

analyzed the public and media discourse that form the public opinion on “bad mothers”: migrants who leave their children (“social orphanism” according to the media) in order to work abroad.

The conference, however, didn’t stay only on the theoretical ground of research presentations and analyses. Many contributions promoted the activist stream of feministically orientated sociology. **Ute Gerhard** of the University of Bremen (the author of “Gender and Citizenship in Western Europe”) analyzed feminist studies of today by conceptualizing the provision of care as a central hinge of gender justice and she extended the framing of social rights to include family and domestic rights and obligations. She tried to link both discourses on care and citizenship in order to give reasons for a model of women and men as citizen earners and carers. Gerhard inveighed against gender inequalities that, according to her, develop because men do not sufficiently participate in childcare and domestic work. She argues that the neoliberalistic concept of work-and-home management forces “Western” women to procure a childminder. It’s the women from the “East” who have to leave their own children due to the bad economical situation to look after somebody else’s children (Hochschild coins the term “alternative loving” here).

The participants in the conference agreed on a more resolute solution of the given situation, though on a rather vague level, I dare say: by activism, by pushing “Western” countries towards increase in financial aid to the developing and so-called “pink” countries (whose GDP is for the major part based on remittances

of female domestic workers), e.g. the Philippines, by improving the legal status of female migrants, particularly in the EU countries, by supporting the development of NPOs that liaise with domestic workers, etc. As many authors of the presentations work as consultants in European institutions and cooperate actively with international organizations and NPOs its more likely that they will find more specific solution to this problem.

Conference Contributions by **Ursula Apitzsch, Margrit Brückner, Birgit Geissler, Ute Gerhard, Lena Inowl-ocki, Karin Jurczyk, Juliane Karakayali, Maria Kontos, Helma Lutz, Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, Maria Rerrich, Helen Schwenken, Marianne Schmid-baur, Kyoko Shinozaki, Helen Schwenken, Gabriele Wenner, Brigitte Young.**

Petra Ezzeddine Lukšiková

Report from the 11TH CONFERENCE OF THE “BIOGRAF” JOURNAL

19th-21st June, 2009, Hoješín
u Seče, Czech Republic,
<http://www.biograf.org/konference/>

The 11th conference of the “Biograf” journal brought several surprises. The first one was the conference itself because in the past year the working session of the authors and friends of the Biograf did not take place and the continuation of the long and popular tradition could have been endangered. Fortunately (in my opinion at least) these fears were

baseless and the 11th working session of the Biograf journal took place in the last third of June.

The second surprise was the place since the conference was relocated from Borek u Suchomast to a similarly friendly environment of the village of Hoješín u Seče where the cloister of the School Sisters of St. Francis hosted professional discussions and conference festivities.

The third novelty was of a personal character: the post of general organizer as well as of the editor of the journal Biograf has been assumed by Barbora Spalová.

The conference did not have one general topic; the participant researchers were connected by a similar interest in qualitative methods and their critical re-thinking, which was more or less verbalized in conference papers and discussions.

The conference started on Friday evening with the discussion of the article “*Konstrukce normality, rizika a vědění o těle v těhotenství: příklad prenatalních screeningů*” (*The construction of normality, risks and knowledge of the body in pregnancy: the example of prenatal screenings*) by Jaroslava Hasmanová Marhánková, published in the last volume of the Biograf 2008/47. The discussion was directed by **Ida Kaiserová** and **Eva Stehlíková**, who worked out discussion rules to prevent the discussion from degenerating into personal narratives of prenatal care experience. The main aim of the discussion was to investigate “which sociological concepts the topic can be connected with and how the topic can be developed regarding facts as well as the research itself.” (Rules for the moderated discussion). Many of both

present and absent readers read the text as an activist one, giving a voice to the less powerful side of women who are sent for medical examinations of controversial importance. Nevertheless, the article lacks the view of doctors and therefore a great part of the debate concentrated on the question of whether an article written in this way is defensible as a social science text.

The Saturday conference marathon was opened by **Alice Červinková** and her paper “*Vědci v pohybu: Geopolitiky akademické mobility*” (*Scientists on the move: Geopolitics of academic mobility*). Her research in Romania showed that academic mobility is a part of both systematically created Euro-American science politics and a consequence of the transnationalization of the work market. The biographies of academics evidence that academics understand this type of work-mobility as work as well as a migration experience. Part of this experience is not only solving the problems of leaving for abroad but also thinking about coming back home.

