

Notes from Belgrade: Social Anthropology for Archaeology Students in a Post-Conflict Society

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Abstract:

Social anthropology courses, some elective and some mandatory, for archaeology students at the Department of Archaeology, University of Belgrade, commenced only after 2003. Since Serbian society opened itself from its isolation, the key challenge has been to teach new generations who have grown up during the civil wars in Former Yugoslavia to recognize broader perspectives on human cultures, universalities, and differences. Anthropology has been consequently utilized as a prominent tool for cultural relativism, multiculturalism, ‘Otherness’, and reflexive thinking. However much these facets have all proved necessary, they seem to have fallen to the wayside in ‘post-truth’ world. It has therefore become unclear in teaching how to address the phenomenon. This paper aims to critically discuss anachronous traditions in social and physical anthropology in combination with new challenges of the biologisation of social identities in archaeology and social anthropology.

Keywords: archaeology, identity, culture-historical approach, return of biology, curriculum

Introduction

Although, there is common thinking that the aim of archaeology is just to excavate and analyse the ruins of the past, archaeology is located within a patchwork of diverse epistemologies as well as is referent to activism regarding heritage and the future of human culture. Social anthropology and archaeology in education therefore matter. This article aims to provide background on the application of courses of social anthropology at the Department of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia which reflect how teaching these comparative worlds of knowledge, changes one’s thinking about the deep past as well as how to critically re-evaluate the social realities of students and scholars who are also still citizens of a country within the semi-periphery of Europe.

Sensitivity to the Question of Identity

Archaeology is an area that deals with critical interpretations of the past, and is therefore responsible for analysing in more detail how identity issues are discussed in a post-conflict society (Kisić 2013; Naef 2016, 181-188). Globally, however, the history of archaeology and the current state of archaeology intertwines with social anthropology and/or ethnology, from their common roots found in the unilineal evolutionism of the 19th century, through eco-functional ideas common to neo-evolutionary anthropologists and processual archaeologists, emerging into to common postmodernist themes (Палавестра 2011). However, these general tendencies take on specific outlines in individual social contexts, especially when they are accompanied by circumstances of war, repression and trauma. The conflicts dissolving the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s were one such instance. They were characterized by scholars as an attempt to “(re)claim” the past and claim (ethnic) territory (Čolović 2008: 119-132).

Interpreting the past itself is a political act. Archaeology and its findings are frequently misappropriated to support and establish the aims of social identity. Generally speaking, in times of political power shifts, the question of a nation’s ethnic past becomes a note of public concern. Therein, archaeologists serve as instruments of state projects, offering the impression of there being deep roots and a long-standing past for nation-states formed in their respective political context (Kohl and Fawcett 1996: 3-18). Nevertheless, the position of the archaeological community in post-conflict society is overtly complex: while the archaeologist may wish to shine light onto the past, the goal of discovering and interpreting it remains formidable when illuminated by the

political goals of the present. Bearing this in mind, a pertinent example may be used to better shed light on the manner in which social anthropology is able to affect the development of branching disciplines. By examining the recent history of archaeological education regarding social anthropology in Serbia, such influences should be more tangible and elucidate how archaeology can respond to new contexts. The context of Serbia in recent history, particularly as a background to development in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, illustrates changes in curricula matching shifts in social contexts (Babić 2015: 8-12).

Today, archaeology in Serbia mainly takes concepts from social anthropology and confronts them with material records of multiple pasts – while striving to interpret them in a critical and responsible manner. This context of specific sensitivity to the question of collective identity in archaeology stems from a post-conflict state, which has not been remedied. Consequential to the circumstances in which interpreting the past cannot be done free of burden, it is therefore necessary to briefly outline the historical circumstances and the resulting social trauma thereof (Babić 2010: 259-266; Палавестра 2011: 229-261).

As with the other Republics which emerged from the former Yugoslavia, Serbia became a post-cold-war ethnic state that found an identity engaged in ethnic strife and civil war within its neighbouring states. The downfall of the former Yugoslavia was all the more tragic due to the efforts of the SFYR that had tried to forge a multi-ethnic state after the end of the Second World War. Prior to its collapse, the later independent states shared a general brotherhood and unity (in Serbian: bratstvo i jedinstvo) that was torn asunder, violently, that forced individuals to take sides. These traumatic circumstances are still felt by the respective populaces of their nation-states today. In the absence of confrontation to this difficult past, nationalism and revisionism has come to thrive on the lack of an articulated identity (Pesić 1996; Subotić 2010).

