SPECIAL ISSUE

INTRODUCTION: THE INTERSECTIONS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND IDEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

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When ideologies are used to justify violence, oppression, or to fortify hierarchies of inequality in order to bring about political change that benefits some while causing harm to others, is there a moral mandate or ethical responsibility for anthropologists to engage with the actors pursuing such agendas? If so, what effects might engagement in ideologically driven political interventions have on the quality and impact of anthropological research? No one can critique from a position outside of ideology. Therefore, interventions are not ideologically neutral. If events in an anthropologist's field site prompt political activism, how should anthropologists reflect on the ideological underpinnings of their own research and their scholarly response to ideas and events they find objectionable?

The aim of this issue of "Ethnologia Polona" is to address these questions by interrogating the intersections of academic research and ideological engagement as they have unfolded historically and as they continue to shape our field in this period of growing political tensions. Today's political landscape is characterised by the global rise of authoritarianism, religious nationalism, populism, and neo-imperialism. Their implementation has led to political transformations that include occupation, injustice, and wars on multiple fronts. The entrenched ideological convictions of particular actors and groups have also fuelled the subversion of truth, the normalisation of "alternative facts" and disinformation, and elevated the acceptability of xenophobic and racist rhetoric in many regions of the world.

Anthropologists who conducted fieldwork during the Cold War had to contend with a polarised ideological context that either condemned or celebrated socialism, often in black and white terms. Many continued to conduct ethnographic research during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s or in their aftermath, when nationalist, xenophobic or otherwise exclusionary debates raged, much as they do today. Those anthropologists navigated conflicting feelings of allegiance and pressures to disclose who they were even as they withstood attempts to convince them to choose one side over another and to represent that corresponding narrative or interpretation. Regardless of the specific time or the theoretical paradigms to which anthropologists subscribed, there is a track record of anthropologists engaging in public debates, often as critics of the dominant political and social ideologies of their times.

We define ideology as a set of ideas that forms the basis of economic and political systems and social theories and practices by linking social processes to relations of power and domination. Global capitalism, nationalism, socialism, and liberalism are ideologies that have been particularly significant in shaping state policies and geopolitical alliances in the 20th and 21st centuries. For anthropologists, one of the most influential and succinct definitions of ideology was penned by Clifford Geertz (1973). He defined an ideology as "a cultural system." In doing so, he sought to reposition ideology away from a Marxist interpretation of ideology that equated "ideas as weapons" wielded by certain groups in their quest for power. Rather, Geertz depicts ideology as a meaning-making framework, and specifically one that bridges the gulf between the way things are and the way they should be, thereby allowing individuals to orient themselves and act purposefully.

According to Louis Althusser (1976), ideology, or the ideas we hold about the world and our place in it, has a material existence that is always present in our consciousness, concepts, and institutions. Ideologies permeate advertisements, election campaigns, government slogans, national holidays, and monuments. Once accepted by the majority and institutionalised, ideologies fade into the background of public and political life and are denegated, to use Althusser's term, which allows them to go unnoticed and therefore unchallenged. It is easier to critique the ideological engagement of others, especially when it is unacceptable to us, than it is to recognise, let alone criticise, our own ideological biases, assumptions, and blind spots. Ideologies are impactful and powerful since they naturalise and normativise certain perspectives, ideas and actions as well as erase the validity of others. They smuggle their value-laden premises into everyday practices and the rhetoric of daily life in such a way that inclinations, preferences, and orientations come to be experienced as second nature. This contributes to the negative connotations of ideology in the Marxist sense as "false consciousness," as a means to manipulate individuals and groups into serving the interests of others. Paul Ricoeur (1986) reminds us that utopian thinking

posits that it is possible to create a world without or beyond ideology which he, like Althusser, understands as illusory.

The importance of recognising the intersection of ideology and research, and the impetus to act it often yields, became especially poignant for anthropologists living or working in Eastern Europe after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This war prompted anthropologists to re-evaluate their own research and the existing theoretical paradigms that had been developed to understand power and political change. How can we explain the multiple outbreaks of war we witness today and the will to fight and destroy among some and the will to uncompromisingly resist among others? Which ideologies motivate these convictions and which do we want to inform our own? We can learn from how prior generations of anthropologists have responded to political crises, authoritarian regimes, and war.