The following panel of two papers touched from different angles the topic of continuity and discontinuity: **Štěpán Ripka** in his paper “*Limity kontinuity: Může se stát divoch křesťanem?*” (*Limits of continuity: Can a savage become a Christian?*) thought about the willingness of anthropology to research and take discontinuity seriously, in this case the discontinuity of faith (and culture as well) at the moment of religious conversion of the Calderash Roma in Mexico. He showed that anthropologists tend to interpret some of the external symptoms before and after conversion as a sign of un-con-

fessed continuity, as a proof of “underlying structures” of culture or society – an anthropologist then states that there is no real conversion and change in an individual but only a re-labelling of the original practices. On the contrary, **Anna Pokorná** spoke about keeping the continuity: in her paper “*Domov pod pokličkou: K antropologii jídla*” (*Home under the potlid: On the anthropology of food*), she concentrated on the mechanisms of keeping and transmission of “national” identity during migration. She described how the Czechs who came to Israel (then Palestine) after the war have been keeping the consciousness of group identity and continuity with home by means of food and how they have been transmitting the relationship to the Czech Republic and to Czechness (actually somewhat abstract nowadays) to their offspring – in a situation of evident external discontinuity.

The topic of re/presentation and public space connected the following pair of papers. Using the results of the discourse analysis of online discussions in the discussion forum of the daily paper “Sme,” **Jana Lindbloom** in her paper “*Stratégie prezentovania väčšinového a menšinového názoru vonline diskusiách o dotáciách do poľnohospodárstva*” (*The strategy of majority and minority opinions’ presentation in online discussions of subsidies in agriculture*) showed different argument strategies of critics and defendants of agricultural subsidies’ politics. The core of her argument lies in understanding the online discussion as a local social situation where not only power and persuasiveness of the presented opinions are important but also their position in the situationally and locally given opinion.

The discourse strategy of those expressing a major opinion moreover supported by the media differs diametrically from the strategy of minority opinion speakers. **Kateřina Pulkrábková** was also concerned with representation strategies – in her paper “*Romské ženy v českém veřejném prostoru*” (*Romany women within Czech public space*), she first of all called attention to the varied representational strategies of Romani women activists. These strategies differ when aimed at majority women activism, at the majority, or, on the contrary, at the Romani minority. Romani women activists are always in the situation of negotiating their positions while the negotiation is influenced by both the manifold discrimination they feel and their personal biographies.

In her paper “*Posudky: Z kádrové práce komunistického Česka*” (*Personal files: From the background check practice of communist Czech lands*) **Marie Černá** used materials from the ongoing research of the Ústav pro soudobé dějiny (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences). On the example of one academic who “did not cope with religious delusions,” she showed exactly how the background check practice representing an ever-present part of the communist regime proceeded. Although the great majority of personal files were written by people inclined to be friendly to this academic, the power with its tools – the personnel files – was not “tamed” and infiltrated the society at all the levels. So as the religiosity of one academic was profiled in the personnel files, nobility as an identity category was profiled in interviews with six Czech noblemen in the paper by **Josefina Borecká** “*Kolektivní*

paměť české šlechty” (*Collective memory of the Czech nobility*). Borecká tried to show the specific use of general identity signs as descent, family, wealth, homeland and moral credit in noblemen’s biographies. The participants then proposed that the author should complete the text analysis with an analysis of how else nobility expressed itself.

The last Saturday panel was devoted to explicitly qualitative research and its possibilities and limits. In his theoretical paper called “*Výzkumný rozhovor: Monolog vs. dialog*” (*Research interview: Monologue vs. dialogue*), **Pavel Nepustil** accented the specificity of the research interview situation that is first of all a relationship, a space where meaning is or can be created. Starting from Harlene Anderson’s family psychotherapy and her concepts of dialogue conversation and “collaborative practices,” Pavel Nepustil discussed possibilities of the research interview as a “sharable inquiry” when researcher and participant set up meanings to an equal extent and this way they both participate in the research process. **Lenka Slepíčková** and **Michaela Bartošová** concentrated on a different aspect of the research interview: they asked themselves in their paper “*Proč s námi mluví? Motivace k účasti na kvalitativním výzkumu a její vliv na průběh rozhovoru*” (*Why do they talk to us? Motivation for participation in qualitative research and its influence in the course of the interview*) of why people are willing to participate in research, especially in research aimed at intimate, personal topics, and what is the influence of their motivation on the course of an interview. The researchers summarized their experience from three

pieces of research – research on childless women over 30 years of age, primiparas over 30 years of age, and sterile men and women. According to their findings, the most common motivation for participating in research is an effort to help the researcher – woman-student – with her work. Other identified motivations were sharing personal experience with an uncommitted person, getting new information on the topic, use of the interview for self-reflection. The important point is that just as the relationship changes during the interview so can the motivations for its continuation change as well as the participants’ notions of what the interview brings them and what it can (or could) bring. Personal characteristics of the male or female researcher (gender, age, student status, childlessness etc.) are important in the course of the interview as well as expectations, motivations and results of it. The question of what the researcher and what her/his informant expect from the research interview, if and how much the power disbalance given by the research situation itself can be disturbed, or who in the course of the interview is really the “more powerful” one – whether the researcher or the informant – became the topic of discussion and fluently transformed into evening, unmoderated entertainment.