The experience of the post-Yugoslav nations may be compared to that of Germany in the 1980s. The trauma of the Second World War was generally ignored in the creation of a new German nationhood. However, as memory faded, the suppression of confronting traumatic memory subsided in the 1980s when the German people began to associate the past as a relevant emotion to current belonging. The state of mind throughout post-Yugoslav societies has yet to acknowledge the trauma that had occurred, which still overburdens the ex-Yugoslav mind with xenophobia, essentialism, chauvinism and open violence (Härke 2002; Asman 2011: 9-145). As a driving force of the current nation-state, no sector or space in Serbian society, no matter how small, has been left untouched by the violent events of its past.

Archaeology too came under the sway of this shift in social and ethnic identity, but was not exposed directly to it. Although the many unfamiliar with Serbian society might rightly assume otherwise, archaeology in Serbia has by and large resisted the currents of rabid nationalism permeating its society (Babić 2002: 315-319). Unfortunately, this is due to the fact that, instead of tapping into sources of academia, political actors have resorted to non-academic and pseudoscientific sources to buttress political and ethnic identity arguments, thereby partially sparing the study of the past. Not based on actual science, the fabrications of pseudo-science lend themselves to absurd utilization in biased justification to prove the existence of the pre-historical roots of a people and lay claim to the rights over a territory, without critical data getting in the way (Novaković 2011: 398-400).

The critical discussion of the 1990s was mostly directed against the on-going war and policies of the Milošević regime, but archaeology was not seen as part of the battle between Milošević and anti-Milošević supporters. This fact follows the general critical orientation of the time, which was, when actually levied, confined to those intellectuals acting within non-governmental organizations of “parallel” educational institutions. In its struggle to control public institutions, the Milošević regime pushed Serbia and academia into destitute economic circumstances which helped lead to a further passivity in archaeology. This situation only worsened as the regime continued to limp forward throughout the 1990s, dragging Serbia with it. The rump Yugoslavia faced international isolation and its academic relations were severed. As funds were practically non-existent for any international academic endeavours, Serbian archaeology was left spending the final decade of the 20th century in stagnation (Novaković 2011: 398-400).

The status of archaeology prior to 2000 had not been promising. It was a marginal discipline focused on exotic topics through outdated schools of thought, dominantly non-reflexive and poor in funding for research. Yet, the younger generations of archaeologists at that time were experienced activists close to anti-war activism and

Poperian open society ideas. This set of mind brought archaeology into a specific wind of change after the fall of the Milošević regime, which distinctly shows the ability of archaeology's horizons to broaden.

Culture-Historical Approach in Serbian Archaeology: the Source of Frustration

Present day archaeology in Serbia was enriched by social anthropology, its seed was planted, however, in the cultural-historical approach. This traditional, outdated approach, dominant in Serbian and Yugoslav archaeology throughout most of the 20th century, implicitly separated archaeology and ethnology. From a theoretical standpoint, the cultural-historical approach in archaeology is similar to cultural particularism in anthropology, whereby central ideas are used inductively to describe normatively archaeological cultures of the past and evolutionary or functionalist points of view are acknowledged only on the margins of archaeological narratives (Trigger 2006: 211-313). The main archaeological conceptual tool for the cultural-historical approach has been archaeological culture, defined according to Gordon Childe as:

We find certain types of remains – pots, implements, ornaments, burial rites and house forms – constantly recurring together. Such a complex of associated traits we shall call a 'cultural group' or just a 'culture'. We assume that such a complex is the material expression of what today we would call 'a people' (Childe 1929, v-vi).

Therein, the problem arose when archaeological interpretations established a relationship between material objects and ethnicity, exclusively a product of archaeological construction. Although ethnic identities had existed in the past, it may not simply be 'read' from the artifacts themselves. Archaeological culture is, at best, an analytical tool failing to reflect past realities; at worst, however, it is an outdated concept reflecting the need to connect material culture and the territory of ethnic groups. Conceptual origins of the culture-historical paradigm in archaeology and cultural particularism in anthropology lie in the German approach of *Kulturgeschichte*. The prevailing idea of the geographic variability of culture or culture groups necessitated the distinct past of each separate culture that was viewed as tantamount to its own ethnicity. As a consequence, changes in material culture in the archaeological record were attributed to diffusion and migration, as defined in a typological analysis, not to cultural innovations. *Kulturgeschichte* conveniently also corresponded to the rise of nationalism and racism in Europe at the same time, which emphasized ethnicity as the prevalent factor shaping history. In Serbia's context, the same culture-historical approach bore long lasting consequences (O'Brien, Lyman and Brian Schiffer 2005: 8-35; Webster 2009: 11-27; Bandović 2012: 629-648; 2017: 801-824).

