re-thinking of the issues of power relations in the production and distribution of knowledge, as well as their questioning of the social relevance of the discipline, was postponed, and started to appear only in the second decade of the 21st century (Naumović 2008).

Therefore, the core of anthropological research in the new Serbian anthropology consists of two parts. The first part can be defined as a modernist study of classically understood tradition with its precise conceptual, temporal and spatial delineation. The second part is unconstrained in terms of time and space, and its thematic and subject focus is on urbanity, modernity, and contemporaneity. In the space between the anthropological core and epistemological unlimitedness and the established zone of other traditionally based social sciences and humanities, there exists a vast anthropological diversity. This diversity lies between the anthropological core and

what is characterized by epistemological unlimitedness and the established zone of other traditionally based social sciences and humanities. Borrowing of anthropological concepts is often done by other sciences, such as history, sociology, social psychology, pedagogy and political science (Kovačević 2015).

In the educational and scientific administrative domains, ethnology and anthropology cause difficulties for the state administration in their attempts to make sharp classifications. According to the 2006 classification of the National Council for Higher Education, Anthropology and Ethnology is classified as a “social science”, with a distinct diploma title. In contrast, in the classification of the Ministry of Science, the same discipline exists within the Board for History, Archaeology and Ethnology, while sociology is classified in the Board for Social Sciences (Kovačević 2015).

As seen from the above, the history of development of our discipline has been long and layered. The whole process influenced the present-day dual name of the discipline, namely “Ethnology and Anthropology”. At present, when publishing their research, most authors use both names of the discipline, in any of the following variations: “ethnology and anthropology”, “ethnology-anthropology” or “ethnology/anthropology”. The exception is when the studies are devoted to the history and transformations of the discipline, thus, when referring to the periods when only “ethnology” existed (e.g. History of Serbian Ethnology).

At the same time, in naming courses offered at the Department at all three levels, the term “Ethnology/Anthropology” is used when it comes to subjects related to national (Serbian) culture (e.g. National Ethnology/Anthropology – Religion). With courses that take into consideration development of the discipline, such as its history, theories and methodologies, the term “ethnology and anthropology” is used. Otherwise, if courses integrate different theoretical and empirical content, term “anthropology” dominates. Upon graduation, the students receive the diploma of an “Ethnologist-Anthropologist”. This duality is preserved for two main reasons, one is to honor the historical tradition of “Ethnology” which generations of researchers and academic staff were building in Serbia, and the other is to preserve the position of our discipline in both, the humanities (ethnology has been and still is largely treated as a historical science) and the social sciences (anthropology as internationally categorized as a social science) in the institutional and overall public sphere. “Ethnology” is still more visible than “anthropology” in the institutional categorizations of sciences as well as in the employment market.

## Principal institutions, societies, and journals dealing with ethnology and anthropology in Serbia<sup>1</sup>

There are three major institutions dealing with ethnology/anthropology in Serbia, and all of them are situated in the capital city of Belgrade. The Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of

<sup>1</sup> Detailed list with contact details of institutions, societies and journals dealing with ethnology, anthropology, and folklore studies may be found in Vučinić Nešković, Pavićević, Aleksandra 2014.

Belgrade (founded in 1906 as Cathedra for Ethnology), is devoted to high education at undergraduate and graduate levels. The Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is a disciplinary research institute (founded in 1947), while the Ethnographic Museum (founded in 1901) is devoted to collection and representation of ethnographic objects from Serbia, former Yugoslavia, and other neighboring regions populated by the Serbs.<sup>2</sup>

