CONTENTS

157 Editor's notes
David Verbuč

Articles

159 Seeing Sapa: Reading a Transnational Marketplace in the Post-Socialist Cityscape.
Ezra Rawitsch

199 "Makó – Not Only *Hagyma*"?: Competing Histories and Narratives of Onion Production and Spa Tourism in a Hungarian Town.
Vivien Apjok

233 Year of the Snake: An Analysis of the Polish Urban Legend of the Vistula Python.
Mateusz Napiórkowski

Essays

267 Nearly Carbon Neutral Conferences in a Time of Pandemic: A Review Essay.
Lee Bidgood

Reviews

271 Trever Hagen, *Living in the Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground*.
Zita Skořepová

277 Judit Niran Frigyesi, *Writing on Water: The Sounds of Jewish Prayer*.
Veronika Seidlová

281 Maria Sonevytsky, *Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine*.
David Verbuč

285 Susanna Trnka, *Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic*
Markéta Slavková

EDITOR'S NOTES

I took over the editorial duties of the English editions of the *Lidé města / Urban People* journal in January 2020 (I am thankful to the former editor, Hedvika Novotná, for managing the English editions for the previous 12 years). I am dedicated to the high-quality standards of the journal, and to its ethnographic specificity, as well as to its wide international and interdisciplinary outreach. We have followed a rigorous selection and revision process for the articles published in this edition, and the positive outcome resulting from these efforts should be apparent to the readers. I want to express my gratitude here to all of the anonymous reviewers, as well as to my colleagues from the *Lidé města / Urban People* journal, who contributed to the successful completion of this issue.

All of the three articles herein address contemporary social and cultural phenomena from post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, namely from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. More specifically, the first two published contributions deal with local economic developments (informal and marketplace economies, agriculture, tourism), and with related issues of ethnicity (Rawitsch) and identity (Apjok), while the third one scrutinizes digital media and popular culture (Napiórkowski). All three texts utilize ethnographic methods to some degree, and are attentive to the complexities and contradictions of power, agency, and discourse. Furthermore, we are also initiating a conversation on "Nearly Carbon Neutral" scholarly conferences in a timely essay contribution by Lee Bidgood. Finally, the review section of the journal discusses a rich selection of recent English-language anthropological and ethnomusicological publications that are on the one hand very international and interdisciplinary, and on the other, related in one way or another to the Czech Republic and the wider region.

I regard my editorial work for the journal as a work in progress, which means that the current issue therefore represents only the beginning of a longer journey that will attempt to make public many relevant and engaging texts and topics, as well as introduce several editorial changes and innovations to the journal. I hope you will follow, appreciate, and perhaps also contribute to these endeavours!

David Verbuč

SEEING SAPA: READING A TRANSNATIONAL MARKETPLACE IN THE POST-SOCIALIST CITYSCAPE

Ezra Rawitsch
(independent researcher)

Abstract: *Central and Eastern European post-socialist states have undergone profound political and economic changes in the three decades since 1989. Although the dramatic transformations of the immediate post-socialist period were highly visible and widely documented, recent political and economic developments are crucial to understanding the region's contemporary conjuncture. The broad trend of moving away from liberalism and toward an emergent authoritarian politics, both in the Visegrád states and elsewhere, raises new uncertainties regarding the rule of law, the civil rights of minority groups, and the status of democratic rule. Meanwhile, the region's increasingly globalised economies have variously embraced and shunned Western economic influence, maintaining and cultivating trade and political linkages with the former "Soviet ecumene" and in Southeast and East Asia, notably China and Vietnam.*

Amid these trends, novel forms of urban space locate and reveal a variety of perspectives on the nature of the post-socialist transition. Since its founding in 1999, Sapa marketplace, on the outskirts of Prague, has become a focus of transnational trade networks and a cultural centre of the Vietnamese-Czech community in Czechia. Czech scholars have emphasised Sapa as an important centre of Vietnamese-Czech culture in the Czech Republic; I consider more expansively how Sapa can be conceptualised as a transnational and post-socialist urban space, and how legacies of migration and informal economic activity have contributed to its formation. I explore the material present of Sapa, which helps to locate, focus, and reveal specific legacies of the socialist past and the dynamics of the post-socialist transition.

Keywords: *Sapa marketplace, urban space, transnationalism, post-socialist cities, Vietnamese-Czech diaspora*

Acknowledgements: *Rawitsch wishes to acknowledge his advisors, Drs. John Pickles, Chad Bryant, and Christian Lentz at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for their invaluable support of this research. He wishes also to express his gratitude to the review committee for their feedback, and to the faculty and students at Charles University's Department of Social Geography and Regional Development for their advice and assistance in Prague.*
Email: ezrawitsch@gmail.com

Introduction

Each day at Sapa, more than 350 business entities with thousands of employees engage in trade with tens of thousands of visitors (see Figure 1)[1]. The act of trade is at once highly localised and highly transnational.[2] At Sapa, one is just as likely to come across a Chinese-made smartphone as a bundle of Thai basil grown in Czechia. There are wholesalers hailing from dozens of countries, some of whom who deal only in multiples of one thousand; there are pensioners from neighbouring apartment buildings who come for a single bag of groceries. Buddhists offer incense at one of Prague's few public temples (see Figure 2). Children play in and out of their parents' storefronts while mothers tend cash registers, or scale fish, or talk.