The demarcation line between archaeology and ethnology for Serbia was first established in the late 19th century when archaeology and ethnology were founded as fields of study at the University of Belgrade. Since then, the inter-relationship between the two has been described as being neighbourly non-interference (Палавестра 2005: 87-96). Archaeologists rarely have freely borrowed formal analogies from ethnology in the service of reconstructing the past. In cases where it has been done, they are relegated to prehistory in the main. Serbian archaeological communities have, to this day, been heavily imbued by the traditions of both 19th century naïve empiricism in German anthropology and a cultural-historical approach (Babić 2006: 656-658). Even with the application of current norms and tendencies in social anthropology, outdated concepts have hung on and refused to go by the wayside in light of other revelations within the field (Raczkowski 2011: 197-210; Babić 2013: 625-628).

Additionally, Serbian archaeology had tended to be non-explicit in terms of theory and methodology. However, the fact that theories and methodologies are not explicitly stated and that the connection with anthropology and ethnology has been formally denied for almost the entire 20th century - does not mean that there are no underground connections (Palavestra and Babić 2016: 13). Obsessive questions of Serbian archaeology for most of the 20th century were ethnic determination and its continuity. These have all been considered to be "implicit knowledge" (Stoczkowski 2008: 346-359) that need no explanation nor be explicitly defined in the archaeological interpretations of the past.

Such an approach has had dangerous potential consequences in its political misuse. When such implicit understanding is accepted, it lends itself to abusing data that is cherry-picked to prove preconceived hypotheses and common general beliefs whether accurate or not. However, the implicit knowledge itself has an origin in social theory which can be drawn out to be shown, whose roots shed light on the argumentative structure that still permeates Serbian archaeology to this day. Therein, a main issue that still plagues Serbian academic fields concerning the examination of the past is origins especially of derived ethnicity in diachronic perspectives termed "ethnogenesis" (Milosavljević 2017: 23-39).

The origin and genealogy of implicitly present theoretical foundations in Serbian archaeology can be partially located based on works by a group of local social scientists interpretable as highly problematic from ethical standpoints of current scientific standards. Milan Budimir, Veselin Čajkanović, along with Niko Županić and Vladimir Dvorniković, were all key authors active in the first Yugoslavia up to and after the Second World War. Their ideas came to be used in Serbian archaeology as an implicit theoretical framework. The core of these ideas was the continuity of race and ethnicity expounded particularly by Županić and Dvorniković (Milosavljević 2010: 25-113; Palavestra and Milosavljević 2015: 634-640). These were transformed into ideas of cultural continuity, as stemming from the context of racially marked social sciences after the culmination of the Second World War and further developed under the influence of the respective “political correctness” of the multi-ethnic state of the former Socialist Yugoslavia. Although adapting to new contexts, the structure of arguments remained the same, continuing to be constructed on research whose aim was pontification on the ethnogenesis of the South Slavs and Paleo-Balkan tribes (Novaković 2011: 397; Mihajlović 2015: 83-88).

The history of archaeology and ethnology/anthropology in Serbia stems from concepts predominant in the latter 19th and first half of the 20th century prominent in anthropology within the German-speaking world. These same ideas of race, purity and eugenics reached a crescendo in their abuse during the Second World War, resulting in mass extermination. Thereafter, they were abandoned and made taboo within the Western context as a whole (Härke 2002). The taboo of racial science was not necessarily true in all contexts, particularly in Yugoslavia (formally, but not essentially). The Serbian founding fathers of archaeology and ethnology were educated in the same cultural context in the latter half of the 19th century. After having established these disciplines in their Serbian contexts, their academic successors blindly followed them and little criticism was made to deviate thereof. Consequently, regressive ideas about racial or ethnic identity did not cease but came to be the common background shaping social thinking which has persisted in Serbia even to this day. Such cultural-historical ideas burdened with latent racial anthropology have not been questioned, but transmitted as sacred, perceived as the only ones possible. While heavily outdated, they have been reflected in the teaching of archeology (Milosavljević 2010: 47-69; Milosavljević 2020: 116-117).