Ethnologists or socio-cultural anthropologists are assembled within the Serbian Ethnological and Anthropological Society. It is the successor of Serbian Ethnological Society, founded in 1957 as a branch of the Yugoslav Ethnological Society, which from 1976 became an independent society. After the crisis caused by the disintegration of SFRY, it was rejuvenated under the present name in 2008. The main goal of the Society is to improve the social role and position of the discipline and its participating scholars as well as to support institutional networks and cooperation between ethnologists and anthropologist working in different institutions. Physical anthropologists gather within the Anthropological Society of Serbia, founded in 2007, as the successor of the first Anthropological Society of Yugoslavia, originating in 1959. The gathering place for folklorists has been the Serbian Folklore Association, founded in 1958. It was one of the successors of the Association of Music Folklorists of Yugoslavia, founded in 1951. After discontinuing activity in the 1990s, it was rejuvenated in 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Serbian ethnologists/anthropologists publish their work in five major journals, namely in: the *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology*, and *Anthropology* (published by the Department and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the University of Belgrade), *Bulletin of the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, *Bulletin of the Ethnographic Museum*, and *Papers in Ethnology and Anthropology* (the journal of the Serbian Ethnological and Anthropological Society). The first three journals publish three issues annually, and the last two are annuals. While all the journals publish predominantly in Serbian language, the first three also publish in English and French. Ethnologists/anthropologists publish in other Serbian journals as well, such are: *Africa*, *The Work of Vojvodina Museums*, *The Baština Journal*, *Philosophy and Society*, *The Critique*, *Balkanica*, *Folkloristics*, *Sociology*, *Sociological Review*, *Annual for Social History*, *Serbian Political Thought*, etc.

The Department and the Institute organize small or medium sized annual conferences with international participation. The Society organizes small national level

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<sup>2</sup> More about each institution may be found at their respective websites: (1) Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Belgrade: [www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija\\_antropologija](http://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija_antropologija) (in Serbian), and [www.f.bg.ac.rs/en2/ethnology\\_anthropology](http://www.f.bg.ac.rs/en2/ethnology_anthropology) (in English). (2) Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts: [www.etno-institut.co.rs/](http://www.etno-institut.co.rs/) (in Serbian), and [www.etno-institut.co.rs/en](http://www.etno-institut.co.rs/en) (in English). (3) Ethnographic Museum [www.etnografskimuzej.rs/](http://www.etnografskimuzej.rs/).

<sup>3</sup> More about each society may be found at their respective websites: (1) Serbian Ethnological and Anthropological Society: [www.http://www.eads.org.rs/](http://www.eads.org.rs/). (2) Anthropological Society of Serbia (dealing with Physical Anthropology): [www.antropoloskodrustvosrbije.com/](http://www.antropoloskodrustvosrbije.com/). (3) Serbian Folklore Association: [www.facebook.com/UdruzenjeFolklorista/](https://www.facebook.com/UdruzenjeFolklorista/).

conferences, while the Museum organizes the International Ethnographic Film Festival.

Each of these institutions has their own research projects, financed by the Republic of Serbia Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (Department and Institute), and the Ministry of Culture (Museum and Society).

Ethnologists/anthropologists are also employed at other faculties, research institutes, museums, as well as in various state and nongovernmental institutions. They are represented, for example, at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the U. of Belgrade, and faculties of philosophy of the U. of Novi Sad and U. of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica. Also, they work at the Institute of Social Research, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Institute for Political Studies, Institute for European Studies, Institute of Serbian Culture Priština – Leposavić, etc. Regional museums, spread throughout Serbia, employ at least one ethnologist/anthropologist, which is also true for the Museum of African Art in Belgrade. A unique institution in which anthropology was making a wider public outreach is the Petnica Science Center (near the town of Valjevo). Since 1994, the Center organized annual program in Socio-cultural Anthropology for talented secondary school students from Serbia and the surrounding countries. Unfortunately, since 2022, this program has been merged into a new one, called Socio-humanistic Sciences. In addition, since 2018, a summer workshop program was introduced by the Vuk Karadžić Educational, Scientific and Cultural Center in Tršić. In both cases the programs were conceptualized and implemented by the faculty and graduate students of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the U. of Belgrade.

