

39:791(497.6)(049.3)

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A long term visual ethnography in a Bosnian village: *Tracking epistemological and methodological issues*

Abstract: The ethnographic film titled *Lukomir, my home* (2018) is a visual ethnography of the daily life of an elderly couple from Lukomir, the highest mountain village in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It depicts transhumant shepherders' yearly migration cycle, during which they travel every winter with their flock of sheep from the Bjelašnica mountain ridge to the villages 30 km away, in the vicinity of Sarajevo. The film tracks the different spatial and material dimensions of their migration as well as their relationship to a life-style that is slowly disappearing. We see and sense the couple's connection to the land, animals, and the overall changes to their social world. The film as a visual ethnography serves as a basis for the discussion of the anthropological understandings one can attain through audiovisual material in comparison to written research. Every research topic makes us expand upon our methodologies in various ways in order to explore *how* we need to *look at* a certain issue. The mutually constitutive exploration of one's research topic and the employment of various visual media can reveal connections, sensorial dimensions and world-views that otherwise perhaps would not be apparent. Through a reflexive analysis of the filming process as well as our field research, we can consider these important epistemological as well as methodological questions in the production of anthropological knowledge.

Key words: visual ethnography, visual anthropology, ethnographic film, reflexivity, Lukomir, Bosnia and Hercegovina, transhumance, shepherding, methodology

Introduction

In the following article¹, I will analyze the anthropological insights attained while using visual ethnography in order to understand when and how we create new meanings and knowledge with the aid of participant observation and visual methods. I will first describe the field work context in order to present to the reader the work process and field work experience. Later, I will shortly

¹ I thank Tatiana Bajuk Senčar (ISN ZRC SAZU) for reviewing the following article.

elaborate on the concept of reflexivity in the research and analysis processes, taking into account anthropology's engagement with the subjectivity of the research encounter and the nature of ethnographic writing as a way of producing knowledge or ways of knowing about other worlds (Pink e.t.al. 2015: 12). The short analysis of the reflexive approach in anthropology in general and visual anthropology in particular will serve as a reference frame for pointing out and examining different aspects of visual ethnography that are seen when analyzing our methodological approaches. After a short theoretical discussion, I will present our field work experience, which is divided into three phases: gathering video material, arranging and editing the material, and screening the final ethnographic film. Finally, I will sum up the findings of the article gained both through personal experience in filming ethnographic film *Lukomir, my home* and through the analysis of perspectives and ambiguities of visual anthropology in a more general context. More than just data from which we can read/watch cultural meanings, I consider both the written text and the final film as processes from which new meanings and knowledge can emerge.

Village Lukomir: Field work, film and the context

“Working with animals is extremely exhausting, as most of the families in Lukomir don’t have time to go on vacation, let alone to the seaside. Sometimes they go to the Boračko jezero (lake, op.p.) or to Bašćaršija market in Sarajevo. They don’t experience the sort of tourism known to the tourists that come to Lukomir. Many locals would change their way of life for something else at the first opportunity. (Notes from the fieldwork diary, 10. 8. 2014)” (Gorišek 2017: 58, my translation).



Film still 1: Village Lukomir (Bjelašnica Mountains, BiH), August 2014, Manca

Filak.

The decision to engage with visual ethnography in the village of Lukomir in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was based on the common interests between myself and fellow anthropologist Žiga Gorišek. In 2013-2014, Žiga was on a study exchange in Sarajevo², where he was researching the impacts of tourism on the transhumant and sheepherding practices on the Bjelašnica Mountain massif³. The main field work started in the spring of 2014 with occasional visits to the village and continued with longer periods during summer months, when both authors stayed and participated in everyday chores and activities in the village.

Lukomir is the highest village in BiH, at an altitude of 1472 m above sea level (see Film still 1). It rests on the southern slopes of the mountain massif Bjelašnica, which is mostly known for having been a site of the winter Olympic Games in 1984. Despite the outmigration of the population and the increase of tourism in the last decades, transhumant pastoralism remains one of the main economic practices in the villages of Bjelašnica (Gorišek 2017: 108-113). Approximately 22 houses in the village are still populated. Transhumance and the seasonal migration of families and their flocks of sheep characterize the life of village residents, whose lives can be roughly divided into two seasons: summers on Bjelašnica and winters in lower settlements in the vicinity of Sarajevo – including Hadžići, Ilida, Tarčin, Pazarić, etc. (Gorišek 2017: 8, 47, 72). The summer season consists of bringing sheep to mountain pastures, drying hay and completing diverse chores that secure a living for Lukomir residents throughout the entire year.

The villagers from Lukomir have faced different waves of migration between the different villages in the valleys and settlements on Bjelašnica (Gorišek 2017: 75). Despite the long-term depopulation trends from Lukomir to urban settlements around Sarajevo, many returned to Lukomir during the Yugoslav War in the 1990s, as it was known to be safer there than around Sarajevo. Lukomir is one of the few villages on Bjelašnica (as well as Čuhovići and few seasonal settlements) that was not burnt down during the Yugoslav War, even though the front line between the Bosnian Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbian Army (Army of Republika Srpska) traversed the area (Gorišek 2017: 54). As a result, Lukomir has maintained its traditional architecture and appearance, which is the village's main attraction, bringing in growing numbers of visitors. In domestic as well as foreign tourist pamphlets, Lukomir is depicted as a picturesque village above the Rakitnica Canyon, one of the most authentic and unspoilt villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The entire

2 The study exchange at the Department for Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Sarajevo, was a part of the Basileus Mundus study exchange program.