PAST DEBATES

Throughout the twentieth century, there have been multiple instances in which anthropologists have engaged in public debates, by offering their research findings as evidence to overturn dominant paradigms and thwart ascendant political positions that they found empirically unjustifiable and morally objectionable. It is tempting to overlook the risks these anthropologists took and the incisiveness with which they argued their positions. In many instances, after initial criticism, the ideas they offered were embraced over time and emerged as new ethical, cultural, and institutional norms. We can benefit from recalling their experiences. We offer several examples of how ethnographic research has challenged ideological views on race, gender, and colonialism in the past.

Racism has long been a culturally embedded ideology that grounds certain ideas about personhood and legal rights in biology. Racism posits that there is a causal link between physical and psychological traits, intellect, and other cultural features that can be generalized in racial categories. As an ideology, racism has been used to inform, explain, and justify policies that have systematically disempowered racial minorities. In the early 20th century, Franz Boas was one of the earliest pioneers to use anthropological research to challenge the legitimacy of scientific racism and the dominant view that humans should be grouped into a few, unchanging, bounded racial types (King 2020). Boas' research argued for the importance of history and socio-political context as explanatory factors for cultural and even cognitive and physical differences among peoples. He illustrated this by showing the considerable differences that arose between the offspring of immigrants and their European-born parents. His data challenged the prevailing views about immutable differences between races by showing that even the cephalic index, a parameter for determining

the shape of the skull, which had "always been considered one of the most stable and permanent characteristics of human races" (Boas 1912, 5), was sensitive to environmental influences. These factors prompted Boas to insist on the importance of historical processes in shaping all facets of human experience and led him to challenge white supremacy and become a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. As early as 1910, Boas supported racial equality in the US, which was a radical position at the time, and was an outspoken opponent of imperialism as well.

Two of Boas' students, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, went on to challenge dominant ideas regarding gender ideologies and gender-based roles and identities. Both women made critically important contributions that shifted our thinking by arguing that biological sex was different from socially constructed gender. This was a novel and highly controversial idea in the 1930s. Through ethnography, Mead illustrated the variety of gender roles found across cultures and challenged the dominant understandings of gender as fixed and biologically determined by sex. Mead's and Benedict's findings drew on fieldwork conducted in Samoa, Japan, Papua New Guinea, and among North American indigenous peoples. Initially, such arguments generated much criticism and were derided. Their views gradually gained acceptance and today few would argue for a biological basis for gender roles. Overall, these two women used their ethnographic expertise to formulate fundamentally new ideas that reshaped gender ideologies by upending preconceived notions of gender roles.

The dynamics of challenging dominant ideologies also worked in the other direction, not just from anthropologists to the greater society. World War II was a watershed in world politics and in terms of imposing change on the discipline of anthropology. Talal Asad wrote that World War II ushered in changes that "affected the object, the ideological support, and the organisational base of social anthropology itself" (1973, 88). This reminded him of the extent to which "anthropology does not merely apprehend the world in which it is located, but the world also determines how anthropology will apprehend it" (1973, 88). The post-war period was characterised by numerous colonial rebellions that challenged the validity of European imperialism. As empires broke up, political power in the new sovereign states shifted from local to national elites who used nationalism to forge national cultures even as their economies and ecologies became more firmly integrated into the capitalist world system. Decolonisation movements changed anthropological thought through their objections to the colonial roots of the discipline, its claims to "value-free" study of "other cultures", and its role in replicating inequalities between the European and non-European worlds. As a result of such criticisms, new disciplinary priorities based on respect for human rights emerged and shaped theoretical and methodological engagements. Giving greater voice to indigenous peoples, recognising the political

and economic contexts that structure research, and acknowledging that a person's subjectivity can be a vessel for multiple systems of ideas that are often not singular, coherent, or reducible to state influence, became new research practices that yielded greater sensitivity to the power relations between researcher and subject. These new practices defined research in the postcolonial, post-war era.