While the nationalistic and ethnic based furore that took hold in Europe of the latter 19th century and first half of the 20th has since been superseded, particularly in academic thought that has moved on from essentialism, the issue of ethnic origins as connected to national identity is still very much alive and present in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, especially Serbia. In its post-war context, the question of national origins has become part of national discourse. However, it is equally problematic as it is misused and has long since abandoned all pretence of a scientific basis (Bandović 2012: 644).

Teaching Anthropology for Archaeology Students: a Source of Empowerment?

Some minor theoretical changes in archaeology started in the former Yugoslavia from the 1980s under external influences. At this time, Lewis Binford gave lectures over the period of one semester in Ljubljana, Slovenia and two lectures in Belgrade, Serbia (Novaković 2015: 126-131) which resulted in changes coming about in the curricula of the Department of Archaeology in the University of Ljubljana. The influence of Binford was felt in Serbia, but it was minor. Serbian archaeology had largely not accepted Binford’s processual paradigm shift which had been introduced in the USA and the UK in the 1960s as based on the neoevolutionistic anthropology of Leslie A. White and Julian H. Steward. Changes in the theoretical framework of Western archaeology can be shortly summarized by Lewis Binford’s idea that “(American) archaeology is anthropology or nothing” (Binford 1962, 217). In the mainstream, Serbian archaeology had never adopted a processual paradigm shift from the 1960s nor the post-processual paradigm shift from the 1980s to the 2000s. Instead, there have only been sporadic multidisciplinary coalitions in Balkanology and *longue durée* history applied to archaeology, merely on the margins of the discipline (Palavestra 1994: 83-95).

Consequently, the interchange of ideas between archaeology and ethnology in Serbian archaeology had been left unchanged for an entire century. Anthropology was only introduced into the archaeological curricula in 2003. Given this background, in order to better comprehend the importance of this novelty of social anthropology, it is necessary to review the condition of Serbian archaeology itself at the time of 2000. After the collapse of the Milošević regime in 2000, Serbian archaeology slowly started to exit its isolation. Working in concert with foreign partners gained steam which brought about reflexive reassessments regarding the events of the decade prior. The new social context led to questioning the role of archaeology in public discourse after the wars. Since then, the charge has been foremost led by archaeology professors at the University of Belgrade through the introduction of standards in archaeological theory and initiating an education contemporary with archaeological thought.

Sadly, the majority of the archaeological community in Serbia has still nurtured their conservative professional tendencies, coming starkly in contrast to the innovations offered by European as well as American archaeology and anthropology, thereby relegating itself woefully to the past (Milosavljević 2016: 89-90).

Upon becoming a signatory to the Bologna Declaration in 2003, the archaeological curricula transformed drastically. Nevertheless, the first steps of reform to teaching materials and methods at the Department of Archaeology began in the 2001/2002 academic year. A SWOT analysis was conducted to determine potential for development of the Department. The first reforms were initiated in 2002/2003, although these pointed to the need for further improvement (Babić, Vasiljević, Drašković 2014: 31-36). One of the most crucial developments was establishing the bachelor courses that respect the history of ideas in archaeology. In other words, since 2003, the reflection on the past of various fields of archaeology and sensitizing students to changes in science, both those that have happened before and those that we can expect in the future, have become part of the curriculum of archaeology studies. The radical change was that the goals of the archaeologists were set more broadly (Babić 2015: 8-12). Not only were archaeologists, as before, trained to determine the cultural-chronological framework of remains from the past, but were, through lectures, given ideas about the interwoven links between archaeology and social anthropology in their inter-relationship to one another as well as promoting archaeological epistemology as directly emerging from social anthropology. The application of anthropology in archaeology has, therewith, significantly advanced, recovered, and has been fruitful for the discipline of archaeology as whole. Hence it may also be seen here that it was only in 2003 that Binford and everything following Binford became curricula to be studied.