Ethnology is still used in an applied domain, that of folk pedagogy and choreography, in two institutions, namely in the Department for Traditional Dance Pedagogues of the College for Pedagogical Education in Kikinda, and in the Center for Traditional Serbian Dances Research, presently attached to the National Dance Ensemble “Kolo”.

## **Diverse activities of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology**

The Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade is primarily devoted to undergraduate and graduate levels of university education. The four-year program at the undergraduate level concentrates on a variety of courses in socio-cultural anthropology, and in different ways combines theory, methodology and ethnography. In addition, the Department faculty is involved in national and international research projects. In the previous project period (2006–2010), the Department held two national projects: *Cultural Identities in the Processes of European Integration and Regionalization*, and *Anthropology in the 20th Century: Theoretical and Methodological Scope*. In the current project cycle (2011–2022), the Department carries out three projects, they are: *Anthropological Researches of Serbia: From Cultural Heritage to Modern Society*; *Identity Politics of the EU: Adjustment and Appliance in the Republic of Serbia*; and *Transformation of Cultural Identities in Contemporary Serbia and the EU*. All the projects have been supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological



Development of the Republic of Serbia. Department members also engaged in three projects supported by the Ministry of Culture and Informing of the Republic of Serbia, namely: “*Stranger Here, Stranger There*” – *Cultural Heritage and Identity of the Migrant/Guest Workers Population* (2011–2013), *Urban Cultural Heritage and Religiosity in Contemporary Context* (2011), and *Cultural Identities as Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2011–2012). In addition, two international projects were realized in cooperation with the University of Primorska, Slovenia. The first project dealt with *Factors of Disintegration and Integration in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia Before and After 1990* (2005–2009), while the second, entitled *Changes in the Identities of Ethnic Minority Groups: A Comparative Study* (2010–2011), focused on former Yugoslav territories and Austria. Otherwise, some Department members have been engaged in various international projects individually or as members of larger research teams.

Since the reforms related to the functioning of scientific institutions and their funding brought about by the relevant ministry in 2018, the Department staff has had an opportunity to apply for projects funded by the newly inaugurated Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. The calls for projects stimulate multidisciplinary research as well as participation of national or international teams of researchers. The competition for these funds is high, and the applications are reviewed by international evaluators.

Since 2012, two specific, long-term projects have been realized at the Department, with the aim to connect teaching, research and public engagement, namely *Intangible Cultural Heritage Weekend* and *Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar*.

International educational projects have been realized as well. Most importantly, Jean Monnet Module “Anthropology of European Union” has been introduced within the master’s program as an innovative two-semester project, with the aim of integrating research and teaching on EU-related issues at the Faculty of Philosophy. It additionally intended to stimulate debates linked to the Serbian accession to the EU with different public stakeholders. Also, Erasmus+ Program for mobility of students, lecturers, and administrative staff has been realized with a number of European universities, such as Panteion University in Athens, Greece, and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland.

The Department is also active in organizing conferences. In 2005 the 3rd Conference of the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InA-SEA), entitled “Urban Life and Culture in Southeastern Europe”, gathering 200 anthropologists, historians and sociologists dealing with Southeastern Europe, was organized by Vesna Vučinić Nešković at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade (for Book of Abstracts, see Vučinić Nešković, Brunnbauer 2005). In 2013, the Department hosted the 27th Conference of the Network for Scientific Cooperation in European Ethnology and History (Euroethno), entitled “Traditions of Europe: Modification, Invention and Instrumentalization of Traditions” and organized by Senka Kovač (for published papers see Kovač, Milenković 2014). From 2006 onwards, the Department organizes on average one smaller conference each year with participants from Serbia and some from abroad. Conference papers are published in the Ethno-Anthropological Series and thematic volumes of Department journals.