3 Žiga Gorišek defended his thesis titled *Transhumance on the crossroads of changes: Transhumance and tourism as strategies of survival in Lukomir on Bjelašnica Mountain (BIH)* (Gorišek 2017) at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, for which he received a Dean's reward in December 2018.

area is popular among hikers as well as among skiers in the winter season, who can sleep in some of the huts (there is a type of bed and breakfast offer and some catering facilities in the village). The growing number of tourists in the past years has meant an increase in so-called heritage tourism due to tourists' desire for "genuine' contact with the villagers, a taste of home cooked food, an insight into local traditional stories etc." (Gorišek 2017: 119). Tourist agencies and locals follow global trends that promote ecotourism and rural tourism in mountain regions. There is also an increase in mass tourism, mostly promoted by Arab states and mainly focused on the ski slopes and hotels on Bjelašnica and in the valleys around Sarajevo (Gorišek 2017: 72, 91, 116).

As we can see, there are numerous factors changing the cultural landscape of Bjelašnica, which for a long time was shaped mainly by transhumance shepherding practices. The biggest obstacles for the maintenance of these practices are not only tourism and its infrastructure but also the lack of grazing areas in the vicinity of Hadžići (already the suburbs of Sarajevo), where villagers from Lukomir mostly migrate in the winter (Gorišek 2017: 116, 119). The state's subsidy system is active but not strong enough to aid all farmers to retain and develop their shepherding activities. Consequently, the village community in Lukomir has an important decision to make regarding their future - whether or not to maintain a lifestyle connected to sheep-breeding and seasonal transhumance practices of herding (Gorišek 2017: 118).

In general, the aim of Žiga's master's thesis, *Transhumance on the crossroads of changes*, was to describe the effects of tourism on the transhumance herding practices in Lukomir, which is what we initially wished to depict with a camera. The process of visual ethnography went its own direction and it evolved into a long-term visual documentation process from April 2014 until May 2017, resulting in the ethnographic film *Lukomir, my home*, completed in 2018. We first made contact with our film's protagonists, Tidža and Ismet Čomor, through Ena Bavčić, a colleague from Sarajevo. Ena had participated as a field assistant to a Dutch film crew that stayed in Lukomir in 2009 in order to make a short documentary film about the village. They filmed the same family, and, had to stay on the mountain for a month, because the roads were closed due to heavy snow. Their film, *Wintersleep in Lukomir* (Koevorden 2010), became the last documentation of a period when villagers stayed in Lukomir during a winter season. Our visual ethnography, on the other hand portrays the older couple's everyday life in a broader perspective, as we lived with Ismet and Tidža Čomor during different periods and seasons over the course of 4 years. We accompanied the couple while they carried out most of their everyday chores in Lukomir and Hadžići, including when they released the sheep into the valley and when they returned with them to Lukomir. The film was (and still is) screened at various ethnographic (and other) film festivals around Europe, and has received positive feedback from viewers. In the following pages, I will elaborate on some of the issues raised during and after the fieldwork through self-reflection of the film process.

Self/reflexivity in ethnographic practice and visual research (from shortage to exaggeration)

In this section, I will shortly outline the usage and historical development of reflexivity in visual anthropology and in anthropology more general. I see it necessary in order to understand processes of knowledge production that do not happen only while analyzing gathered ethnographic material but also during methodological process. It is also important to recognize the potential benefits and drawbacks of this approach, as I use it as the article's frame of reference.

The emphasis on reflexivity⁴ in ethnographical practice grew from the so-called representational crisis in anthropology, also known as the "reflexive turn" or "Writing Culture" debates in the 1980s, which addressed many questions regarding the ways we create anthropological knowledge through ethnography. They were a critique of authoritative, scientific and objective anthropological writings, which challenged dominant ways of 'knowing' and 'researching'; they also triggered the reconsideration of the epistemological foundations of representation as well as the realization that ethnographic truth is inherently partial and finite (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Martinez 1992; Crawford 1992; Loizos 1993; Pink 2008; Jenssen 2009; O'Reilly 2012; Pink et.al. 2015; Lunaček Brumen 2018). The main core of these debates were concepts such as reflexivity, authority, objectivity and dialog (Crawford 1992: 137, Jenssen 2009: 41, 45). Consequently, anthropologists started to search for alternative forms of ethnography – including partial, open, multi-modal, polyphonic and evocative ethnography – based on the implementation of self-aware/reflexive and dialogical forms of writing (Crapanzano 1980, Taussig 1989, 1993; Taylor J. 1998 etc., in Martinez 1992; MacDougall 1992; Crawford, Simonsen 1992; Marcus, Calzadilla 2006).

