



Professor Vesna Vucinic Neskovic
Chair
World Council of
Anthropological Associations

12 October 2015

Professor Andrejs Silins
Chairman
Latvian Council of Science
Akademijas Square 1
Riga, LV - 1050
LATVIA

Subject: Establishment of Social and Cultural Anthropology as an independent science discipline in Latvia

Dear Professor Silins,

I am writing in my capacity as the Chair of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) and on behalf of the current Organizing Committee. WCAA represents more than 40 anthropological associations across the world. We would like to express our strongest support for the establishment of Social and Cultural Anthropology as an independent science discipline in Latvia. We applaud the aspiration of our colleagues from the Latvian Anthropological Association (comprising academic staff of both the University of Latvia and Riga Stradins University) to affirm and strengthen the academic standing of Social and Cultural Anthropology in your country.

We think that gaining official status as a science discipline is crucial for anthropology's further development in Latvia, both academically and professionally. Social and Cultural Anthropology is a relatively new discipline in Latvia, yet its public voice has been loud and its contributions to academic and applied research clearly visible and useful. One of the main goals of academic anthropologists in Latvia now is to launch a doctoral programme in anthropology, complementing the existing BA and MA study programmes and thus creating a full-fledged, three-tier platform for anthropological education. Formation of a joint international doctoral study programme in anthropology (a project that involves also Tallinn University and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas), which is currently funded by a grant from the Wenner-Gren foundation, would be impossible without confirming the status of anthropology as an academic discipline. Specifically, the lack of official academic status would delay the formation of a Professorial Council in Anthropology, a prerequisite for a doctoral programme under the Latvian Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

We believe that confirmation of Social and Cultural Anthropology as an independent science discipline, following the praxis of many countries whose anthropological associations are members of the WCAA, would help Latvian social anthropologists to consolidate the potential of the discipline and continue the advancement of anthropological knowledge and its application in many spheres of social life in Latvia. Importantly, it will help to widen the ranks of anthropologically educated citizens and thus enhance the scholarly and public debate on important socio-political issues in Latvia and beyond. At a time of numerous global challenges, exemplified most recently by Europe's migrant crisis, in-depth anthropological analyses – and the alternative solutions such analyses can offer – are much needed.

We therefore urge you to support further development of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Latvia by granting it the status of a scientific discipline in its own right.

Yours sincerely



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