The faculty of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology is quite numerous. At present, it comprises 27 teaching staff (all with doctoral degrees, out of which 10 are men and 17 are women), plus the department secretary, and two librarians. Among the teaching staff, there are 10 Full Professors, 9 Associate Professors, and 8 Assistant Professors. Twelve of the junior members of the Department are employed part-time as researchers at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy, and part-time as teaching staff at the Department. In the period since 2006 the Department was chaired by professors Ivan Kovačević and Bojan Žikić intermittently.

In the 2019–2020 school-year, for which there are available statistics, the Department enrolled 297 undergraduate students (out of which 55 freshmen), 28 master's degree students, and 42 doctoral degree students. The Bologna framework of study started in 2007 at the undergraduate level, in 2008 at the master level and in 2009 at the doctoral level.

The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology is another administratively independent unit of the Faculty of Philosophy, U. of Belgrade, which got its current name in 2010. Its predecessor was the Center for Ethnological Research, founded as part of the then called Department of Ethnology in 1987. The Institute has its administrative structure, researchers, and office space, yet in its activities it is closely tied to the Department. The Institute organizes lecture series called *Agora*, which have hosted a large number of renown colleagues from abroad.

The Department publishes the journal *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* (*Etnoantropoloski problemi*), while the Institute publishes the journal *Anthropology* (*Antropologija*). According to the present classification of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, first one, due to its placement on the Web of Science list, is classified as the “international journal”, and the second as “national journal of international importance”. These journals have international editorial boards and publish high quality articles, primarily in anthropology, but also in the domains of related humanities and social sciences. The Department also publishes Ethno-anthropological monograph series, edited volumes, and e-monographs. In the earlier period, the publishing was done in association with the Serbian Genealogical Society, while in the recent years it is mostly done by the Faculty of Philosophy Publishing Center and Dosije Studio. All the mentioned journals and publications are open access, and are available online.<sup>4</sup>

Beside the regular volumes, *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* have been publishing thematic volumes on the number of topics, such as contemporary urban legends, new evolutionary paradigm in anthropology, structural anthropology today, cultural encounters in Serbian economy, migrant workers, popular culture, fashion and anthropology, anthropology of horror, anthropology of film, anthropology of music, migrants and literature, anthropology of TV series.

<sup>4</sup> The two Department journals may be accessed at separate websites. *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* may be found at [www.eap-iea.org](http://www.eap-iea.org), while *Anthropology* may be found at [www.antropologija.com](http://www.antropologija.com). Monographs and edited volumes may be found at [www.anthroserbiabooks.org](http://www.anthroserbiabooks.org).

The Department also undertook a publishing project in 2013, called the “New Serbian Anthropology” with a dual purpose. One is to present the development and constitution of modern Serbian anthropology, and the other is to introduce it to a wider audience through the choice of representative articles. The initiators of the project, Ivan Kovačević, and his associates, have envisioned two modes of presentation of new Serbian anthropology. The first mode is the editing of thematic volumes of articles published over the course of the previous four decades, which comprise the basis of the transformed discipline. These volumes are to be presented electronically on the website [www.anthroserbiabooks.org](http://www.anthroserbiabooks.org). So far volumes on a number of themes were issued, namely on anthropology of film, music, science fiction, new socialist rituals, advertisements, death, tourism, and TV series. The other mode is the publishing of review articles which give the wider reading public an insight into the development of certain subdisciplines of anthropology. With this in mind, *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* has created a special section titled “New Serbian Anthropology” in which, such articles are to be published.