Similarly, the evolution of ethnographic filmmaking evolved from 'innocence' – i.e. observational realism and the tendency towards realistic and objective documentation (or sometimes even re-creation) of social life – to 'self-reflexivity', understood as a more reflexive film process employing participatory methods from the 1960s onward (MacDougall 1992; Crawford 1992; Loizos 1993, Grimshaw, Ravetz 2009; Jenssen 2009; Suhr, Willerslev 2012). Visual anthropologists were therefore dealing with similar issues even before the representational crisis and were indeed searching for different and alternative

4 The concept of reflexivity in research takes the *self* as a reference point (Steier 1991) given that you are projecting your own experience on yourself, incorporating your own reflections of the world surrounding you in the analysis process (Jenssen 2009: 4, 10-11). Reflexivity is all about context – the analysis of the approaches we use and the ideas behind them, including as well the social experiences and interactions of everyday life as well as our personal experience (Jenssen 2009: 107, Pink 2008: 34; Etherington 2004: 46; 2012: 1-27). Reflexive appreciation of how different aspects and influences (theoretical beliefs, disciplinary agendas, personal experience, gendered identities, different visual perceptions and aesthetics, etc.) are combined to produce visual meanings and ethnographic knowledge in our research is at the forefront of this thinking (Pink 2007: 39; Jenssen 2019: 108).

forms of representation that would transcend the conventional scientific paradigm of ethnographic writing (Crawford 1992: 66, 72; MacDougall 1992: 32; see also Nichols 1992, Jensen 2009). Nevertheless, some authors argue that the decades-long debate about reflexivity, subjectivity and authenticity in visual anthropology did not have an important effect on the discipline in general (Crawford 1992: 72; Pink 2008: 590, Ruby 2000: 164).⁵ Despite calls for new, multi-vocal and reflexive ethnographies, theories did not consider or even recognize important visual anthropologists such as Jean Rouch, who began reconsidering ethnographic practice in his work and revealing the methodological mysteries of ethnography by using participatory film methods and giving the voice to his protagonists as far back as the 1960s (MacDougall 1992; Crawford 1992; Weinberger 1994; Banks 1998; Ruby 2000; Ruby 2005; Banks, Ruby 2011; Henry, Vávrová 2016; Lunaček Brumen 2018).⁶

Innovations in visual anthropology consisted not only of technological developments⁷ but also of a diverse set of interests and topics, strategies, forms of representation and the reinforcement of films and their legitimacy (Loizos 1993: 10-12). “New” ethnographic film that acknowledged its own limitations and boundaries focused on the active role of the ethnographer in the creative relationship with film protagonists. Typical authors of these new ideas and innovation in ethnographic film were also Colin Young and David MacDougall, who appeared together in the *Principals of Visual Anthropology*, 1975 edition (Hockings 1975; Henley 1998: 50).⁸ Authors such as David and Judith MacDougall later continued this tradition, introducing the significance of subtitling (see also Weinberger 1994: 25).

Despite the legacy of the above-mentioned debates, experimenting with aesthetical and textual forms in anthropology is still not the leading engagement of contemporary anthropologists, even if the overall trend leans towards sensorial anthropology (Harvard Sensory Lab) and multi-modal anthropology, including interactive multilinear documentaries or iDocs, VR’s, geolocational media

5 The ‘Writing Culture’ critiques also did not include gender or indigenous studies (as they supposedly did not contribute to the discussion on the textual theory), as they mainly focused on the role of the text and took ethnography solely as written one (Marcus, Clifford 1986). Nevertheless, the book had an enormous effect on undermining the discipline’s methodology by emphasizing the importance of reflecting upon the ethnographer’s position in the field (see also Rabinow et.al. 2008: 28, 36).

6 His most famous attempt was the film *Chronicle of a Summer* from 1962. Not only did Jean Rouch make a pathway for changes in ethnographic filmmaking towards more participatory cinema, but he also inspired the interest of different filmmakers, documentarians and artists for ethnographic film (Ruby 2000: 171).

7 The rapid development of digital technology included synchronous sound and image, handheld cameras, cheap 16mm films, colors, subtitles, etc. (Pink 2008: 586; Pink et.al. 2015: 12; Loizos 1993: 11-12; see also Bromhead 2014).

8 They were calling for the camera to operate as an active and catalyzing element within the filmmaker-protagonists-audience triangle, which should generate meaningful events and interpretations (Rouch 1975, Young 1975, MacDougall 1975; see also Henley 1998, Grimshaw, Ravetz 2009 and Vávrová 2014).

based on GPS, ethno fiction as a combination of improvised acting and fiction, and film essays (see Schneider, Wright 2006; Sjöberg 2009; Grossman 2010; Veraart 2013; Favero 2014; Borecký 2016; Port 2018).⁹ Many authors think that visual anthropology – as an empirical fieldwork method – should become part of anthropological training meant to develop our visual perception, including systematic observation and training of the gaze (Križnar 1996; Banks 2001; see also Ruby 2000; MacDougall 2005; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005; Ruby 2005; Grasseni 2011; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009). In this way, visual anthropology should develop its own alternative goals and methodologies that will benefit the field in general and not only supplement or copy written texts (MacDougall 1997: 285, in Schneider, Wright 2006: 23; see also Ruby 2005: 160).

