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Leoš Šatava, Professor of ethnology and a sociolinguist. His research interests include ethnic and linguistic minorities, primarily the Sorbs. He teaches at Czech and Slovak universities, currently at Charles University in Prague and University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. As a keynote speaker he opened the conference “Small language – large issue”. He also sits on the Editorial Board of the *Adeptus* journal.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7660-6119>

e-mail: lsatava@tiscali.cz

Maciej Mętrak, Czech studies specialist and ethnologist, graduated from the PhD programme at the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw. He currently works as a research assistant at the Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences. Founder and chief coordinator of the conference “Small language – large issue”, and editorial secretary of the *Adeptus* journal.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5285-4580>

e-mail: maciej.metrak@ispan.waw.pl

Leoš Šatava, Maciej Mętrak

Introduction

Earlier predictions notwithstanding, the question of language and ethnicity remains an immediate, pressing issue. It also continues to attract research interest from social scientists, as illustrated by the international young scholar conference “Small language – large issue”, which was held on 30 November – 1 December 2018 in Warsaw. The idea for the event was conceived by two Warsaw-based centres for Slavic studies: the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw and the Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, while organizational support was provided by the Ethnographic Laboratory Association (Stowarzyszenie Pracownia Etnograficzna) and the Czech Centre in Warsaw.

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Author one is a member of the Editorial Board of this journal, author two is a member of the Editorial Team of this journal.

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In the course of the two-day event, young researchers – students and PhD students representing academic centres from eight countries (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Serbia) – delivered thirteen presentations, which were accompanied by three lectures from invited guests and capped with a panel discussion. Many of the presentations touched upon issues currently animating the field of minority languages and cultures studies, such as contemporary revitalization efforts, analysed through a number of lenses. Apart from speakers whose presentations were mostly informational or documentary in nature, there were those who undertook to analyse and interpret specific examples in broader contexts, in an effort to seek answers for more universal questions. The presentations are currently finding their way into print in this issue of *Adeptus*, published by the Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, and the forthcoming fifty-third issue of *Zeszyty Łużyckie*, a journal of the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw.

This issue of *Adeptus* features a thematically diverse array of articles, whose common thread is their focus on ethnolinguistic minorities and attendant issues. It includes both case studies with a narrower scope, whose authors examine specific ethnic groups from a number of different angles (Kamil Czaiński's article about the language of the Czech-Polish borderlands, Justyna Majerska-Sznajder's study of the linguistic landscape of Wilamowice, Marina Sakač's inquiry into the ethnic identity of Rusyn youth, and Ayur Zhanayev and Wojciech Połęcz's investigation of the Buryat internet), as well as more theoretical, cross-sectional efforts (such as Guillem Belmar and Maggie Glass' examination of minority language use in digital realms and Jeanne Toutous' article comparing the ideological aspects of minority movements in Brittany and Lusatia). Both perspectives intersect and complement each other, focusing on the contemporary situation and the recent past of the groups in question, including Silesians, Vilamovians, Rusyns, Buryats, Bretons and Sorbs.

The studies featured in this issue offer a number of valuable insights and findings that can be of further use to researchers active in the field of ethnicity and linguistics. Despite their heterogeneity (which also implies a beneficial multitude of perspectives and methodologies), the examined subjects seem to confirm that the field has not lost any of its relevance despite the growing globalization and interconnectedness of our everyday reality. On the contrary: drawing attention to the specific and separate ethnic and cultural identities in defiance of prevailing homogenization, and providing the "small world" – no

less fascinating than the grand one – with much needed space, continues to be a valid, pressing issue, and is shaping up to be one of the greatest challenges of our time. It is precisely in this context that Anthony Giddens defines “glocalization” in his *Sociology*, calling it a “mix of globalizing processes and local contexts which often leads to a strengthening rather than diminishing of local and regional cultures”. We believe that a reflection of this particular augmenting effect can be found in the cases analysed and interpreted in the articles collected in this issue. We also hope that minority languages, invaluable to their speaker communities and compelling to ever new generations of scholars, will persevere and continue to develop, both in the Slavic world and beyond.

It was this desire to spotlight minority languages and culture, and to emphasize their vitality and ability to accommodate the challenges of modernity, that was the primary motivation behind the 2017–2019 project “Small language – large issue” (which the conference under the same title was only a part of). The initiative, which included a series of meetings with young activists and scholars of linguistic minorities from the Slavic area (including speakers of non-Slavic tongues whose cultures and languages were considerably influenced by their Slav neighbours), was initially, in the 2016–2017 academic year, thought up to complement the “Smallest languages of Slavic area” seminar taught by Maciej Mętrak at the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw. In the following academic years, 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, thanks to the support of Faculty of Polish Studies and the Ethnographic Laboratory Association, the event grew in scope and reach, and was soon used to popularize the subject matter outside strictly academic circles. The whole series has included ten meetings,¹ a conference (whose agenda featured three lectures that drew on the form adopted by prior meetings and a panel discussion),² and a field trip for students

¹ The meetings explored: Wymysorys (11 April 2017, speakers: Bartłomiej Chromik and Tymoteusz Król), Sorbian languages (20 April 2017, Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska), minority language rights (9 May 2017, Tomasz Wicherkiewicz), Yiddish (16 May 2017, Magdalena Kozłowska), the Lemko language (26 April 2018, Marta Watral), Buryat and Yakut languages (8 May 2018, Künnej Takaahaj and Ayur Zhanaev), minority activism and politics (21 May 2018, Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska and Tomasz Wicherkiewicz), the Kashubian language (19 March 2019, Mateusz Titės Meyer), Polish Romani (16 April 2019, Andrzej Grzymała-Kazłowski, followed by a screening of the Czech documentary film *FC Roma*, with an introduction from Weronika Parfianowicz), and the cultural heritage and legacy of Wilamowice (5 September 2019, Anna Bińka and Katarzyna Waszczyńska).

² Leoš Šatava’s keynote lecture, “Options and methods of language planning” (30 November 2018), a meeting with representatives of Czech minority from Żelów (30 November 2018, Wiera Pospiszył and Karol Pospiszył), the lecture “Mazurski los i mazurska mowa” (Masurian fate, Masurian speech) (1 December 2018, Katarzyna Sobolewska and Piotr Szatkowski), “Małą łyżką smakuje dłużej” (With smaller spoon you enjoy it longer), a debate of translators translating fiction into minority languages (1 December 2018, featuring Artur Jabłoński, Grzegorz Kulik, Piotr Szatkowski, Justyna Majerska-Sznajder, Marta Watral, moderated by Artur Czesak), recorded and available as a podcast of the Polish Literary Translators Association “Na przekład”; an annotated transcript will be published in *Zeszyty Łużyckie*.

from the Slavic Studies Club (Koło Naukowe Slawistów) at the University of Warsaw, who have been involved with organizing the “Small language – large issue” series of events and the attendant conference.³

Translated by Jan Szelągiewicz

Note:

This is a translation of the original article entitled “Wstęp”, which was published in *Adeptus*, issue 14, 2019.

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³ The trip to Wilamowice took place on 23–27 September 2019, and was coordinated by Maciej Mętrak from the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw and Tymoteusz Król from the Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences/Vilamovians Association. Six students from the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies attended (Zuzanna Kierwiak, Antoni Kowalczyk, Eliza Markiewicz, Filip Wielechowski-Olszak, Zuzanna Woszczerowicz, Adam Zygmunt). All in all, the students processed eighty-four complete catalogue cards of museum objects, with added photographs, for the planned museum of Vilamovian culture and language.