



## **Departures and Arrivals – The Second Finnish-Hungarian-Estonian Ethnological Symposium**

The second Finnish-Hungarian-Estonian symposium is based on a long tradition of co-operation between these three countries. More than 30 years, Finnish, Hungarian and nowadays also Estonian ethnologists have gathered together and discussed current topics of the field. The symposium of 2017 was organized by Hungarians. Physically, the symposium was held in Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca), Romania, in mid-May with the collaboration of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society and the Kriza János Ethnographic Society. The theme of the symposium was “Departure and Arrival: Migratory Processes and Local Responses from Ethnographic and Anthropological Perspective” – a very burning issue especially in Hungary, but also in the northern parts of Europe.

There were two days reserved for the presentations and one day for an excursion to the Torda salt mine. Each day, there was one keynote speech given during the presentations. The first keynote speech was presented by professor Helena Ruotsala from the University of Turku. Her topic was different types of departures and arrivals in the Tornio valley in Finland and Sweden. Thanks to her expertness on the northern issues and professional view of the situation of refugees in the northern parts of Finland in the past few years, her speech gave a valuable insight into the cross-border mobilization in this northern area. Ruotsala constructed her paper on different modes of mobility over the border between the Second World War and year 2015, when tens of thousands of refugees crossed the border from Sweden to Finland. The presentation was based on Ruotsala’s own experiences during her field work periods in the twin cities of Tornio and Haparanda.

Interesting notions were made especially in the context of the open border with connotations of “saving” the border.

The second keynote speech was presented by Director Balázs Balogh from the Institute of Ethnology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The topic of his fascinating keynote speech was the immigration waves from Hungary to the USA. Balogh defined the different immigration waves from Hungary and then described current cultural heritage practices (in this case e.g. food, music, dances, and artifacts) and their meanings and values for the (Hungarian) identities among immigrants. He explained how the connections to Hungarian culture depend on the families and their heritage practices. For example, in some cases the Hungarian language might be saved even in the 5th generation of immigrants. Strong connections to the Catholic Church have been a powerful way to preserve Hungarian ways of life even though the number of little churches has been diminishing compared to the situation in the 1930s and 1940s. An interesting museological project going on is one where researchers move all the artifacts of one immigrant household back to Hungary and build a replica of that house there.

The main themes of the sessions were historical and contemporary topics related to migration processes, questions of identities and some special views, for example animal agencies and (museum) pedagogical issues. In this report, I will give one example of each of those themes. Professor Art Leete from the University of Tartu made a presentation of alcohol trade in Western Siberia. Leete constructed a rather complex and complicated net of ideas and practices related to the use and trade of alcohol among indigenous people in Western Siberia. The indigenous people were not just helpless victims of the alcohol trade but had versatile approaches, e.g.

religious practices, to applying alcohol to local cultural practices.

Very current and controversial topics were also offered in the symposium. For example, Árpád Töhötöm Szábo from the Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj Napoca) spoke about work, property relations and patterns of Romani migration, and his case study was from Transylvania. According to Szábo's presentation, the situation of Romani people in Transylvania is connected to state structures and the global capitalist economy even though they live practically outside the state control systems. The understanding of their own situation, environment and possibilities to influence their own circumstances are rather low. Another example comes from Estonia. In her presentation, doctoral candidate Keiu Telve from the University of Tartu described her case study of Estonian male commuters in Finland. The topic of the presentation was their cross-border commuting through networks. Estonian male workers were an example of "good migrants"; hard working men who also have good language skills and a Nordic temperament. Telve made an excellent example of current netnographic research, which might have social impacts on our society.

Finally, I was very pleased that there were some strongly museological presentations in the symposium, because all these three countries have a vivid and active museum sphere. For example, Edina Földessy from the Museum of Ethnography (Budapest) spoke about research proj-

ects that have been conducted in the museum on the material culture of immigrant groups in Budapest. The research made among immigrants was mainly focused on objects that immigrants considered meaningful to them. These objects revealed different life strategies in a host society, cultural relations, dialogues, negotiations and discourses about sameness and alterity between immigrants and Hungarian society. One very affecting example was a project in which the museum researcher collected objects that were left behind by immigrants when they were moved on from the border areas of Hungary. Those objects were treated as archaeological objects and remind us all of the stories that were not told and collected. Museum visitors were able to create new stories for those objects but the sense of loss and sorrow behind those objects was still present.

What about the future of the symposium? The next symposium will be held in 2020 in Tartu, Estonia, and the one after that in 2023 in Budapest, Hungary, where the Museum of Ethnography should have a new museum building to explore. In the final discussions, the idea was presented that *dialogues* might be the next topic for the symposium. The unique combination of fraternal and friendly collaboration and the variety of research interests are the key issues that make the symposium appealing and fruitful also in the next decade. Tartu of dialogues – we are waiting for you.

*Maija Mäki*