Radek Tichý opened Sunday morning with his paper “*Restrukturalizace pražské arcidiecéze: Strípek fungování katolické církve na začátku 21. století*” (*Restructuring of the Prague archdiocese: A fragment of Catholic church functioning in the beginning of the 21st century*) Radek Tichý summarized his research, which started with the beginning of restructuring of

the parochial system, declared by the bishops and their co-workers also to be a renewal of the church. The researcher himself expected strong discussions at the level of church hierarchies, priests and laymen, members of particular parishes. Restructuring went through to a significant measure without active participation of churchgoers in the processes of decision-making and a similarly marginal role was also played by priests of particular parishes. The topic of the paper was to describe the mechanisms of decision-making inside the Catholic Church conceptualized as an organization with the characteristics of a bureaucratic system with limited possibilities of its members to practically influence the decision-making process – though the decision-making process was not only declared open but also communicated as a part of a renewal process of the whole organism of the church. The other paper was also concerned with research into organization and the possibilities and results of its restructuring. In his paper “*Internacionalizace ekonomické kultury v jednom českém pivovaru*” (*Internationalization of economic culture in a Czech brewery*) **Kamil Mareš** presented a case study of economic and corporate cultural changes of a middle-sized Czech brewery taken over by an owner who lived abroad. To what extent does such a brewery and its beer become a “global” product and to what extent does it keep “local” characteristics? Do the changes in communication of workers, management of the company, and in some production processes represent a step in losing its local specific characteristics and in internationalizing the product – or a global

spread of one particular original Czech beer? These questions were not only the topic of the paper, but also the topic of the following unsurprisingly passionate discussion in the Czech context.

The next bloc was devoted to the topic of gender, which was more or less explicitly present in many other papers. By means of biographic interviews, **Ivan Vodochodský** researched the process of the creation of pictures of manhood by men who started their families at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s in socialist Czechoslovakia. He concentrated on the aspects of self-presentation of men, who construct a self-picture in a prism of current time and in the specific context of a research interview with a man who is one generation younger. The paper strongly accented the fact that a meaningful and coherent picture of manhood is created situationally and also under the influence of particular patterns which the sociologist Gabriela Spector-Mersel conceptualized as “screenplays of hegemonic manhood.” Conditionality and changes of actors’ images of gender roles were also captured in the title of the next paper – “*Mužství mezi ‘tehdy’ a ‘dnes’: Dělení genderu ve vyprávěních o životě za socialismu*” (*Manhood between “then” and “now”: Making of gender within the narratives of life under socialism*). Another presentation “*Kdo je v pohybu, ta nestárne – aktivní stárnutí jako genderovaný diskurz*” (*Moving, she does not grow old – active ageing as gender discourse*) by **Jaroslava Marhánková** thought over the discourse of “active ageing” and its gender aspects. On the basis of research into leisure-time centers for seniors, the author discussed the fact that

however this discourse is presented today universally, in real situations it is adjusted to women who are almost the only visitors to senior centres. Participation in activities of leisure-time senior centers is not only bound to the activities offered, but also to gender-conditioned images of growing old originating in gender senior biographies. The research shows that the discourse of an active old age comes from a particular image of growing old and of womanhood/manhood and that first of all it specifically disciplines women's bodies.

The conclusion of the conference belonged to **Zdeněk Konopásek** and his reflection over a sentence said by his five-year old son: "This is the first time I am doing it for the second time." The Konopáseks call attention to the fact that uniqueness and regularity do not exclude each other but, on the contrary, they always go hand in hand. Everything happens from certain points of view both uniquely and regularly. According to Konopásek, this quality of reality is often ignored by sociologists who differentiate the research-field into the unique and thus suitable for qualitative research and the regular suitable for quantitative research and statistics. Konopásek invited balance of this discord by sensitivity to both sides. The participants asked the author to concretize this extraordinarily theoretical paper. The discussion leader, Ida Kaiserová, then likened what was said to a work of literature which has similarly only several possible genres but its uniqueness resides in an individual working-out of those genres.

I must conclude this report with saying that the working session of Biograf

kept its name. Particular papers were thought over, discussed and criticized by the participants. Mostly the discussion was serious, sometimes not so serious. The atmosphere of the conference was not academically sterile – serious speeches mixed with cries of the participants' children, for whom a parallel program was prepared; the speeches were also coloured by the arrival of a Franciscan nun who came to ask for what time to prepare lunch.

Of course not all papers were of equal quality and with regard to the scope of the topic not all presentations were interesting for every participant. Nevertheless, in my opinion, varied stimuli, both scientific and non-scientific, and the friendly and open atmosphere of the conference created an environment rich in ideas to which it is a pleasure to return.

Markéta Vaňková

**Conference Report:
SUMMER IN THE CITY.
DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF
CULTURE [Lato v mieście.
Różne oblicza kultury]**

25th–26th June 2009, Krakow, Poland.

Another of the series of conferences devoted to urban ethnology/anthropology took place in Polish Krakow in June. It was organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Department of Ethnology; the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences; the Polish Academy of Sciences, Committee on Ethnologi-