In a window, advertisements for round-trip airfares are posted. Prague to Hanoi, via Moscow: CZK 16,500. There are non-stop tickets to Moscow, Istanbul and Chengdu; connections to Ulaanbaatar, Beirut, and Beijing (see Figure 3). Three adjacent travel agencies attract passers-by with signs in Chinese, Czech, English, and Vietnamese. Another multilingual sign reads "Korea Mart and Asian Foods Supermarket"; nearby, a store claims to be Czechia's largest importer of goods from India, Indonesia, and China. Around another corner a sign reads "Turkish Goods" (*Turecké zboží*) alongside the star and crescent (see Figures 4, and 5).

[1] This publication was supported by the Morehead-Cain Foundation.

[2] Numerous definitions of transnationalism have been proposed. Here, I use the term in reference to Steven Vertovec's conceptualisation, characterised by "sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009, 2).

Figure 1: A streetscape just north of Sapa's main entry gate. Photo: Ezra Rawitsch, 2018.

Figure 2: The flag of Vietnam flies over Sapa's Buddhist shrine, one of only a few in Prague. Photo: Ezra Rawitsch, 2018.

Figure 3: A multilingual advertisement in Czech and Vietnamese for flights from Prague to Hanoi on Aeroflot, the Russian national air carrier. Photo: Ezra Rawitsch, 2018.

How has such a space – a vibrant, transnational, multilingual space – come to be where it is, on the outskirts of Prague, in an unassuming set of low-rise warehouses? My subject in this paper is Sapa, a remarkable marketplace and cultural centre. But it is also an attempt to unfold and trace elements of the established narrative of Sapa and examine how it might be extended to situate the marketplace in a broader context. I aim to show how Sapa can serve as a case study of the imbricated patterns of post-socialist landscape transformation, transnational migration, and alternative economies, while also proposing a fragmentary, multiple approach that seeks to destabilise existing conventions and reveal additional ways of interpreting the urban landscape.

Figure 4: The various signs on display at Sapa. Photo: Ezra Rawitsch, 2018.

Figure 5: The Sapa site, centre, as it appears in a 2018 aerial photograph. Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.[3]

Research Design and Approaches

This project has emerged from a lifetime of exposure to the expatriate communities of Central and Eastern Europe in Los Angeles, California and a longstanding desire to engage first-hand the landscape remembered to me at countless gatherings of family and friends. My interest in post-socialist cities began as an intern for a housing NGO in Bratislava, Slovakia, where during the summer of 2016 I worked on a research project concerning the nature of public spaces in the post-socialist period.

I carried out fieldwork in Prague during the summer of 2018. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and methodologies, including my site visits to Sapa in 2018, archival research, aerial photography, unstructured interviews, and

[3] Photos from the IPR Praha GeoPortal are used under the Creative Commons licensing terms (CC BY-SA 4.0).

visual analysis, I develop a reading of the landscape as a palimpsestic text characterised by the relationship between its multiple overlapping layers of detail. From city archives to geotagged posts on social media to aerial photographs of the Sapa marketplace site, the resulting work is a synthesis of these interrelated repositories and my personal notes, photographs, recordings, and memories.

Three main theoretical approaches have guided my inquiry. Reading Sapa's structure and form, I propose several additional ways of seeing Sapa as an urban space which is:

1. Reflective of the urban political economies of post-socialism, especially the Lefebvrian production of spaces that conform to post-socialist political, social, and economic frameworks.
2. Exemplary of the fractured, multiple, and overlapping geographies of socialism and post-socialism, which defy unidimensional understanding (here I reference Doreen Massey's concepts of progressive sense of place); and,
3. Expressive of diverse economic practices that complicate the idea that post-socialism is essentially capitalistic in nature (here I work with J. K. Gibson-Graham's conceptions of diverse economies).

I worked with a research group at Charles University to establish connections at Prague's main archive (Archiv hlavního města Prahy), in Chodovec, and with the Prague Institute of Planning and Development (Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy). With the help of my contacts at these organisations, I was able to arrange viewings of historical urban plans and access repositories of aerial photography which illustrated how the site that is now home to Sapa was imagined and transformed over time.

The Prague Institute of Planning and Development and the city of Prague maintain excellent online repositories of GIS data and imagery that were invaluable to my project (IPR Praha n.d.). These repositories insured my ability to take my research from Prague back to North Carolina and continue my work throughout the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019. This combination of methodological approaches aims to interface with and extend existing literature, offering several cultural and historical geographic approaches to understanding the cityscape of post-socialist Prague.

The Marketplace

Sapa is located in Praha-Libuš, an outlying neighbourhood ten kilometres south of Prague's historical centre which was mostly farmland until the 1970s. The site which now houses Sapa was constructed between 1970 and 1975 as an integrated complex of industrial, residential, and recreational buildings (a microdistrict or *mikrorayon*):[4] a meat processing factory, a *panelaky* residential tower-block, a school, and a recreation centre housing a pool.