Recent research on Cold War anthropology (Price 2016) illustrates how anthropologists were affected by state policies and ideologies. In the post-WWII era, Soviet ethnographers embraced Marxist anthropology and claimed Western ethnography served the imperialist cause. They engaged in ideologically vigilant critiques of "bourgeois anthropologists", who were known for their "aversion to Marxism" and "wariness of the USSR" (Alymov 2022). Western anthropologists, on the other hand, were constrained by restricted possibilities for conducting long-term, fieldwork-based ethnography. This limited interactions and encounters, and eventually slowed the growth of the discipline. Those who did conduct anthropological research in communist states had to contend with constant fears of endangering their interlocutors and losing access to their field sites. Westerners were pressured to reveal their political persuasions as either favourably inclined or critically opposed to Marxism, Soviet-style socialism, and leftist initiatives more broadly.

Katherine Verdery's book, *My Life as a Spy*, published in 2018, reveals the ideological circumstances that shaped her research during the Cold War. She describes how the Romanian secret police viewed her through the lens of Cold War ideological biases and concluded that, as a foreign agent, she must be a spy. They took steps to influence her contacts and shape her research outcomes. Ideological intervention also worked in the other way. Unbeknownst to her at the time, Verdery (2016) now acknowledges that, as an IREX grantee, the money that supported her research was ultimately traced back to the Ford Foundation and the CIA. She argues that her research was "tantamount to the product of a struggle between the CIA/Ford Foundation/Department of State and the Securitate to control representations of "communism" for US audiences" (2016, 450). She claims that most anthropologists working in socialist Romania did not intentionally denigrate Romanian communism. Yet, their ethnographies did not convey the "radiant future" of communism either. Verdery concludes that even "while thinking we combatted Cold War ideology, we played roles this ideology dictated" (2016, 450).

After the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991, Western scholars often analysed the so-called "transition," variously understood as a shift from socialism to capitalism, from the Soviet people to post-Soviet nations, or from authoritarian rule to democratic forms of governance, including the development of civil society (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Dunn and Hann 1996, Grant 1995, Hann et al. 2002, Phillips 2010, Ries 1997, Wanner 1998). In each instance, the premise was that

Eastern Europe was Westernising by trading in communist ideology for globalised capitalist principles of organising political and economic life.

Eastern European anthropologists embraced Western ideas and yet critiqued the ideological projections of their Western colleagues that orientalised Eastern Europe by representing the region as radically different from the West (Cervinkova 2012; Thelen 2011) and presenting Eastern European societies as mired in history and unchanging (Buchowski 2012). Most poignantly, Michał Buchowski (2004) criticised Western anthropologists for treating Eastern European scholarship mostly as a source of ethnographic data and disregarded its theoretical implications. He also asserted that Western scholars frequently subscribed to an attitude of superiority that made them the "observers" of the "observed", which rendered Eastern European anthropologists as "natives" rather than counterparts.

THE PRESENT MOMENT AND CALLS FOR DECOLONISATION

The Russian annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, followed by Russia's support for armed separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, became a moment of reckoning. They led to the emergence of new frontiers of war in Eastern Europe that definitively marked the end of post-socialism by destroying any sense of "fraternal brotherhood" (Klumbytė 2019; Wanner 2014). After 2014, the Donbas region of Ukraine joined South Ossetia as another destabilised region on its way to becoming another conflict zone, much like Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. Equally important is that the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine in 2014 were followed by bombings and the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the Brexit referendum in 2016, and the US presidential election in 2016. This succession of events had an enormous impact on Eastern Europe. It fractured the commitment of Eastern European states to Western liberal and neoliberal projects. For some, it justified increased militarisation, which led to the polarisation of civil societies (Klumbytė 2019). As the anticipation of an uncertain future grew, populist and illiberal ideologies took root throughout Europe and Eurasia. We must recognise the failure of post-socialist studies in anthropology to anticipate these developments. The political and humanitarian crises that characterize the recent past motivated many to use their research as a platform to advocate for specific political positions.