We could say that ethnographic film went from *fly-on-the-wall* (observational methods), *fly-in-the-soup* (active, participatory and reflexive use of the camera) towards *fly-in-the-I/eye* (where reflexivity becomes paramount) (Crawford 1992: 67; Crawford 1992a: 125-126; see also Jenssen 2009: 46). Today we are probably facing an overall emphasis on self-reflexivity as a concept and a general turn towards ourselves (Giddens 1992 in Jenssen 2009: 132) in light of postmodern thought (Ruby 2000: 151-152) or as a legacy of the ‘Writing Culture’ debates that perpetuated the dogma to put yourself in the text as a synonym for being reflexive. Paul Rabinow and George Marcus, on the other hand, would argue that even today the self-reflexive in ethnography answers to a very narrow set of rationales and justifications (2008: 51). We can see this through the production of ethnographic films seen at various ethnographic film festivals, where it is common to see visual ethnographies in which the main thread of the narrative is the author’s point of view and the experience of the process of visual ethnography. Even though I do think a certain amount of reflexivity in research (especially with camera’s presence) has to be present, there has to be a certain measure of how much is enough (see also Ruby 2000: 155).

“Lukomir through the lens”: Strategies and perspectives

Reviewing the footage made during field research enables you to see things and events from field work from different angles and at different intervals of the research process as a whole. It also allows for the possibility to overview your own position towards the people you study. Field notes are useful in this sense, but I agree with Leslie Devereaux when she states that writing takes place after the

9 Parallel to text- and word-based monographies there were always individual tendencies of alternative and modal versions of classical scientific texts. One of those is *Eskimo realities* by E. Carpertner, who in 1973 tried to use Eskimo aesthetics combined with art and anthropological sensibility (Schneider, Wright 2006: 10; Worth, Adair 1997). Rarely mentioned, but also important, are authors such as Jeremy Rothenberg and Dennis Tedlock, who started with a newspaper *Alcheringa* in 1970 and experimented with visual presentation of texts and »ethno poetics« (ibid.). An important, more recent, example is *Navajo houses and songs* by David and Susan McAllester, who present a collection of ritual songs, photography and original transcriptions of the Navajo people.

experience, while, on the other hand, each film take happens or is constructed in the moment of filming (1995: 72). She writes about the contingency of experience (with the camera) as a process of entering, engaging with and immersing oneself into the social reality that is constantly re-created and depends on our ever-changing interaction with the world (1995: 68). With the analysis of our field experience, I will strive to understand this intertwined relationship between ethnographic practices and forms of representation in anthropology.

The decision to use a video camera while conducting fieldwork on Bjelašnica and Lukomir was connected to our previous experiences in visual ethnography during the time of our studies. It was initially woven into the subtle desire to document Lukomir as a picturesque village and depict a way of life that seemed so inspirational. The theme we meant to initially explore was the above-mentioned impact of tourism on the way of life in the village. However, while we continuously participated in the every-day life routines of the family, we slowly started to see the camera as an obstacle. We began to compare ourselves to the other tourists that came to the village and carelessly used their photos/cameras without asking permission or reflecting upon their position vis-a-vis the inhabitants (see Film still 2). We felt restrained by feeling similar to them, taking images *of* and *from* people without their approval. Similarly, we started to realize that focusing on tourism as an obstacle or potential threat reinforces the binary *hosts and guests* (Smith 1977) often mapped onto the relationship between tourists and local inhabitants. Consequently, after a few uncomfortable situations, we decided not to use the camera in the initial phases of fieldwork. We always carried it with us but decided not to use it to depict people. Looking back (and looking through the footage), I see the first shootings as an endless admiration of the landscape that seemed to open in different ways even during the course of a day, let alone during different seasons. We were in a way also too timid to have the process of visual ethnography affect our friendship and therefore turned our camera instead to the scenery surrounding us, thus looking at Lukomir from a more photographic point of view. Later on, when we had more courage, we began to follow a natural flow of events regardless of whether it included tourists or not. We adapted ourselves instead to the relationship we had with Ismet and Tidža, our protagonists. The fear about using the camera was connected to the problems Žiga faced in the beginning when trying to find interlocutors that would speak with him more openly about his questions about tourism and transhumance. People seemed really apprehensive towards foreigners due to many previous (also filming) experiences. Given that Lukomir is often portrayed by different tourist and commercial organizations (see Crevar 2018), villagers are aware of what kind of power images can have.



Film still 2: People who come to visit Lukomir enjoy taking photos of the villagers as they go about their daily work (Lukomir, August 2014, Manca Filak).