In the immediate post-socialist period (1989–1999), informal and open-air markets emerged on vacant sites around Prague, including the present-day Sapa site (Drbohlav and Čermáková 2016). In 1999, the facility was sold to a consortium of Vietnamese-Czech investors doing business as Saparia, a.s., which established market stalls within existing warehouses and factory buildings, and made them available for rent to independent wholesalers and merchants (Fiedlerová and Sýkora 2015; Freidingerová and Svobodová 2015).

Over time, the market has grown to accommodate an extensive variety of functions and groups. One can find at Sapa "restaurants, grocery shops, hairdressers, nail studios, travel agencies, medical doctors, a nursery, a translation bureau, a wedding studio and a Buddhist pagoda", among many other kinds of businesses and non-governmental organisations (Freidingerová and Svobodová 2015).[5]

In quantifiable terms, Sapa can be described as 27 hectares of wholesale-retail-commercial-cultural-culinary-religious space. It is among the largest marketplaces in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Qualitatively, it is known in the popular imagination of Praguers and many visitors to Czechia's capital as "the Vietnamese market", but it has been described in various ways. It is characterised in academic writing as a "marketplace" (Drbohlav and Čermáková 2016), a "bazaar" (Hüwelmeier 2013; Fiedlerová and Sýkora 2015), described

[4] The term, from the Russian микрорайо́н, characterises the large-scale planned suburban residential developments common to much of Central and Eastern Europe during the socialist period.

[5] Very little quantitative data has been produced concerning Sapa's operations. Privately-held Saparia, a.s., which acts as the administrator of the Sapa site, releases a limited picture of their financials. Additionally, much of Sapa's economic activity is informal or not published. Saparia's latest official filing with the Czech government showed CZK 5,800,000 (about 212,000 euros) cash on hand and fewer than five full-time employees (Kurzy.cz n.d.). The largest listed company located at Sapa, Tamda Foods, s.r.o., showed CZK 398,000,000 (about 14.5 million euros) cash on hand in 2019 (Kurzy.cz n.d.). I have not delved into the economic details of the market's hundreds of enterprises in this paper; however, future research might consider the scope and reach of firms doing business at Sapa.

in popular media as "Little Hanoi" (Děd and de Babraque 2010), and called by one writer "a Vietnamese paradise" (Storm 2015).

Sapa is a focal point of Vietnamese[6] culture, commerce, and social life not only in Prague, but in Czechia more broadly. It has been argued that Prague has become a centre for the Vietnamese-Czech "mostly because of ... the trade and cultural centre of Sapa" (Freidingerová and Svobodová 2015). However, Sapa is also characterised by a profound diversity of economic, cultural, and social practices, which, when considered, help to construct a more complete portrait of the marketplace and its urban surroundings. Informed by the influence of the Vietnamese-Czech community on Sapa, I wish to situate Sapa in a broader context: within a landscape of post-socialist urban development, characteristic of the cross-border relationships and exchanges which have come to typify the region in the 21st century, and amid the proliferation of informal economic practices in the aftermath of post-socialist transition.

The Production of Space in the Post-Socialist City

Spatial transformations at Sapa in the last two decades illustrate how spaces constructed in the socialist conjuncture were reformed, reimagined, and reconstructed to fit the needs of a market economy. These changes have tended to be gradual, informal, and occasionally fraught with allegations of wrongdoing. This process of change helps to situate Sapa in its broader geopolitical and urban spatial context: not as a thing apart from the city; rather, as a constitutive element of the post-socialist urban landscape.

Legacies of socialism on the urban periphery: 1945–1989

The history of the Sapa site, illustrated in archival aerial imagery, reveals how the physical structures of Socialism endure in the urban form of the marketplace and its surroundings. At the same time, the gradual adaptation of these structures shows the path-dependent manner of spatial transition.

At the end of World War II, the Sapa site was made up of individually parcelled farmland between the nearby villages of Libuš and Pisnice, both of which underwent little expansion during the following decade (see Figures 8,

[6] A note on terminology: I use the terms "Vietnamese" and "Vietnamese-Czech" in slightly different ways in this paper; in general, I employ the former when making more general reference to the national and linguistic community irrespective of diasporic location, while the latter is used in specific relation to the community of Vietnamese people in the Czech Republic, irrespective of citizenship.

Figure 6: A 1971 city map of Prague does not depict the future Sapa site. Photo: Prague City Archives (Archiv hlavního města Prahy), 1971.

and 9). There is a twenty-two-year gap in available aerial imagery; however, a 1971 city plan does not depict the site (see Figure 6). Furthermore, the 1971 plan shows that the administrative boundary of the city of Prague did not yet encompass the site that today houses Sapa (see Figures 6, and 7).

Aerial photographs taken in 1975 illustrate the construction site of the Masokombinat Libuš, or Masokombinát for short, as part of an integrated mikrorayon-style development featuring high-rise residential towers, recreational facilities, and factory buildings. City plans produced in 1979 show the finished

Figure 7: The Masokombinat site is depicted on a 1979 plan of the city of Prague Photo: Prague City Archives (Archiv hlavního města Prahy), 1979

Masokombinát and the expanded administrative region of the municipality of Prague, which grew to encompass nearby Pisnice in 1974 (see Figure 7).

