



**Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung
Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology**

CALL FOR PAPERS

First Conference of the Visegrád Anthropologists' Network

**Visegrád Belongings:
Freedoms, Responsibilities and Everyday Dilemmas**

7-8 June 2018

Venue: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany

Convenor: Chris Hann, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

The Visegrád Anthropologists' Network (V4 Net) was launched in October 2017 at the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology on the initiative of Chris Hann. Its main purpose is to contribute to a better understanding of contemporary social phenomena in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (the V4) by applying the theories and methods of anthropology, broadly defined. A second goal, especially important when many educational institutions in the V4 face severe pressures, is to consolidate the standing of the discipline, in fruitful conversations with fluid adjacent fields of the social sciences and the humanities.

The first conference of V4 Net will tackle very broad themes pertaining to “belonging”: from face-to-face communities and regional identifications to loyalties to larger imaginary constructions such as the nation. Beyond the nation-state, does the V4 itself generate sentiments of belonging, and if so, how are these effects achieved? How can anthropologists illuminate current tensions between national belonging and larger entities such as the EU, or a Christian European civilization? In addition to all these forms of collective belonging, other forms may also be explored: to one's family or larger kin groups, to workplaces, secular associations, religious congregations etc. In all cases, acts of categorization and processes of boundary construction result in exclusions, with implications for social relations and their imagination.

The juxtaposition of “freedom” and “responsibility” is inspired by Karl Polanyi (see the final chapter of *The Great Transformation*, 1944). The mature Polanyi argued that freedom cannot be attained in conditions of bourgeois liberalism, where market is the dominant form of economic integration, but only through socialist democracy based on the recognition of society and responsible action towards others. Today, when economic

pressures force families apart and politicians manipulate sentiments of belonging to a nation-state to disguise increasing social inequality and to monopolise power, Polanyi's social philosophy seems utterly utopian. In his home region and elsewhere, the notion of responsibility may itself be acquiring darker aspects. But is this to paint the picture too black? Can we detect other forms of belonging in the contemporary V4 that might contain the seeds of a new emancipatory "double movement" in Polanyi's sense?

Proposals should draw upon recent ethnographic research. The prime focus should be on one or more countries of the V4 but papers that engage with the former East Germany will also be considered.

Proposals should be submitted to Chris Hann (hann@eth.mpg.de) before **28 February, 2018**. Decisions will be communicated before 13th April. Invited participants will have their expenses covered in full.