Advancements stemming from teaching anthropology and archaeology as a whole are a reflection of social change within Serbian society (Palavestra and Babić 2016: 316). The roots of the issue lie in the history of the two fields. Akin to other European social sciences, Serbian ethnography/anthropology and archaeology originally arose as a producer of normative images of the national tradition following the Herderian understanding of folk tradition (Ковачевић 2001; Палавестра 2011). As a constant basis of ethnology and archaeology, phenomena corresponding to tradition or ethnic culture became additionally reinforced after the dissolution of the SFRY as a first phase of post-socialist change that concentrated on building new ethnic identities through utilization of the past. Bearing this background in mind, the attraction of sociocultural anthropology in the first decade of the 2000s at the University of Belgrade was a sign of an anti-essentialist orientation as well as new epistemological scaffolding for future archaeology. Starting from 2003 until today, social anthropology is studied in several courses, including intertwined histories of the ideas of archaeology and social anthropology, through paradigm shifts, as well as courses that give an overview of the latest ideas that connect sociocultural anthropology with archaeology.

The main course, elective one, *Archaeology and Social Anthropology* instructs on the history of ideas within both archaeology and social anthropology, beginning with the 19th century, from Edward Tylor to Clifford Geertz (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade). A plurality of ideas is taught in order to spur debate and instruct on the emergence of modern-day ideas from the remnants of those which have already passed (Piliavsky 2017: 16). More importantly, the overall orientation of the curriculum possesses a background that understands archaeological epistemology as primarily related to social anthropology (offering a wide range of perspectives). This has the effect of creating a different view of the past, seeking social dynamics, and, as an unintended consequence, giving birth to a radically different view of the social present. The ancillary effect worth highlighting is that teaching and learning anthropology can be effective on an individual level as it promotes the understanding of social context. As Simon Coleman suggests:

Teaching has an often vital part to play in this process of constantly discovering, and constituting, anthropology for ourselves and for others: and anthropology can be so much more than we usually allow ourselves to say, or to see (Coleman 2011, 9).

As a society, Serbia still grapples with its traumatic past that is marred by the real world effects of ethnic-conflict. The increasingly distant voices of horror from the past still remain relevant and recent in discourse as an influence in society where understanding is lacking. Due to the reflexive nature of anthropology and archaeology, teaching these lends to the overall ability to analyse ourselves and understand society (Babić et al. 2017: 14). The application of new ideas, especially those from socio-cultural anthropology to the study of archaeology, although beneficial, is not without its problems, just as all inherited traditions in Serbian archaeology are not automatically disputable. However, the changes which are bringing about a sea-change within Serbian archaeology have already started to drip through.

The Return of Biology: a New Challenge?

Although science progresses via iterative construction based on new techniques and methodologies as well as the destruction of theoretical scaffolds, adding new tools to outdated methods still in use may lead to outdated new conclusions presented in new clothing. New tools have potential, but their limits of application should be considered carefully (Currie 2019).

In 2014, archaeologist Kristian Kristiansen optimistically defined the new science revolution in archaeology (Kristiansen 2014) in which DNA research would be key to opening closed doors in archaeology. While true that archaeology has entered a novel state, it has not done so in a manner of falling into a different paradigm; rather, it has used DNA analysis as one tool among a set of others to provide evidence to conclusions based on multifaceted research. Genetic research, above all, has opened doors in the social sciences to find new perspectives and supporting data into novel areas of research. However, as with any tool, it has the power to be destructive as well as constructive. The phenomenon of the return of biology has been used to better understand the biological aspects of collective identities. Albeit beneficial, it is also detrimental when applied in simplified terms for complex questions. More to the point, the growing importance of genetic research has complicated matters concerning constructivist theories of race and ethnicity, as well as to the politics of belonging (Brubaker 2015: 48-84).

According to Bruno Latour and Ian Hacking, social constructivism in the social studies of science and technology pertains to the facts created in knowledge production, considered to be influenced and coloured by social factors (Latour and Woolgar 1986; Hacking 1999). Although social constructivism can retain factuality and consistency with the philosophy of realism, most analyses in this area are antirealistic in practice due to their philosophical nature (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy). Hence, the return of the materiality of material culture in archaeology coupled by the rapprochement with positivist natural sciences and STEM leads to serious regroupings of the field of archaeology (Kristiansen 2014). The reflexive attitude towards the production of knowledge in archaeology was dominant in post-processual archaeology on a global level from the beginning of the 1980s until the beginning of the twenty-first century. At the heart of the matter is that, in the study of race and ethnicity, the triumph of constructivism over biological reality has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. The biological, material and medical aspects of archaeological research on a global level have now become crucial in moving the pendulum from one climax to another (Babić et al. 2017).