In 1989, on the eve of the transition, aerial photographs show an expanded complex of factory and residential buildings now fully intertwined with the traditional edges of Libuš, officially a district of Prague, and adjacent to other industrial-style developments. Still, the Masokombinát remains on the very edge of the city of Prague, bounded to the south by swaths of farmland and the small village of Pisnice (see Figure 11).

Figure 8: A 1945 aerial photo of the present-day site of Sapa Marketplace, near the village of Libuš (upper left) south of Prague's historical center Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.

Figure 9: A 1953 area photograph looks much the same as the 1945 photograph; however, the collectivization of agricultural land is evident in the erasure of boundaries between plots. Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.

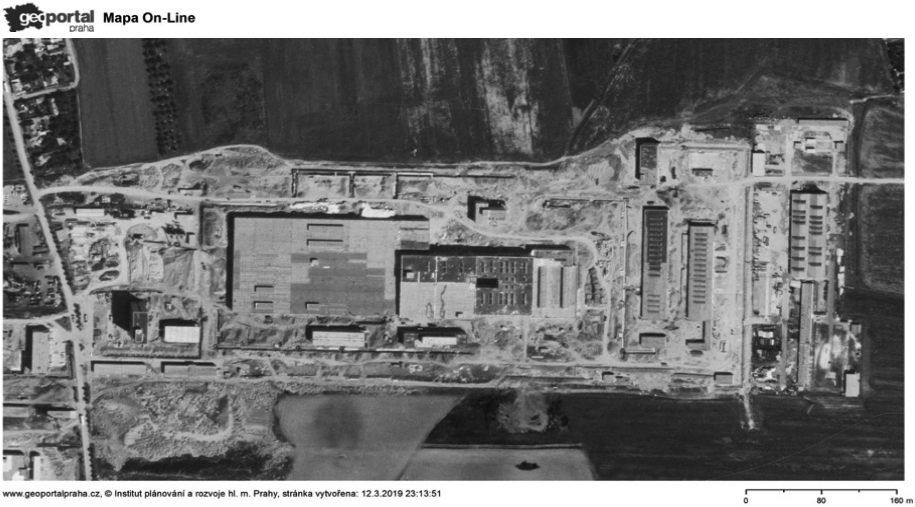

Figure 10: The construction site of the Masokombinat Libuš as it appeared in a 1975 aerial photograph. The main building of the southern area of the complex, which today houses merchants and wholesalers, appears nearly finished. Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.

Figure 11: The finished Masokombinat pictured in a 1988 or 1989 aerial photograph. The northern area of the site, constructed after the southern area, is now visible. Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.

From transition to the present: 1989–2018

Exactly what occurred with the Sapa site in the ten years following the Velvet Revolution is up for some debate, but a fractured portrait suggests a bungled privatisation process with implications of fraud that resulted in the bankruptcy of the Masokombinát facility. It is known that between 1995 and 1996, František Chvalovský, a Czech footballer and entrepreneur, took a majority stake in the privatized successor to Masokombinát, which adopted the trade name "Satrapa" and sought to establish a group of meat producers at the former Masokombinát. Plans collapsed in January 2000 with a filing for bankruptcy that alleged the group carried debts "in the billions" of Czech crowns (Cizner 2000). Allegations of *tunelování,* or "tunneling"[7], in which the remaining cash and solvent assets of one firm are fraudulently transferred to another through the "tunnel" of a dubious bankruptcy scheme, surround Satrapa's ruin. The uncertain circumstances of Satrapa's insolvency were not ameliorated by the subsequent arrest at Prague airport of majority shareholder Chvalovský on 27 February, 2001 and his indictment for a fraud alleged at CZK 640,000,000 (Carey 2000; Flint 2017).

Saparia a.s., which represented the consortium of investors that would come to own the Masokombinát site, incorporated on 5 October, 1999. By early 2001, "cheap electronics and clothing" were already on sale at the Sapa site (Cizner 2000). By 2003, shipping containers, themselves a manifestation of the globalisation and containerisation of the economies of former post-socialist states (see Rodrigue and Notteboom 2009; Vertovec 2009), lined the fences that form the boundary of the Sapa site.

A series of aerial photographs dating from 1988 through 2018 reveal how Saparia and its tenants appropriated, adapted, and reformed socialist-era spaces to meet the needs of their enterprises. These photographs offer a novel way of tracking the unfolding of the post-socialist transition on the urban landscape. Between 1996 and 2010, approximately ten to fifteen new buildings of various sizes, from small sheds to large warehouses, were constructed on the Sapa site (see Figure 12). Between 2000 and 2003, the largest temporary market hall was demolished in order to construct a more permanent covered market hall in an adjacent area. Today, these large market halls house many of the marketplace's soft goods merchants. While new construction was common,

[7] The term "tunneling" in English actually comes from Czech to describe exactly the practice alleged here.