Divergent interpretations emerged among anthropologists to explain the war, revealing a gulf in understanding. Which country was the imperial power to blame for the tragedy of invasion, the US or Russia? (Dunn 2022; Hall 2022; Hann 2022; Harvey 2022; Kalb 2022; Ries and Wanner 2022). Despite this gapping division, the invasion elicited demands to "decolonise" the field in order to avoid the kind of

misguided assumptions that produced the blind spots that (once again) prevented us from anticipating the prospect of such state-led violence in the region. The calls to decolonise knowledge production include decentring Russia-focused research agendas; upending the Russo-centric logic that permeates institutional organisations, hiring practices, and journal content; and developing new theoretical paradigms and perspectives to inform the study of the region. Decolonising demands are made even though it remains difficult to delineate the geographical scope of the object of Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian research. Where is the border that separates Eastern Europe from Eurasia, the Caucasus from Turkey, and the former Central Asian republics from the rest of Central Asia? In other words, at this critical juncture, there is consensus that the infrastructure that supports knowledge production must change, but what it will become remains to be seen.

Appeals to decolonise research in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union recognise the 2022 invasion of Ukraine as a war of colonial liberation, suggesting that the USSR only seemed to collapse almost bloodlessly in 1991. Inspired by postcolonial studies, new research agendas have already begun to highlight the interstitiality and hybridity of Ukrainians and other Eastern European peoples, recognise the mimicry of colonisers, the power of self-colonisation, and the perils of postcolonial in-betweenness (Dzenovska 2018; Wanner 2022). Decolonisation is therefore interconnected with other strategies of knowledge production and writing that signal competing ideological assumptions and engagements to which we now turn.

IDEOLOGY AS A CATALYST FOR REFLEXIVITY AND POSITIONALITY

Ideological engagement was previously framed by anthropologists in terms of "moral models". Roy D'Andrade argued that anthropology shifted from a discipline that understood its mission as offering "an objective model of the world" based on empirical data to a discipline that produces knowledge by drawing on "a moral model of the world" (1995, 399). He cautioned against two hazards of relying on moral models while conducting research. First, he argued that "moral models should be kept separate from objective models because moral models are counterproductive to discovering how the world works" (1995, 402). In other words, moral models, and the ideologies that often stem from them as *systems* or *sets* of ideas, can potentially lead to erroneous conclusions. A researcher can be predisposed to see connections and make causal explanations for social phenomena because the ideology posits that they should be there. In this way, ideological commitment to a set of ideas can produce its own blind spots and ultimately be counterproductive. Second, to ensure the widest analytical vista and the most accurate research findings, D'Andrade urges anthropologists to "keep their politics separate from the way they do their science"

(1995, 402). While D'Andrade and others see moral models as epistemologically problematic, few today would argue that "objective" models based on empirical data are morally or ideologically neutral. Scientific knowledge, anthropological or otherwise, is always partial and embedded in power relations, beginning, for example, by the privileging of anthropologists' knowledge and authority over their interlocutors.

Activist anthropology emerged in the late 1980s and drew on such works as *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes, 1972), published in the aftermath of the turbulent 1960s. Led by figures such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes, activist anthropology came to diametrically oppose the views offered by D'Andrade. In contrast, Scheper-Hughes urged anthropologists to take moral models as the starting point for their scholarship, arguing that public anthropology "has an opportunity to become an arbiter of emancipatory change not just within the discipline, but for humanity itself" (Scheper-Hughes 2009, 3).