## Course curricula of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology

In order to present the dynamic of changes in the course curricula at the Department a short overview of the developments in this domain is in order.<sup>5</sup> In the last decade of the 20th century (1990–2000), the structure of courses had a few principal characteristics. The core ethnology courses (as the heritage of the 1970s), comprised the study of three major cultural domains: Material Culture, Social Culture, and Spiritual Culture. Old World and New World Ethnology continued to counterbalance the largely nationally oriented content. Ethnological/anthropological theory and methodology were kept in this core. Each of the three major domains was further subdivided into “specific” (national ethnography) and “general” (theoretical) courses. Both categories of courses were now fused with more theoretical and analytical content. “Ethnology” was substituted by “Anthropology” in the names of some “general” courses, while other courses included a dual name – “Ethnology and Anthropology”. The names of “specific” courses changed their national designation after the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991 (e.g. Ethnology of Serbia – Material Culture). Courses such as Introduction to Ethnology and Anthropology, Physical Anthropology, Ethnic Anthropology, Ethnic History of the Serbs, National History in the New Era, and Theory of Contemporary Society (introduced in 1990 instead of Marxism and Contemporary Society) remained in the curriculum until the start of the 21st century (Mihaljčić 1998). The overall Department program of this period reflected the ethnological traditions developed in Serbia through the whole previous century, but also the influences coming from various European traditions (mainly of Central, Western and Eastern Europe), all that under the circumstances of disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia.

<sup>5</sup> Detailed description of changes in the curricula in the 1963–1997 period may be found in Mihaljčić 1998.

More visible transformation of the curriculum started since the early 2000s. In expectation of the implementation of the Bologna Process<sup>6</sup> in the whole university education of Serbia (planned for 2006), the University of Belgrade opened the doors to the curricula reforms as early as 2001/2002. Each department had the freedom to conceptualize its own new academic programs. At that time, the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology introduced some new core courses. A number of them substituted previous courses of similar content, while building up on modern theories, such as Anthropology of the Body, Anthropology of Ethnicity, and Anthropology of Folklore. Others were entirely new, namely Anthropology of Gender and Kinship, Political Anthropology, and Urban Anthropology. To give an example, Urban Anthropology was introduced for the first time as the undergraduate core course after the initiative of the author of this paper. The Bologna Reform, introduced in 2006, reinstated this course in the same status. In the curriculum changes that were introduced with the first accreditation cycle (approved by a special external commission), the Urban Anthropology course was also incorporated into the master's and doctoral programs in 2009, to be continued in the 2014 and 2022 cycles. Another new course, World Anthropology – Urban Culture and Society of China, which for a while was taught within the optional 4th year course on City and Culture, was officially introduced as the core course in the 2014 accreditation cycle. Assessed as attractive for the incoming students, in the 2022 cycle it has become a 1st year course entitled Anthropology of China. It should be pointed out that the system introduced in the 2000s onward enabled to test new course concepts and content within the already accredited courses through introduction of new themes and regional focuses.

The curriculum making and its reforms and additions since the early 2000s was a result of a process of negotiation between individual Department faculty based their own research interests (already implemented or planned for the future), and the Department leadership that was responsible for creating the overall study program at all three academic levels – undergraduate, master's and doctoral. The senior faculty kept some of the inherited courses from their predecessors, but also stepped into new areas, while the junior faculty created courses mainly related to the topics of their doctoral theses. The new curriculum was the result of a creative amalgam of traditional ethnological and novel theoretical and analytical trends coming in waves from Western (mainly Anglo-American and French) anthropology, South-East and Central-East European anthropology, but also emerging from the specific socio-cultural circumstances of Serbia itself (Tables 1, 2, and 3).

The following three tables show the present-day undergraduate, master's and doctoral studies curricula, implemented in the 2014–2022 period.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The Bologna Process comprises a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications. Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, most of the European countries decided to “harmonize” their traditionally varied systems and accept the framework of three cycles of higher-education qualifications (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees), using the European Credit and Accumulation System (ECTS).

<sup>7</sup> The curricula presented in the three tables may be found at: [https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija\\_antropologija/program\\_studija.php?god=4&nivo=0](https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija_antropologija/program_studija.php?god=4&nivo=0), [https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija\\_antropologija/program\\_studija.php?god=4&nivo=2](https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija_antropologija/program_studija.php?god=4&nivo=2) and [https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija\\_antropologija/program\\_studija.php?god=4&nivo=5](https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/etnologija_antropologija/program_studija.php?god=4&nivo=5).