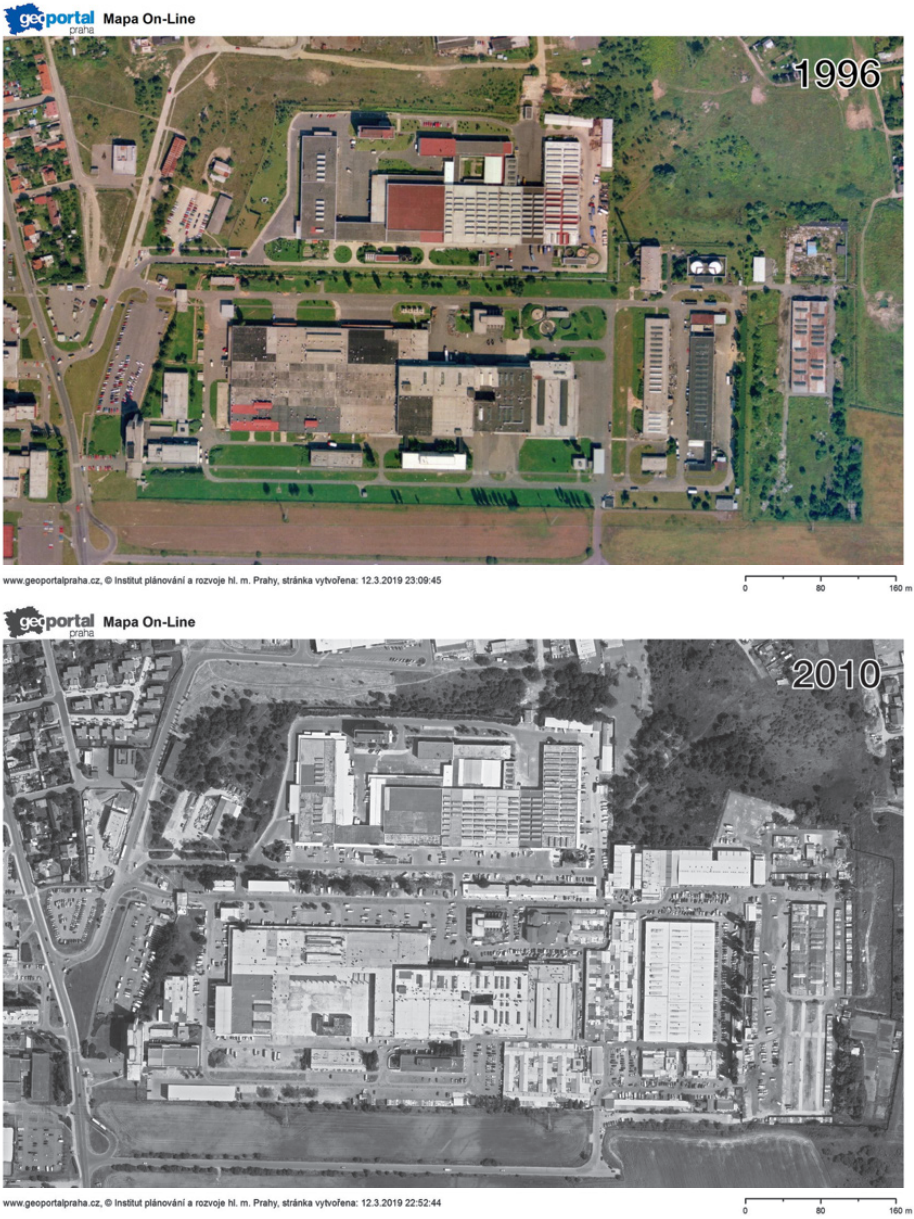

Figure 12: Above, the Sapa Marketplace site as it appeared in 1996, relatively unchanged from seven years prior; and below, as it appeared in 2010, showing more than a dozen new buildings and numerous cars. Photo: IPR Praha, 2019.

management and merchants also appropriated vestigial structures of the socialist-era Masokombinát. Wholesalers occupied the largest buildings, former factory floors and distribution warehouses, and established storefronts along their loading docks.

Between 2003 and 2007, an area resembling a water storage facility underwent a distinctive transformation. The circular tanks were gradually woven into the commercial fabric of the marketplace. In 1996, the tanks appear unmodified. By 2003, informal market buildings surround the now-disused piece of industrial equipment. By 2009, the tanks were modified into circular buildings and capped with octagonal roofs. Visiting the site in 2018, it was not apparent that these buildings were built within the confines of a piece of disused industrial equipment. However, aerial photos reveal how this inherited structure of the socialist era was adapted to the needs of the marketplace (see Figure 13).[8]

These photos reveal other landscape transformations: green spaces are gradually replaced with vast parking lots; reconstruction efforts owing to a fire that occurred in 2008 show the complete renovation of one of the large Masokombinat warehouses; a larger number of automobiles appears in every successive year.