When we became more and more active in the daily work activities of the protagonists and their wider family, we started to use the camera during some work tasks, including hay picking, probably the hardest chore in the summer. We asked the family for their permission every time we used the camera. As we participated in daily tasks, we many times became part of the video material ourselves, an issue we encountered several times during our previous filming activities (Filak & Gorišek 2015; see also Filak & Gorišek 2013). When you are participating in the daily life of the people you are researching, you quickly find yourself too busy to hold a camera. It is easier to work in pairs in such cases, despite the fact that you then can quickly become part of the footage. The decision to show ourselves in the final film was a consequence of this dilemma. We were considered to be part of their family and cooperated in most of the tasks. Thus it seemed rational to also include some of this footage in the final film.¹⁰

The work activities in the village culminate each year in the biggest village festivity, *mevlud* (a local Muslim religious holiday that is followed by a festivity, *teferidž*),

¹⁰ This decision was criticized by a few filmmakers at the NAFA conference and film festival in Cluj-Napoca in Romania (11.-15. September 2018). What the best solution would be is not a clear, but, as was suggested by filmmaker Gary Kildea at the festival, maybe a common photograph of us together at the beginning of the film would have been sufficient in this regard.

for which people from all over the country return to Lukomir to see their relatives and friends (Gorišek 2017: 39, 60, 81-86). It was also the first time during our field work experience that they actually asked us to film them. After this event, which did not seem so relevant to us at the time, we didn't have to continually ask for permission to film, and we also slowly used camera more often. Through the experience of visual ethnography, we realized that this festivity is the highlight of their year on the mountain. They still often watch the festival footage, as it helps them see who participated in the event. Even now, when we communicate by phone or social networks, they would say something like: "*we were watching you the other day on mevlud*", exemplifying the importance of this filmed event. It seemed that the initial decision to carry the camera with us at all occasions without actually using it (or use it only to depict landscape) reinforced our position as researchers using cameras. They appreciated that we were not pushy with it, while at the same time acknowledging our desire to use it. In addition, the protagonists started to insist and point to things that should be recorded and documented, for example pie making, wool threading, etc. They are also elements of their everyday life considered to be traditional and perceived as such by them and the outsiders. The creative, relational use of the camera can help us involve our interlocutors in the process of meaning-making, thus bringing about the processual aspects of social relations rather than merely documenting things 'out there' (Banks 2001:112; Favero 2013: 70). With the help of the camera we could therefore understand more about what is important to the villagers (*mevlud* as a form of social display or elements of their daily life that they perceive as traditional). Another good experience was linked to the use of the small handheld camera to screen the footage on the wall inside their small house. In this way, the family could see the things we were recording and became enthusiastic to see themselves and the landscape on film; furthermore, we could see what is important for them through their comments and enthusiasm while watching the footage (the blooming flowers, seeing other villagers, etc.).

'How' you film and 'how' you show a certain issue (i.e. cinematographic strategy)¹¹ entails combining your own views with the world views of the protagonist (Piault 2006: 372). What the camera encouraged us to examine more was what Lukomir and sheepherding means to our protagonists (what are the elements through which they identify themselves), how they see the future in Lukomir, how they anticipate to go to the mountain in the winter and how they enjoy the clear air, routines and exchanges with neighbors, tourists and visting family. Listening only to the interviews would quickly lead us to think that life on Lukomir can only be hard, as it requires constant work and the engagement of the whole family. While going through the footage, we sensed that Lukomir is the

11 Colette Piault introduces this term as a process that results from the dialectic movement between knowledge and imagination; what is translated into images (fra. *Mise en images*) is a way to deal with 'how' to show, the 'how' to film (Piault 2006: 371-372, Postma 2006: 334-337).

highlight of their year, despite all the hard work needed to sustain this lifestyle (see Film still 3).



Film still 3: Ismet with his sheeps while sheepherding (Lukomir, July 2014, Žiga Gorišek).

By the time we left the village and the summer pastures in August 2014, the relationship we had with Tidža and Ismet became a family one, and we realized that we wanted to continue this visual documentation of the family and transhumance herding practices on Bjelašnica. We decided to return to the village in November 2014, when the family with their flock of sheep moved by foot to Hadžići, a village 27 km away, in the vicinity of Sarajevo. Walking all day with other shepherds through the mountain slopes of Bjelašnica was a unique experience, reinforced by strong winds and heavy rains that made the path through the banks harder (also technically speaking, in terms of camera use). Nevertheless, it was an important (in a way sensorial) experience that facilitated our understanding of the couple's lifestyle and their adaptation to the conditions of the land. The moment of leaving is also extremely emotional for them, as they know they are leaving their home behind, despite their looking forward to being with their family and their memories of having lived on the mountain during winter months in harsh conditions (see Film still 4).



Film still 4: Tidža leaving Bjelašnica (Lukomir, November 2014, Žiga Gorišek).

Despite our desire to continue documenting daily life in Lukomir, we unfortunately were not able to return again for such a long period as we did in the summer 2014. Instead we returned periodically for shorter visits during the winter-spring seasons of 2015, 2016 as well as during May 2017 to film the ascent on Lukomir. The ascent is technically easier, as the family helps Tidža and Ismet move to Lukomir with a big truck. They go twice, once to carry the sheep and the second time to take the cows and household materials, including various work. Despite the large amount of time that passed between our visits, the family never distanced themselves from us, even if we were not able to stay with them as long as we would have wished. One issue we encountered was the problem of filming in the valley in the presence of the entire extended family (Ismet's son, his wife and 2 grandchildren). The children (their grandchildren) clearly stated they do not want to be filmed as they had bad experiences with the Dutch group filming the above-mentioned documentary *Wintersleep in Lukomir* (Koevorden 2010). They were not asked beforehand if they wanted to be on camera, and they later did not agree to being featured in the final film (even though in the end they were). Another obstacle was linked to the fact that we were returning as guests – not as active family members of the family as we were until autumn 2014 but as visitors – which meant we had different ‘obligations’, including drinking coffee, sitting and conversing, and drinking more coffee. Consequently, the footage from Hadžići could not be compared with the material from Lukomir, where we actively participated in daily life activities for a longer period of time. The camera

footage from the the valley had lesser importance for us as well as for them, as they mostly anticipated when the snow would melt and they would finally be able to return to Lukomir. In this way, the footage follows our perception of the field work as well as protagonist's perception of their own daily life and of aspects that are important to them in a certain period.