The dawn of the genomic era erupted in 2001 with the publication of the human genome sequence, thereby revolutionizing fields beyond biology alone (Brubaker 2015). Since then, highly respected journals have reliably published articles authored by social scientists that link races to biological groupings. Yet, in a new context, social constructivism is insufficient in and of itself to comprehend social identities as well as to adequately formulate critical responses. Human cultures are not just semiotic, but also dependent on the limits of the biological bodies and natural environment. The trouble stems from the idea that genetically distinct clusters of human beings must be “objective” in comparison to approaches of social sciences that are perceived to be “subjective”. To make matters worse, social scientists are afraid to delve into hard sciences due to their lack of formal training in biology. As a consequence, a genetic black-boxing of social identity construction is borne out, such as can be found with race or ethnicity based on DNA analysis. The epistemology of genetic science has therefore remained a mystery for non-biological specialists (Carter 2007: 546-556; Jobling, Rasteiro and Wetton 2016: 142-161). The return of biology has partnered onto the ontological turn of the Anthropocene’s growing apocalyptic discourse with a real-world basis on the ecological problems of Earth. These changes are not interpreted as a paradigm shift, rather as ones in ontology (Latour 2014: 1-18; Haris and Cipolla 2017). Thanks to these events, new perspectives have become crucial for reflecting on old and new problems, which has also given rise to new topics in anthropology and archaeology. Regardless of its heralding novelty, due to the constant influence of new ideas and their tools, it has become further necessary as well to be constantly critically oriented (Stoczkowski 2018: 65). Whatever the case, the insights coming from biology, ecology, anthropology (in particular the study of human-animal relations) open completely new relational perspectives. They show previous studies of archaeology and anthropology to indeed be too anthropocentric. The influence of biology does not have to be understood as necessarily regressive, but as an influence that may open very important questions of ontological turnover (Ingold 2011; Viveiros de Castro 2015: 5-7).

This change was also mirrored in the teaching of archaeology through the growth of the bioarchaeological field at the Department of Archaeology, University of Belgrade. As an illustration, within the bachelor studies of archaeology integral to the present day curriculum are, among others, the required courses of: Physical

anthropology; Environmental archaeology; and Bioarchaeology; as well as the electives of ‘The application of biomolecular analysis in archaeozoology: DNA and stable isotopes’; ‘Humans and animals in the past: interpretation of biometric data (limited to the territory of modern day Serbia)’; and ‘Archaeology between nature and culture’ (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade). Therefore, the Department of Archaeology in Belgrade strives to respond to challenges and theoretical changes by embarking on new topics, new analyses, critically and thoroughly respecting the ideas of epistemic tolerance as fruitful for future development.

Accepting Novelty but Remaining Critical

Regardless of the caution and multiple perspectives in the process of education, the context in which the work of archaeologists in Serbia happens in the shadow of political circumstances. The issue of social identity remains crucial because Serbia's state borders have not yet been formally established or popularly accepted. The method of financing and the existing funding opportunities significantly influence the choice of scientific areas of research, commitment and orientation (Babić 2013). Therefore, it is important that the wider application of new scientific analysis is not to be understood in a simplified manner (Brubaker 2015). The archaeologist Barbara Voss has pointed to the increasing use of bioarchaeological evidence in the study of ethnogenesis in a colonial context as a trigger that raises ethical and epistemological questions about relations between the body and identity, as well as social and natural phenomena. As she notes, biological factors alone cannot account for identity, individually or collectively as humans are social beings and not the construction of their DNA alone:

Bioarchaeological studies of intergenerational genetic transmission simply cannot account for the full range of kinship structures and sexual and non-sexual relationship that contribute to communal identities. Additionally, adoption, godparenting, non-reproductive sexual relationships, friendships, and partnerships may be especially instrumental in the formation of new communal identities. However, because these relationships are not defined through biological reproduction, these important social connections are not visible in archaeological studies that use biological and genetic markers as a proxy for social communities (Voss 2015: 663)