**Table 1** Curriculum for a four- year undergraduate program

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Intro to ethnology and anthropology	Ethnological and anthropological theories	Anthropology of gender and kinship	Urban culture and society of China
Intro to material culture and heritage	Anthropology of material culture	National E/A - Economy and culture	Ethnological and anthropological museology
Material culture of Serbia	Comparative religions	National E/A – Religion	Nonverbal communication
Anthropology of the body	Anthropology of the society	Urban anthropology	Body and identity
Anthropology of ethnicity	Folk religion of the Serbs	National E/A – Clothing	Culture and violence
Anthropology of religion	New World anthropology	National E/A - Religion and gender	National E/A – Politics
Old World anthropology	Anthropology of the Balkan societies	Political anthropology	Methodology - Functional and interactional analysis
	Visual anthropology	Methodology – structural analysis	3 electives in ethnology and anthropology:
	Applied anthropology	General methodology	E 1. Literature and society, interpretative approaches
Foreign language	Foreign language	Fieldwork practice	E 2. Popular culture and folklore
2 electives (philosophy, history, archeology or sociology)		1 elective (archaeology, sociology or philosophy)	E 3. EU, globalization and multiculturalism

As the presented curricula suggest, the study program at the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the University of Belgrade is intensely focused on ethnology and anthropology courses, with only a few electives from other departments. The courses are conceived to encompass whole subdisciplines, or at least wider fields of study. Such educational concept, based on a broadly defined disciplinary

**Table 2** Curriculum for a one-year master's program

Year 1 (Mandatory)	Year 1 (Optional)
Anthropology of Contemporaneity	Optional 1.
General methodology of E. and A.	Anthropology of the European Union 1
Urban and gender studies	Anthropology of science and politics
Methodology of E. and A. (research design, field research, archival research, media analysis, repeated surveys)	Anthropology of religion and folklore
	Optional 2.
	Anthropology of the European Union 2
	Anthropology of popular culture and new religions
	World anthropology
	Final (master's) thesis

**Table 3** Curriculum for a three-year doctoral program

Year 1 (Optional 1)	Year 1 (Optional 2)	Year 2 (Optional)	Year 3
Anthropology of Islam	Anthropology of violence and crime	Mandatory: Methods and techniques of anthropological writing	Work on doctoral dissertation
Anthropology of modernity and Material culture studies	Anthropology of political conflicts	Anthropology of time	Defense of doctoral dissertation
Anthropology of fashion	Anthropology of media and media as a source	Anthropology of migrations	
Anthropology of the supernatural and A. of new religions	Anthropology of religion and gender	Anthropology of music	
Anthropology of kinship and A. of new biotechnologies	World anthropology	Ethnological and anthropological museology	
Anthropology of old age	General methodology of Ethnology and Anthropology	Historical and psycho-analytical approach to society and culture	
Anthropology of film	Methods of field research and visual anthropology	Historiography and anthropology of archaeology	
History of anthropology	Structuralism and narrative analysis	Ottoman state and society (15–18. c.)	
Cognitive and medical anthropology	Hermeneutic anthropology		

focus, is the general feature of educational system of Serbia, which displays continuity from the times of the establishment of the first higher educational institutions (early 19th century), founded by the state and staffed with Serbian intellectuals educated in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and other European countries. In that respect, the present Department curricula are quite different from many study programs in other parts of the world, where university studies assume a much smaller number of core ethnological and anthropological courses, but also include courses with thematic titles that dominantly stem out of the current research topic of the faculty conducting the course, thus without a wider sub-disciplinary or even field-related framework. Also, in some cases, anthropology is taught within or in conjunction with sociology or cultural studies, thus without a formal disciplinary recognition. In other cases, where the system of undergraduate diplomas is based on the Major (the main focus of one's studies) and the Minor (a secondary specialization), students have a limited number of anthropology courses, in comparison to a greater number of other science and art courses.