“Lukomir through the editing program”: Constructing a narrative

The editing process started in November 2017, after Žiga defended his research thesis at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Ljubljana. During the research years (2014-2017) we gathered a great amount of the video material and (beside interviews), we did not systematically go through it until then. The amount of footage to systemize was maybe an initial, more technical issue we faced when starting the editing (by the amount of hours to watch it all). Later, the issue was how to edit all this material into a coherent whole that would make sense to us, to our protagonists as well as to a potential audience, which is an issue we encountered during all phases of video production (filming, editing and projecting the film). Through editing, we realized that one needs a certain ethnographic understanding of the logics of a people's way of life (and how they connect them and of their practices (Postma 2006: 350).

We edited different parts of the days and months separately, after which we compared the material. As we conducted the majority of field work during the summer, we did not face many problems with editing this part of the later film. The periods during which we did not use the camera as much (e.g., winter) were lacking in consistent footage, which troubled us until the final version of the film. One of the arguments raised by a few viewers at the NAFA conference and film festival 2018 was the fact we use in-between titles (descriptions) to provide context as well as to explain the film's narrative structure. We separated different periods with text that introduces what will happen in the following sequence. The dramaturgy of the footage should reveal itself without the aid of the “scientist”, who assumes the role of explaining facts to the others. However, in this case, we decided to provide such context due to the lack of consistency in the footage. As we felt we did not have enough video material to tell the story in the terms of dramaturgy, we decided to employ in-between titles. I believe that this can, to a certain extent, become a way of returning to the objective, rational and explanatory type of ethnographic film often criticized in the past. However, while doing field work and later analysis or editing, one must make pragmatic choices in order to make sense of the material.

Going through my experience of the editing process, we could sense it was different then Žiga's, as I was not part of the written research process and could allow myself greater freedom both in the filming and editing portions of the research. In a way I was not worried about attaining all the information necessary to understand the complexity of one phenomena that effects the village. This helped me to focus more on the intrinsic flow of the lifestyle of Tidža and Ismet,

more than following the research narrative of the whole research topic (see also Crawford, Simonsen 1992: 5). In this way, the process of visual ethnographic research (including the fear of the camera's impact) and the re-watching of the video material made us to look beyond our initial topic: the impact of tourism that would potentially be essentialized in a divisive way. Through visual ethnography, it was easier to shift the focus of our interest into tactile aspects of their life-style. These included, for example, the gentle and close relationship with the animals, the routine of everyday sheep care, and the hard work that seems embodied in their movements. Through the adaptation of our 'cinematographic strategy' (Piault 2006, Postma 2006) - refocused on the everyday life and shepherding – we realized that tourism is in reality only one of the changes taking place in Lukomir. Other important changes include population aging, unstable subsidies and the lack of grazing areas around Sarajevo. Thus while tourists are often present in the area (going in and out of their lives, as well as from the footage), we are not led to think that it is the only important aspect of change. The final film was in a way also a result of our collaboration, as Tidža and Ismet suggested to film (the tasks or areas mentioned above) what was important to them.

Following up on the last point, David MacDougall raises the question of *whose story is it* (1992: 25, 32). Peter I. Crawford suggests that a particular film's strategy or aesthetics fits a particular culture, basing his argument on the connection between a film's narrativity, the culture depicted and the audience (1992a; see also Postma 2006; Henry, Vávrová 2016). In our case, the video material follows different spatial and material dimensions of seasonal migration in general and shepherding in particular (as well as the relationship to the life-style, animals and the landscape). It follows the intrinsic flow of the one-year cycle of the shepherders and depicts the village way of life, even though the footage from the valley was not comparable to the summer life in Lukomir (by the amount and the type of the material). The footage also revealed the slow pace of everyday life routine of our protagonists in space and time. Similarly, as Alyssa Grossman describes her own ethnographic film *In the light of memory* from Romania (Grossman 2010a), films create rhythmic and multi-layered experiences that invite viewers to inhabit the images (and experiences) and not only watch them on the screen (Grossman 2010: 170). *Lukomir, my home* in a similar vein contrasts stillness and movement, work and leisure, mountains and city, summer and winter, waiting and working. Through the relatively slow pace of the images, we are drawn into the various dimensions of the sensory experience of the couple.¹² We can sense it by seeing the concrete elements of their daily life as well as their connection to the place/space in their interactions. In this manner, as Vávrová noticed, you can take/use a camera independently from a text, creating ethnographic material as a new form of knowledge (2014:19).