Such transformations show how new spaces emerged at Sapa both from within and from without the physical legacies of socialism. The "end" of socialism did not correspond to a wiping clean of the landscape it had created; rather, the landscape was gradually reformed in the mould of new economic, social, and political relations. At Sapa, a new class of entrepreneurs built entirely new buildings with entirely new purposes which nevertheless shared foundations (in a metaphorical and quite literal sense) with vestiges of a collapsed system. Moreover, these new physical structures represent emergent economic relationships which were undergirded by the already-prevalent practice of informal exchange endemic to the socialist shortage economy and practiced by a developing merchant class, a theme I will examine in the final section of this paper.

Public spaces, private property, and socialism

The macro-level restructuring of the political economy of Czechia has motivated a ground-level transformation of the spatial environment not only in Prague's iconic spaces, but also in quotidian spaces like Sapa. Turning next to reading

[8] There are annual aerial photos available from 2000 onward; though too numerous to include in the essay, they may be viewed on the IPR Prague database listed in references (n.d.).

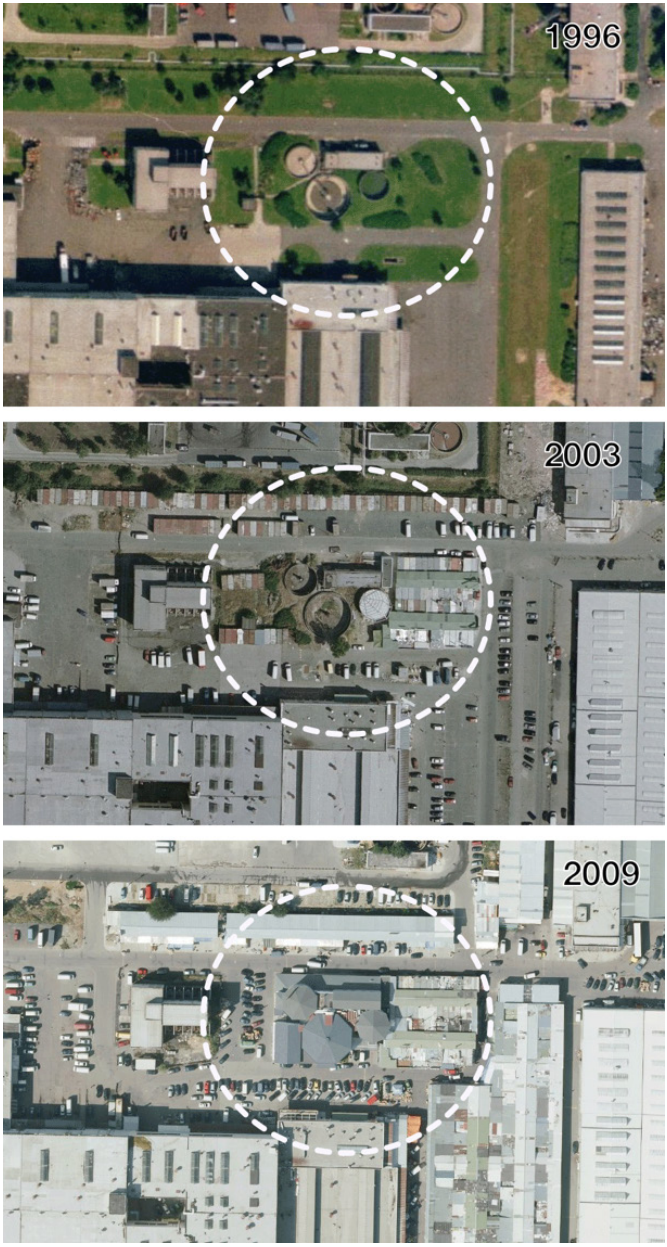

Figure 13: A water storage or treatment plant was gradually transformed into a building for market activity Photo: IPR Praha GeoPortal, 2019.

Sapa in the context of these changes, I suggest that the urban form of Sapa reflects a post-socialist, as well as Lefebvrian production of space.

Stalinov (2007) argues that socialist governments in Central and Eastern Europe wrought significant change to the nature of urban public spaces, here defined as material spaces for common use (parks, playgrounds, squares, streets, train and bus stations, beaches). Yet the expropriation of urban spaces under CEE socialist systems extended to the "private realm" – homes, commercial offices and storefronts, and other forms of private real property. This process resulted in much of space in general becoming "public space" in some sense of the phrase: Stalinov points out that in Yugoslavia and in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic "all urban land was appropriated by the state" (ibid., 270).[9] Perhaps as much as three-quarters of urban land was held in public ownership, a ratio that was "more or less inverse" in cities in the West, where approximately one third of urban land was publicly held. Significantly more of the socialist city was "public space"; at the same time, a significantly higher proportion of the socialist city was public space (ibid.).

Yet socialist cities "significantly curtailed" one of the vital functions of urban public spaces in pre-socialist Europe: their use as marketplaces (ibid.). To fill the vacuum left by limitations on commerce and public religious life, traditionally important public spaces (central market squares, main boulevards, etc.) were filled with ideological symbols and monuments, programmed with coordinated mass events such as parades, and appropriated for other politically important projects (ibid., 271).