## Conclusion

The discipline of Ethnology and Anthropology has come a long way in Serbia since its inception in 1880 at The Great School, when Comparative Geography and Ethnography was introduced as an obligatory course. Since its beginnings until the start of the Second World War, the Serbian ethnology had been developed as a “national science”, with the underlying purpose of “nation-building”. After the establishment of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1945, ethnology was degraded and placed under the patronage of other social sciences, such as history, sociology and philosophy. In late 1970s, with the opening of the country towards the West, ethnology gained new vigor through access to foreign books and journals, and direct contacts with international researchers. However, the application of knowledge gained by the disciplines of sociology, economics and philosophy was seen as more useful to the state elites, who were mainly concerned with economics and welfare of the Yugoslav state, than the knowledge that ethnology had to offer.

The research of urban society in the 1980s was one of the main factors that led to breaking away with the traditionalist ethnology. This modernization movement in Serbian ethnology simultaneously gave birth to an original and autochthonous anthropology of socialism. And yet, at the same time, the “voice of the Nation” in what once used to be a “national science” was finally silenced. The 1990s were characterized by continuation of ethnological traditionalism, progress of ethnological/anthropological modernism, and appearance of critically oriented political anthropology. By the end of the 20th century, ethnology was transformed in many ways. The “anthropologization” of the discipline implied a break with the political instrumentalization of the discipline within national projects, which aimed at establishing ethnic, and thus national borders. At the same time, this rupture meant a departure from “ethnogenetic” studies on the “origin of peoples”, as well as from anthropogeography that dealt with the long-term migrations in the Balkans.

In the present educational and scientific administrative domains, ethnology and anthropology cause difficulties for the state administration in their attempts to make sharp classifications. According to the 2006 classification of the National Council for Higher Education, Anthropology and Ethnology is classified as a “social science”, with a distinct diploma title. In contrast, in the classification of the Ministry of Science, the same discipline exists within the Board for History, Archaeology and Ethnology, while sociology is classified in the Board for Social Sciences.

In conclusion, the history of development of our discipline has been long and layered. The results we see at present illustrate that Ethnology and Anthropology has exhibited endurance and vibrancy. The main disciplinary institutions -- the Department, Institute, and Museum -- have been able to attain continuity since their founding to the present. Among them is the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, which unlike many similar educational institutions throughout South-East Europe and other parts of the world, functioned continuously (with the exception of the Second World War period) to the present day.

The development of the Department reveals continual intellectual and organizational attentiveness of its staff and of the whole Faculty of Philosophy. The new curriculum was the result of a creative amalgam of traditional ethnological and novel theoretical and analytical trends coming in waves from Western (mainly French and Anglo-American) anthropology, South-East and Central-East European ethnology and anthropology, but also emerging from the specific socio-cultural and political circumstances of Serbia itself.

Contemporary phenomena and modern interpretations of traditional culture dominate both research and teaching at the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology since the 1980s. Application of analytical and interpretative paradigms prevalent in the international anthropological community has been focused on modern society and problems inherent to it (Kovačević 2015). Since this period the subject orientation was redirected towards reinterpretation of “classic” phenomena in new discourses, but also opening up for disciplinary self-reflexivity as one of its legitimate subjects. The new orientation, in what has been considered the core subdisciplines, includes enriching the curriculum by introducing courses based on individual research fields and themes (Žikić 2008). Extensive analysis of new research directions of the Department will be presented in a separate article in this journal.

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## Declarations

**Ethics approval and consent to participate** The research has been carried out within the ethical framework defined by the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia.

**Consent for publication** Not applicable (the text does not contain any individual personal data in any form).

**Competing interests** The author declares that she has no competing interests.

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## Comments

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