¹² On the other hand, it is clear that the observational style of footage (long takes) as well as slow pace does not automatically ally us with the protagonist's social reality (Suhr, Willerslev 2012: 291).

“Lukomir on the screen”: From local to global understandings

Every visual representation is consumed (not only created) in different social contexts that evoke certain feelings of similarity, distance, recognition or empathy (Banks, Ruby 2011: 9; Vávrová 2014: 3).¹³ The audience always has certain expectations in terms of aesthetics, narrative form, and compositions before watching a certain visual ethnography (ibid., Crawford 1993: 137). At this year’s 15th EASA biennial conference: *Staying, Moving, Settling*, an issue was raised at a panel regarding the triangle of filmmaker-subject-audience. Presenters focused “on the concept of “grace” as proposed by Jean Rouch when describing the kind of unexpected disturbance or wonder that sometimes occurs while recording and editing a film (Rouch 2003; Henley 2009)” (EASA 2018)¹⁴. The question was, when does a certain personal issue become a collective one? When does our *grace* – either *grace* in the field work, *grace* in a spectator experience or *grace* in our own personal experience – become something collective during the process of visual ethnography, something equally understandable and transparent to the people around us, even those not necessarily from our own cultural background? This question also addresses the fact that we have at least three levels of screenings: to the community that is participating in the process of visual ethnography, to our own community at home (being our friends, visual anthropologists, colleagues etc.) and to foreign audiences.

When protagonists become their own audience, they become ‘phenomenologically’ bound to their own representation in a way that is not possible for those who are not a part of their community (Banks 1996: 124, in Grossman 2010: 186). When showing the video material or in this case the final film to our protagonist, they didn’t appreciate the aesthetics of the film as much as they reacted to the details that were more important/significant for them. For example, while watching they deliberated what month (or time of the month) is depicted in the film according to the greenness of the grass in the footage. In a similar vein, they spoke about the sheep that are no longer part of the herd, as they still remember all their names. Overall, they appreciated the final film as a form of personal heritage for their descendants, namely their children and grandchildren.

For the audience in Slovenia, I think the film evoked a certain measure of “nostalgia” and affirms their cultural expectations about Bosnia and Bosnian people, but not necessarily in a negative way, as Slovene audiences found the

13 One of the first analyses of the impact of the audience on film was that of Milton Martinez, who refuted the general assumption that showing ethnographic films to students reinforces their empathy for cross-cultural understandings (Martinez 1992, Banks 2002; Banks, Ruby 2011: 10, Crawford 1993: 138). New studies, under the influence of the ‘critical anthropology’ (Clifford in Marcus 1986, Rabinow et.al. 2008) took text / film as the main source of meaning and tried to analyze the role of the viewer/reader in the construction of this meaning (Martinez 1992: 134; Jenssen 2009: 83).

14 EASA panel *Grace: unexpected moments in ethnographic film* (2018).

protagonists communicative, open, kind and sweet. What our protagonists say in the film are not jokes per se, but the way Ismet speaks, for example, is funny for Slovene audiences, who share a similar cultural background and humor. We were often surprised how many viewers found the film to be light, funny and interesting despite its relatively slow rhythm and pace. At the same time, our intentions were not to entertain audiences with an ethnographic film about shepherding in Bosnia. Yet the nostalgia in the context of film screenings that we observed refers to the sorts of reactions and the comments we received from audience members, which reaffirmed their opinions of Bosnians as having strong gender and work divisions, a patriarchal society and as being generally extremely hospitable and generous. I personally disagree with such comments, as the intention of the film was to acknowledge the multiple and diverse identifications and complex influences on the way of life in the village and in the valley. But as David MacDougall would say, once the film is done, it has its own, new life (1992: 34).

In addition to screenings in Slovenia, we also participated in ethnographic film festivals and conferences outside Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia and were surprised that the film did not entertain audiences in the same manner, even though the film was accepted as a good, intimate portrait of the couple and their way of life. The majority of the comments made by the audience expressed positive reactions, that audience members felt as if they were part of the community and living there with the couple. Comparing the reactions of the different audiences demonstrates that how we see the video material or final film changes on the basis of our perceptions and worldviews. It is analog and coded at the same time, never the sole result of a researcher's ideas (MacDougall 1992: 34). Watching visual ethnographies thus involves not only looking at but also positioning yourself in a certain time and space through sensorial experience and perception of the other. This allows you to understand and relate to other people as well as create new meanings about the research topic (Vávrová 2014: 25; MacDougall 2005: 4, 58).

Concluding thoughts on visual ethnography: Perspectives and ambiguities

The aim of the article was to discuss various aspects of visual ethnography in a reflexive manner with the aid of personal experiences in order to render visible this method's perspectives and ambiguities. Assuming that contemporary anthropology is reflexive and acknowledging the »*myriad limitations associated with humans studying others*« (O'Reilly 2012: 17), I see visual ethnography and its role in the possibility of richer documentation of cultural spaces and practices. At the same time it facilitates the identification of methodological, theoretical, ethical and broader epistemological issues of representation, subjectivity, authority as well as the relationship and responsibility of the researcher in the broader context of anthropology itself (Prosser 1998; Postma, Crawford 2006; Jenssen 2009; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009; Peče, et.al. 2015).