Much of the remainder of the socialist city was constituted by "an abundance of desolate, unkempt, and undifferentiated open spaces" that were devoid of any clear functional purpose other than social interaction, which diffused thinly across the vast landscape of public open spaces (ibid.). These sorts of spaces can still be observed in the immense housing estates on the outskirts of most major CEE cities, though paradoxically many such spaces are now held in private hands.

The Sapa site was part and parcel of this project of socialist landscape transformation. Czepcynski (2008) has argued that the urban landscape transformations under socialism constituted a "totalization of landscape" which left "very little room, if any, for neutrality ... in culture and cultural landscape under

[9] The exact details of land tenure were not consistent across the Soviet republics, so I use RSFSR narrowly here.

socialism" (ibid., 107). The Sapa site constitutes an element of the socialist system of landscape production. Its gradual transformation from socialist enterprise to urban marketplace, far from the iconic centre of Prague, is not marked by sensational moments comparable to the toppling of a statue or the destruction of a communist symbol. Yet it is no less characteristic of the effects of transition on the urban landscape. Czepczynski conceptualises landscape transformation as a discursive process which "[becomes] part of the everyday ... the objective, and the natural, [masking] the artifice and ideological nature of its form and content" (ibid., 41). Sapa arose through such discursive process – the post-socialist transition – and has become a kind of spatialisation of the Vietnamese-Czech experience in Prague, a process which Czepczynski reminds is strongly connected to the making and fixing of representation: "Spatialization is often equivalent to hegemonization: the production of an ideological closure" (ibid., 42). In the case of Sapa, this "ideological closure" could be said to operate both from the perspective of the Vietnamese-Czech and the Czechs: more so than any other wholesale market, Sapa has come to *represent* something about the Vietnamese-Czech minority in the minds of its tenants and interlocutors alike. Czepczynski has also conceptualised Central and Eastern European landscape transformations within the binary of Circulation-Iconography, a tension between openness and closedness, the multiple particularities of Sapa suggest the need for a non-binary, non-essential approach to landscape interpretation that does not seek resolution as an end in itself (ibid., 180).

Berdahl et al. (2000) have offered a possible path forward, describing the post-socialist landscape as "rife with contradiction", arguing for the importance of examining "how extralocal economic, political, and social processes intersect with the individual lives of people in a community" (ibid., 5). Internal idiosyncrasies and contradictions of the recent history of Sapa challenge clear narratives of urban landscape transformation. Originally established as a peripheral industrial complex and aimed to deliver urban wealth to the near rural suburbs, the marketplace is now of central importance to wholesale trade in Prague, and magnifies the effects of globalisation on the surrounding area. Tenants and merchants appropriated the physical structures of a socialist development to construct a thoroughly un-socialist marketplace. Previously held in public ownership but not accessible as a public space, the site which now houses Sapa is currently accessible to members of the public but held in private ownership.

These two spatial modes – publicly owned but inaccessible and privately owned but accessible – constitute an articulation of space which is characteristic

of paradoxes of the post-socialist period. One approach is to assert that the post-socialist period has comprised an "enclosure of the commons" through the privatisation of the assets and spaces of the socialist state. At the same time, the privatisation of publicly owned land and buildings has often resulted in new kinds of public access and activities. Stalinov (2007) and Berdahl et al. (2000) work to show that public ownership under socialism never guaranteed publicly accessible or useable spaces. Sapa represents a helpful reversal of the same principle: that private ownership does not guarantee restrictions on access. The contradictory relationship between "public" and "private" as principle of ownership speaks to the internal contradictions of public and private life during the socialist and post-socialist periods alike.

Susan Gal (2002) offers a navigational aid within this contradiction in her principle of fractal distinction; that is, that individuals can experience the differences between the semiotic categories of "public" and "private" at different scales and in different registers, depending on context (ibid.). She argues that under CEE socialism, fractal distinctions between public and private were deployed by the state to make and re-make labour relationships, not only between firms and individuals, but also particularly between men and women (ibid.). She argues the public-private binary is rarely "stable and continuous", yet nonetheless can be experienced as such despite "changes in the contents of the distinction" (ibid., 91). The contents of such a distinction are especially relevant in the CEE context, where the manipulation of the discursive relationship between the "public" and "private" represented for communist parties one of the "essential points for transforming bourgeois, capitalist society through social engineering" (ibid., 86).

This discussion is additionally complicated by Hirt's (2012) argument that distinctions between urban spaces according to a public-private binary must be further tailored to the context of CEE socialism. The relationships between public and private in "Eastern Europe ... deviate from Western notions", writes Hirt, the "most obvious difference" being "that the socialist public [realm]... was immeasurably larger than its Western counterpart" (ibid., 18). From the central squares of cities and towns to the arenas of civil society and public discourse, the overwhelming presence of the state in public life imbued citizens with a scepticism toward the public realm (ibid.).

Hirt argues that while the "private realm" tended to shrink in relation to the profundity of the public, private spaces attained a new importance as refuges from the watchful eyes of the state: "What the private lost in size, it

gained in sanctity" (ibid., 19). As a result, she argues, "contrary to conventional wisdom ... socialism did not obliterate the private; it obliterated the public – not as institutions, but as an *ideal*" (ibid., 22). Hirt argues that a key paradigm of the post-socialist period was a reluctance to emphasize the development of the public realm in favour of a focus on private spaces: suburban housing, Western-style shopping malls, auto-oriented commercial and residential developments, etc. (2012).