Further reinforcement of biology in the social sciences comes from funding sources. Genetically informed accounts in archaeology are overtly encouraged by European Union research funding. Nevertheless, when it comes to project funding at large, business and economics have had their undue influence on creating a market of measurable output, expressed through the quantification of archaeological data and reports replete with hard science analyses. The large-scale calls for project proposals by European funding institutions almost entirely neglects the need to critically re-assess harnessing ‘big data’ in establishing ‘Europeanism’, whereby ‘heavy funds’ are spent in order to procure scientifically ‘hard’ evidence for the eternal unity and uniqueness of European culture. Unfortunately, by designing projects and writing narratives about the past, archaeologists neglect their critical orientation and are more susceptible to the political goals and profit motives of the European Union. In order to survive in the European academic market, archaeologists may prove willing to reorient their research focus by adapting to these demands. Apropos of the expression that “science can be blind”, the fact that we might be trotting down the same path that has already resulted in dire consequences may be easily obscured in a sea of data. The situation grows even more intricate when looking at how EU strategies (where it must be noted that the priorities of European archaeology do not receive a blank slate in these peripheral states) are implemented inside countries still striving for their own EU membership, such as is the case with Serbia. Big data, quantification, modelling and aDNA are laid layer after layer onto an existing foundation that does not share the same levels and expectations of proposed objectivity (Niklasson 2014: 59-60; Babić et al. 2017: 14-15).

Given the fashionable promotion of the return of biology, the Serbian archaeological community, heavily still imbued by the traditions of 19th century positivism, has adapted such tools to strengthen existing outdated evidence – especially in the light of lacking funds for new excavations and hard data (Bandović 2012). In their misuse, the increasing utilization of bioarchaeological analyses buttresses models in which identity is but a matter of perception. Instead of treading lightly, genetics has been embraced as a code explaining a ‘true reality’. This does little to encourage social construction of identity in a scientific context, but is a reassurance to an outdated way of thinking. As such, this can lead to drastic abuses and simplifications, often present in public discourse in Serbia (Milosavljević and Palavestra 2017: 825-851). Archaeology should, on the contrary, must be an adequate bridge for dialogue between social and natural/hard sciences, offering space for a transdisciplinary understanding of nuances.

Since 2003 when teaching anthropology to archaeology students was initiated in Serbia, the key challenge has been to teach new generations who had grown up during the Yugoslavian civil wars to open up to broader

perspectives on human cultures, universalities and differences. The frustration thereof has not only lain in the application of identity construction in living experiences of students, but in epistemological approaches for archaeology as well. Against this backdrop of growing optimism, anthropology has been utilized as a prominent tool to teach cultural relativism, multiculturalism, a quest of 'otherness' and reflexive thinking. From the perspective of the present day, these facets had all once been necessary, yet seem to have fallen by the wayside in a 'post-truth' world and the decline of the authority of science. The question is whether and how social anthropology can help in these new circumstances, where even old problems have not yet been resolved.

Conclusion

Archaeology and anthropology are so mutually beneficial to one another in their study that one cannot do without the other. Both fields are located in a social context; as such, it should be understood and, if necessary, criticized and re-calibrated. However, this text was written from an archaeological point of view, taking into account the very simple idea that archaeology has multiple benefits if ideas from social anthropology are included in its teaching. This here has been discussed through the concrete example of the social circumstances of a post-conflict Serbia, in which sensitivity to the issue of collective identity, especially ethnic identity, is expressed. The key point in which this paper establishes what was before and what was after is Serbia's social and political turning point in 2000 and 2003 when the curriculum was changed and the Bologna Declaration was introduced into the education of archaeologists.

Not only the form but also the essence and content of the knowledge that was imparted to the students changed. However, in neither of these situations can this be started *ab ovo*; the implementation of new ideas was accompanied by a struggle with the old world of ideas, resulting in negotiations and compromises in a pluralistic manner. One of the leading changes in terms of content was the introduction of ideas that came from social anthropology, which were implicitly present in the research of archaeologists of processual or post-processual persuasions. Although courses specifically dealing with the relationship between social anthropology and archaeology have been introduced, in numerous areas, from the Paleolithic to classical archaeology to methodological principles, the archaeological curricula have been strongly influenced by anthropological ideas. The source of frustration, in addition to the source of concrete evidence, was the previous archaeological tradition in Serbian archaeology, thereby classifying it as a cultural-historical approach. A decade after the introduction of fundamental changes to the curriculum in Serbia, global archaeology is beginning to change - I question whether social anthropology can still be a source of empowerment in new circumstances or not. Of course, the perspective I present is self-reflexive, in the sense my own views and reflection may be biased. Considering the process as a student of the second generation of the reformed system of archaeologists according to the Bologna Declaration at the University of Belgrade, even today as a professor of archaeology, I myself have responsibilities to point out the connection between knowledge production, curriculum creation and social circumstances.

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