The use of a camera in empirical research sets qualitatively different relations and dynamics between researchers and participants in comparison to the use of classical ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews.¹⁵ Seeing with or without a camera cannot be the same, as the camera positions the researcher differently to the people while doing field work. It creates an image that is independent from our bodies (MacDougall 2005: 3) and offers visual particularities of a certain time and space that are concrete, seen and hearable. Finally, the camera also captures what is happening in the background, which can provide a surplus of information that can be useful for research (see also Bromhead 2014: 234). In this way, the use of the camera provides a way to participate as a researcher in the research process during which knowledge is not preset in advance but emerges from the process of filming (MacDougall 1992; Crawford, Simonsen 1992; Banks 1998; MacDougall 1998; Grimshaw, Ravetz 2005; Grimshaw, Ravetz 2009; Ruby 2005; Pink 2011; Vávrová 2014; see also Crawford 1993; Loizos 1993; Jonsen 1993; MacDougall 2005; Lydall, Strecker 2006; Jenssen 2009; Grossman 2010; Favero 2013).

It is important to be attentive to interactions between researcher and participants, particularly the unpredictable relationships that evolve during the filming and their effects on the research process (the relations, intimacy, and understanding of the field), as using a camera positions us at the core of the vulnerable moment of ethnographic experience (Deveraux 1995: 72; see also Bromhead 2014: 52). Namely, we intensify this relationship with the camera's presence and open a new field of intimacy and interpersonal exchange of information and meanings, which can help us better understand and be more sensitive to the ways that people experience, perceive and live their life views and worlds on an everyday level. The visual researcher/filmmaker's distinct position is a significant factor, as is his or her background: who they are, what interests them, how and if they understand others (Loizos 1993; Lydall; Stecker 2006; Postma 2006; Piault 2006; Henley 2006; Crawford 2006; Grimshaw, Ravetz 2005; Jenssen 2009).

In this sense, our fieldwork experience in Lukomir helped us notice all the methodological aspects of visual ethnography that facilitate our understanding of the villagers and their way of life. Through the use of the camera in Lukomir, we understood how it felt to be take images from and of the people in the village as well as the effects of tourism, and tourism's interpretation of a specific "traditional, local" culture. We could also sense the intrinsic rhythm and flow of the people in Lukomir by observing diverse elements of their daily life. By letting them indicate what to film (wool threading, melvud festivity, flowers, sheep, ...) we better understood what is important to them as well as what they perceive to be 'traditional' for their way of lie. Furthermore, we could ascertain if there

15 Many authors argue that it is not useful to maintain the dichotomy between written and visual anthropology, as a clear line between them never existed (Pink 2011: 269; Crawford 1993: 135-136; Port 2018: 136). For the discussions on the word-image dichotomy see also Jonsen 1993; Crawford 1993; Loizos 1993; Jonsen 1993; MacDougall 2005; Jenssen 2009; Grossman 2010; O'Reilly 2012.

were any differences in the methodological and analytical processes employed for gaining anthropological understandings. Upon reading the thesis and watching the completed film, I find that there is a great difference in the way one can become immersed in the life of Tidža and Ismet through visual ethnography. The thesis provides more information about social, historical and geographical contexts and about how daily life in Lukomir changed due to many different factors. The film, on the other hand, presents more about how the changes affect the villagers and their everyday life activities. The parallel written ethnographic research trapped us into trying to find authenticity, to truly express the real life of Lukomir (therefore the usage of additional text). Even if the focus of visual ethnography shifted from the impact of tourism on the villagers, the aim of the thesis stayed bound to this research question. In a sense, written and visual ethnography complement each other. Unfortunately, one has to experience them (read or watch) separately. For this reason, I would argue for multimodal representations, as they enable multiple identifications and multilayered understandings. Writing itself can be multimodal as it entails field work diaries, dialog transcriptions, interviews, evocative descriptions and photography to add qualitatively richer information (Lunaček Brumen 2018: 97; see also Pink 2001 and Clifford, Marcus 1986).¹⁶ Žiga's thesis is already an example of this, as he included photographs and fieldwork diary excerpts in the text. I see the advance of visual media also in that it reaches more people and is therefore a great means for transmitting knowledge and experiences on many diverse levels.

Visual ethnography is a way to demonstrate that as anthropologists our aim is not only to provide documentation. New and important anthropological knowledge develops through participation and interactions, both worthy of consideration. David MacDougall speaks about *corporeal images* – images that carry the imprint of our body behind the camera and its relation to the world that are mirrors of our bodies, reactions, intentions, attentiveness and activity behind the camera (2005: 3). This moment of connection or meeting of the persons in front and behind the camera is visible – we can always recognize the author's position in the process. Moreover, the film's effect is stronger once the author's position is clearer. Through time, our protagonist did not really notice the camera. In the same manner, we became integrated with it but never completely lost control over it, as we were constantly rethinking our position as researchers. In this way, the camera continues the dialog between the researcher and the protagonists...

¹⁶ Sarah Pink is critical towards multimodal anthropology as it's deiving five senses into five conherent modes and calls for sensory anthropological approach that on the other hand sees them interconnected (see Pink 2011).

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