
SIEF 2023 16th Congress **Brno, Czech Republic: 7 – 10 June 2023**

16th Congress of Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) was held in Brno, Czech Republic in the period 7 – 10 June, 2023. The SIEF2023 Congress was hosted by the Department of European Ethnology, Faculty of Arts at the Masaryk University. Among the organizing institutions was also the Institute of Ethnology at the Czech Academy of Sciences and the National Institute of Folk Culture. The theme of the Congress was Living Uncertainty and its various aspects were debated in 132 panels by more than 900 delegates coming from a broad range of countries around the world, thus SIEF2023 reached far beyond Europe. Besides the interesting panels, the conference program also included poster sessions, ethnographic documentaries, and film screenings, working group meetings, publication workshops, and the journal reception reception offered at the congress which was the first face-to-face conference after Covid-19.

Registration and reception was opened in OREA Congress Hotel on Wednesday, 7th June. The opening ceremony culminated with the keynote lecture delivered by Marilyn Stranther, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge. On the following three days (8 – 10 June), the participants took part and attended morning and afternoon Sessions divided into 18 subject areas: Archives, Museums, Material Culture; Bodies, Affects, Senses, Emotions; Digital Lives; Environment; Food; Health and Medicine; Heritage; Historical Approaches; Intersectionalities; Knowledge Production; Mobilities; Narratives; Performativity and Ritual; Politics and Power; Posthumanism; Posters; Religion; Urban Studies. Workshops, tours and curated audiovisual programmes were similarly attractive additions to the convergence events.

The first Plenary Session was held on June, 8th at the Scala University Cinema, chaired by Dani Schrire with speakers Michal Buchowski and Andrea Kitta. The title of this plenary was “Uncertain terrains”. Session 3 with panels, posters, workshops and roundtables followed until 18:15 am. The evening concluded with working group meetings and journal reception and SIEF2021 special issue launch:

Ethnologia Europaea and Cultural Analysis with Ethnologica Fennica “Towards sustainable foodways”.

The next day of the Congress, Friday 9th June was opened with two workshops and one curated audiovisual programme: Old Believers. Session 4 with various panels was taking place at the same time. Plenary session II: Methodological Uncertainty was held at the Scala University Cinema, chaired by Sona Gyarfás Lutherova with the following speakers: Tatiana Buzekova, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, Kyrre Kverndokk, Tim Tangherlini. After lunch at the Academic canteen, Session 5 was opened in the afternoon. In the evening the General Assembly of SIEF was held at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University – the central conference venue. This event was followed by the Young Scholars Prize lectures, working group meetings and mentor and mentee meeting (pre-registration only).

The Congress was attended by the team of the research project “Anthropology of uncertainty. Continuity and Change in the Post-Socialist Period” KP-06-H55/12 based at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)– Ana Luleva (project leader), Ivanka Petrova, Zlatina Bogdanova and Milena Benovska-Sabkova from the South West University “Neofit Rilski” / New Bulgarian University. Ivanka Petrova delivered a presentation “Economic uncertainty and dependencies: creation, enforcement and perception of dependent relations in small family enterprises in Bulgaria” during Session 2 in the “Politics and Power” panel with a title: Dependence and livelihood in times of uncertainty. In the same panel, Milena Benovska-Sabkova read her paper “Insecurity, informality and “moral economy” in West Rhodopes (Bulgaria)”. At the same time during panel “Changing communities in mountain areas between certainties and uncertainties”, Zlatina Bogdanova presented her research “Protesting villages: how local resistance movements are fighting for small communities”. On Saturday, 10th June, in Session 6, Ana Luleva gave her presentation “Family strategies for coping with uncertainty in Bulgaria – between dependency and support”. This panel was dedicated to the topic “Family as a safe haven? Families in social practice and narratives in times of crises”.

More researchers and colleagues from IEFSEM-BAS attended the Congress and delivered papers: “Fieldwork strategy among the Romani left-behind children in Bulgaria” (Magdalena Slavkova); “Natural resources and uncertainty: transforming local practices in search of sustainability (a case study from Bulgaria)” (Ivaylo Markov and Desislava Pileva).

On the last day of the Congress, Saturday, 10th June Sessions 6 and 7 finalized the discussions. In the afternoon Andrea Peto (Central European University, Vienna, Austria, CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest, Hungary) delivered keynote speech II: Teaching and Writing the Truth Today: Five Options. The conference was closed by a roundtable: On the Precarity of Our Disciplines: Possible Ways Forward, chaired by Monique Scheer with speakers: Carna Brkovic, Martin Fotta, Roger Norum, Clara Saraiva. The closing ceremony followed at the Masaryk University and the farewell social event took place at Brno Market Hall.

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