

**Czech-Slovak Conference
MINORITY MEMORYSCAPES.
COMPETITIVE SOCIETIES OF
MEMORY?**

June 10-11, 2010, Prague, Czech Republic.

The "Minority Memoryscapes. Competitive Societies of Memory?" conference organized by the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague and the Jewish Museum of Prague, took place in Prague on the premises of the Jewish Museum on June 10-11, 2010. Blanka Soukupová, Zuzana Jurková, and Hedvika Novotná were the chief conference organizers. Costs of the conference were covered from a Charles University Special Research project called "Postmodern Society – Memory – Culture – Identity."

The conference was started by Miloš Havelka, who welcomed all the participants and introduced Jan Sokol, who gave the opening speech. In it, he stressed two aspects of minorities that are important for a majority. Minorities are crucial, Sokol argued, because they can initiate a change in a society, which is almost impossible for a majority in its homogeneity and sterility; and they are nonetheless important because a minority provides confidence and elementary coherence for a society. After that Blanka Soukupová summarized the development of Czech urban anthropology and presented the three main topics of the conference, i.e., city – minority – and the plurality of memoryscape.

The first day of the conference was devoted mainly to the Jewish minority in Czech, Moravian and Slovak cities and

towns. Peter Salner presented nine possible Jewish views of Bratislava in the 20th century. Then Ivica Bumová talked about the relation between the Slovak majority and the Jewish minority memoryscapes in Dolní Kubín (Žilina region) in the 1930s-40s. Prague in Jewish memory after the Shoah was the topic of Blanka Soukupová's paper, in which she was mainly concerned with places of memory (Nora 1984-92) and their changes in time. Memoryscape of Brno in the period between the wars was the topic of the paper presented by Jana Nosková. In her analysis she identified the topos of Brno as a "children's paradise," as a forgotten time of co-dwelling of Czechs, Germans and Jews; however the analysis also showed that Czechs and Germans stressed different time periods in their stories and among all the three stood unambiguous borders. Hedvika Novotná was also interested in places of memory and paid special attention to the construction of tradition in today's Jewish town in Prague, e.g., the Disneyfication of the sites. In her analysis, she used the concept of communicative and cultural construction of memory (Assman 1992). The morning session was ended by Zuzana Skořepová who sketched for the audience a mental map of the life of Bedřich Feigl, a Jewish painter of the first half of the 20th century, who lived in Prague, Berlin and London.

The afternoon session was opened by Daniel Luther, who followed up on the theme of construction of collective memory by analyzing how the official institutions operated with historical knowledge. He discussed symbolical contents in the varying topography of

Bratislava's streets and squares during the 20th century. But the topic of a synagogue and the Jewish minority in a small town was discussed mainly in the afternoon. Both Blanka Altová and Jaroslav Alt were concerned in their linked papers with the synagogue in Uhlířské Janovice. The former dealt with its cultural and historical memory while the latter with the design of the liturgical space and its conversion (into a hairdresser's). Magdalena Myslivcová talked about the synagogue in Písek. She inquired into the construction of memory and whether in this case we can talk rather about a majority or a minority construct. Zuzana Jurková presented the former synagogue in Kladno as a place of getting together, which was the crucial occasion for establishing contact and dialogue between British and American Jews and The Czechoslovak Hussite Church in Kladno.

The second day of the conference was devoted mostly to other minorities in Czech, Moravian and Slovak cities and towns. The morning session was opened by the paper of Helena Nosková on Králíky (Ústí nad Orlicí region). She described changes in social and cultural capital in Králíky, created on the basis of memories of local Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Polish Czechs. After that Slavomíra Ferenčuchová and Petr Kouřil discussed contemporary "provoked memory" in the originally German landscape surrounding Brno. On one hand, they concentrated on documenting the crosses placed in the landscape and, on the other hand, on presenting the activities followed in order to remember the traditions of villages – such as the St. Wenceslas feast (in Czech

"Svatováclavské hody"). They mapped the strategies of re-interpretation and confrontation of different memories based on interviews and fieldwork research. The morning session finished with the paper by Libuše Groberová on the reflection of the capital, Prague, in a north-Moravian village X.

In the afternoon session, Petr Gibas, Karolína Pauknerová and Bedřich Čížek devoted their paper to a special minority of Prague allotment gardeners and the changes this type of gardening has been undergoing in the post-socialist era. They presented a brief history of these allotments, the legal changes that affect allotment gardening and the discursive analysis of newspapers and webpages about Prague allotments, the concept of greenery in particular, and the debate on why allotments should stay or disappear. The last paper, presented by Barbora Vacková and Lucie Galčanová, dealt with (non)existing minorities within the modernistic town of Zlín. The authors concentrated on the period between 1920 and 1940, the times of the development of the Bata factory and "Bata-ville," and on narratives of modernity and its impact on the town of Zlín.

The conference was ended by a discussion on the course of the conference and the possible future direction of Czech urban anthropology (or urban studies) and, in particular, how the participants of the conference will cooperate in the future and what their points of concurrence are.

During the conference, various attitudes about how to investigate memory, memoryscapes and minority memory within the urban context were presented.

Places of memory (papers by H. Novotná and B. Soukupová) and the concept of provoked memory (S. Ferenčuchová and P. Kouřil) were among the most interesting ones. Jewish minority and construction of Jewish memory (or memoryscape) formed a dominant interest in the presented papers. Only a few papers concentrated on other minorities: e.g., the German minority (J. Nosková in Brno between the wars) or the coping with ruins of originally German landscape around Brno (S. Ferenčuchová and P. Kouřil). The very special case of minorities represented the minorities of the modernist Baťa city of Zlín (inhabitants of the original Zlín, seniors, etc., in the paper of B. Vacková and L. Galčanová).

Even though such a conference cannot act as a representative overview of Czech and Slovak urban studies or urban anthropology, in this case it showed a coherent picture of how social sciences can deal with minority memory. The outcomes of the conference will shortly also become accessible to other interested scholars and students, as the conference will have permanent form in a collective monograph called "Unquiet Memoryscape of a (Post)Modern City" which will be prepared from chosen conference papers.

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SIXTH SYMPOSIUM OF THE ICTM STUDY GROUP ON MUSIC AND MINORITIES

July 19-25, 2010, Hanoi, Vietnam.

The international ethnomusicological organization the *International Council for Traditional Music* (ICTM) has its world conference every odd-numbered year (the most recent one took place last year in the South African city of Durban; the next one is planned for July 2011 in St. John, Canada). In the even years the majority of its study groups meet; the work in them is usually considered the main reason for the ICTM.

The *Music and Minorities* study group is one of the newest (founded in 1999) and most numerous (approximately 300 members). Its last, sixth meeting took place June 19-24, 2010, in Hanoi, North Vietnam. In comparison with the next-to-last meeting in Prague (May 2009, see *Urban People* 2008, 2: 228) the number of active participants decreased and their composition changed. This was the understandable consequence of the relatively high travel costs, which prevented the participation of the majority of South and East European researchers, who otherwise are very numerous. Of the approximately 40 active participants, one-fourth were directly from Vietnam, and a further eight from Southeast and East Asia. More important than the home country of the researchers, however, were the unsurprisingly various discourses which became evident both in the participation of conference topics and in the approach to them. The topic *Other Minorities* was chosen only by the Finn-