More explicit anthropological activism, including interlocutors who critically evaluated the ethnographies produced about them, gave way to native anthropology and other paradigm shifts that overturned the colonial dichotomy of anthropological "observers" studying the native "observed" (Abu-Lughod 2008; Buyskykh, this issue; Jacobs-Huey 2002; Kubica 2016; Wanner et al., this issue). Such new perspectives and understandings of who anthropologists study triggered a more critical evaluation of the cultural norms and institutional constraints that privilege or marginalise certain types of knowledge and an anthropologist's access to them. Researchers more explicitly considered their positionality in the research process, that is, the relations an anthropologist has with others as they inform power dynamics and access to knowledge. Power dynamics between an anthropologist and interlocutors are shifting once again as interlocutors increasingly Google an anthropologist before agreeing to an interview. Anthropologists are now trained to reflexively analyse and disclose how their positionality might influence their assumptions, perceptions, and ability to observe and understand. Precisely because positionality is analytically consequential, it needs to be factored into the research process and the ultimate research goals. Ideologically laden narratives both enable and constrain the ability to analyse events, how gendered and racially marked bodies are read, and how our own reflexivity and positionality influences the research process. Yet, it is increasingly incumbent upon anthropologists to try to articulate these issues and to recognise shortcomings and limitations where they exist. Such reflection is essential before advocating activist engagement based on one's research findings.

Humphrey (this issue) importantly asks what it means to "have an ideology". She writes:

How does an anthropologist educated to think in terms of the inter-related-ness and mutual subject-constituting processes of language, concepts, sub-jectivity, social institutions, economy, politics, ritual, and everyday activity deal with the existence of a self-segregated ideology — one that sees itself as a separate advanced vanguard acting upon the rest of 'society'? […] what are the implications when a studied people are seen to 'have an ideology' — which during the Cold War was perceived as alien and threatening — while the anthropologist's own intellectual formation is self-constructed as non-ide-ological in that sense.

By reflecting on their positionality scholars can speak openly about their ideological persuasions and motivations, whether they are writing with the express intention of evoking empathy in the reader (Buyskykh, this issue); encouraging engagement in radical activism (Trzcionkowski and Zawiejska, this issue); analysing the ideological underpinnings of rhetoric that facilitates state-orchestrated violence (Ries, this issue); uncovering "uncomfortable facts" through ethnography (Hayden, this issue); interrogating critical anthropology and neoliberal positionality (Songin-Mokrzan, this issue); or reflecting on how interlocutors have interpreted the identities and ideological biases that anthropologists might have in practice (Wanner et al., this issue). All forms of writing are embedded in certain ideological engagements. An analysis of positionality can reveal which ones.

THREE THEMES

The articles in this issue represent three broad themes: retrospectives on ideological engagement; positionality and ethnographic perspectives; and anthropological activism. In terms of the first theme, Caroline Humphrey reflects on the ideological underpinnings and her own ideological (dis)engagements during her decades of research in Soviet Buryatia. Humphrey recalls how her research was initially influenced by her Cambridge education and later by her experiences in Moscow. Her research task (to study Buryat kinship), ethnographic sites, timetable, and supervision were all decided for her. Her work was banned in the Soviet Union for "revealing too much reality" and criticised in the USA for sympathising too much with Soviet socialism. Reflecting on the importance of context in the production of knowledge, Humphrey insightfully notes that during the Cold War era it was ethically justifiable for "an anthropologist to adopt a non-judgmental stance to everyday Soviet life. This is no longer the case." However, she concludes that today, in the context of war, "[i]deology has become toxic, almost too hot to handle in a self-reflective manner, and from both sides it casts a shadow over whatever is written about it."

Robert M. Hayden is empathetic to such dilemmas. He unintentionally became a war anthropologist. He writes that "some scholars with expertise on Yugoslavia were paralyzed, unable to formulate responses to events that they had not anticipated and were not trained to deal with." And yet, they all felt obliged to respond to the tragedy of war by carrying out research. Hayden poses the same questions that anthropologists facing the reality of war in Ukraine ask: "What can a field-experienced anthropologist actually offer, and to whom?" His answer to this question is instructive — "the ability to make clear to foreigners why matters were developing as they were and how they seemed likely to go." Hayden's own contribution to the anthropology of war engages the ethics of responsibility, which he expressed in his commitment to uncover "uncomfortable facts" (Weber 2020) when writing about war-torn societies (Hayden 2007).

Julia Buyskykh and Marta Songin-Mokrzan engage the second theme and questions of positionality and ethnographic knowledge production. Inviting us us to write with empathy as an alternative means of producing anthropological knowledge, Buyskykh reveals how war reshapes positionality and writing. She argues that Ukrainians have "every right to express themselves emotionally" in academic writing because emotional testimony is a "deeper form of knowing, which contributes to more insightful and contextualised knowledge production in anthropology." For Buyskykh, writing with empathy indicates recognition, respect, and awareness of other "lifeworlds." She challenges established conventions that dismiss empathy as feminine, emotional, biased, and inconsistent with Western rational science. In the context of the atrocities of war, which include death, internal displacement, and exile, Buyskykh argues that anthropology "has a right to engage, to intervene, and to be a moral science."

Empathy can indeed be germane to the anthropological enterprise and to successful fieldwork. It can lead to genuine insight derived from overcoming our own limitations by imagining the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of others. Marta Songin-Mokrzan argues that neoliberalism "diffuses power and complicates the pursuit of critical anthropology." Her strategy is to find ways of writing outside of a validating neoliberal framework, or even beyond any particular ideology. Songin-Mokrzan invites anthropologists to navigate the complex web of power and their own positionality within it and within particular socio-political contexts as a means to produce transformative scholarship.

Nancy Ries, Lech Trzcionkowski and Natalia Zawiejska, in their respective papers, use their research to ideologically engage with issues that are of great moral and political significance to them, as demonstrations of anthropological activism. Ries analyses the disturbing rhetoric promulgated by Russian state authorities, media ideologists, and militant bloggers. Her article serves as a testimony to Russia's genocidal intentions towards Ukraine and how they are instrumentalised as tools of agitation

and propaganda. "Cruel discourse" is the phrase she uses to depict the ideologies of violence used in Russia to legitimise, justify, and instigate violent action. Cruel discourse "reinvents institutions, hierarchies, boundaries, selves, expectations, desires, and futures" that enable this war to function "for its own sake and for the amplification of power. Orgiastic, ritualistic, sadistic."

In a similar vein, Lech Trzcionkowski and Natalia Zawiejska see activism among religious studies scholars as a form of political intervention. Lawsuits linked to religion replicate ideological cleavages in Polish society between those who want to protect Christianity and those who promote liberal views. The polarisation of the religious field is influenced by the rise of the right-wing political faction "Solidarna" and their mobilisation "in defence of Christians". Scholars who engage in religious activism, they argue, could aim to destabilise the very existing power structures and societal conventions that normalise initiatives that claim to defend Christians as well as other ideologies supported by right-wing politicians.

The final contribution to this issue, "A Conversation: On the Challenges of Engagement and Doing Ethnographic Research in Conflict Zones," integrates and illustrates each of these three themes through a conversation between anthropologists who conduct ethnographic research in the former Yugoslavia in the aftermath of war (Sandra King-Savic and Jelena Tosic) and two scholars who conduct research in Ukraine during an active phase of combat (Oleksandra Tarkhanova and Catherine Wanner). They provide specific illustrations of how ideology and ideological engagement, their own and that of their interlocutors, have affected their ethnographic research by providing concrete depictions of how these dynamics have played out in the course of their research.

In sum, this issue was inspired by the recognition that the war in Ukraine will likely lead to substantial shifts in European anthropology, ethnographic methodology, and theoretical paradigms. A decolonising movement away from an ideologically induced privileging of certain centres of power and objects of research will surely have a domino effect on how we study other issues, problems, and places. These changes highlight our interconnectedness and signal that the era of "us" writing about "them" is definitely over as is the Western gaze on the Eastern other with its paternalistic and disciplining voice. This moment will likely give rise to new forms of activist anthropology and morally informed models of perceiving, researching, and writing with empathy. A recalibration of the East as a new ideological paradigm invites us to reconceptualise very basic categories, such as East/West relations, Russia/Eastern Europe, empire/colonies, and to revisit earlier perspectives on Eastern Europe in order to reveal how East European anthropology intersects with global postcolonial and post-imperial historical developments.

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