What Hirt characterises as an erasure of the public in the socialist period reveals the significance of enduring elements of Sapa's physical design. Despite being held in public ownership, the Masokombinat was physically designed as an urban space into which entry was controlled. Vestiges of these controls, in the form of high fences, a wall surrounding the property, and vehicle and pedestrian gates, remain today.

Toward a Lefebvrian reading

The specific circumstances of the transformation of the Sapa site echo broader transformations that occurred in Czechia and around Central and Eastern Europe during the transition. In the case of Sapa, actors operating in a newly liberalised economic arena worked to repurpose and transform a space paradigmatic of modes of socialist production. This process recalls the Lefebvrian maxim that "new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa" and offers the possibility of exploring Sapa through his conceptualisation of the production of space (Lefebvre 1991, 59).

Sapa can be read within Lefebvre's three-part conception of space as *conceived, perceived,* and *lived* (1991). This trinary conception of space consists of c*onceived space,* that which is conceptualised by those who seek spatial transformation: politicians, urban planners, property investors; *perceived space*, spaces which are produced unwittingly and presupposed within societies; and *lived space,* the space individuals inhabit and experience from their own affective position. Each perspective on the nature of the social production of space is legible in the overlapping urban geographies of the marketplace. *Conceived* of as a socialist enterprise, the Masokombinat came into being as a representation of a spatial future; that is, as an urban plan framed by the political, social, and economic ideologies of the Communist Party. Yet as ideological context changed during the transition, so, too, did the materiality of the Masokombinat site, which was appropriated for new spatial practices amid changing conceptions of the nature of space itself. The resulting affective

landscape – what Lefebvre would call Sapa's "lived space", i.e. the spatial realm of daily life – is often read and narrated by visitors as essentially Vietnamese, and it remains represented that way in most media and some scholarly work. Lefebvre's conception of *perceived* space might challenge this essentialisation as ignoring that Sapa arose from within the presuppositions of the socialist and post-socialist spatial milieux, not from without. Turning next to the historical context of Vietnamese migration to Czechoslovakia, I highlight how a complex-relational approach to reading the landscape adds another perspective on the cityscape of Sapa.

The Vietnamese in Czech(oslovak)ia

The praktikanti and historical immigration patterns

Czechoslovakia emerged among citizens of socialist countries outside Europe as a common destination for education, training, and work. Migration pathways that originated in the socialist ecumene endure in Czechia to this day. Yet most contemporary migration from Vietnam to Czechia has occurred in the 21st century. Media and scholarly representations of the Vietnamese community in Czechia tend to reinforce ethnicity as the essential force in the production of spaces like Sapa. However, while Sapa is an important centre of the Vietnamese community in Central and Eastern Europe, numerous other functions, practices, and identities are legible in the landscape.

Beginning in 1967, Czechoslovakia operated skills-training and guest-worker programs for nationals of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, later the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (hereafter simply Vietnam). The first *praktikanti* (trainees) treaty in 1967 stipulated that Vietnam would send 2,100 citizens to live and work in Czechoslovakia over three to five years, and that Czechoslovakia would bear all costs for the program except for workers' travel to and from Czechoslovakia (Alamgir 2013). The *praktikanti* programs developed over the course of the 1970s, with another 5,000 Vietnamese nationals arriving after 1974. Upon the treaty's renewal in 1980, Czechoslovakia and Vietnam agreed to decrease Czechoslovakia's financial obligations to guest workers, and the resulting agreement allowed Czechoslovak authorities to determine workers' placement according to the needs of the Czechoslovak economy. This difference represented a change from the previous framework, under which Vietnamese workers were trained according to skills demanded in their country of origin (Alamgir 2013).

Under the 1980 agreement, a significantly greater number of Vietnamese guest workers were sent to Czechoslovakia. Drbohlav (2007) estimated that in 1981, between 30,000 and 35,000 Vietnamese guest workers lived in Czechoslovakia. Molterer and Hackl (n.d.) claim that 70,000 to 120,000 Vietnamese nationals lived in Czechoslovakia for periods of four to seven years over the course of the 1980s (Molterer and Hackl n.d.). These figures represent only the number of guest workers temporarily resident in the country – permanent immigration of Vietnamese to Czechoslovakia began with the collapse of the socialist system. At the end of the 1980s, an estimated 13,000 Vietnamese nationals were living in Czechoslovakia (Molterer and Hackl n.d.).

Alamgir and Schwenkel (2020) have provided the most recent estimates of the total population of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia from 1980–1989, an overview of which is provided in the below table:

Year	Total number of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia in a given year
1980	3,529
1981	11,543
1982	21,314
1983	22,446
1984	*
1985	15,300
1986	11,400**
1987	18,900
1988	28,955
1989	35,609

Table 1. Estimated number of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia, 1980–1989 (Alamgir and Schwenkel 2020).

Alamgir and Schwenkel's recent estimate broadly corresponds to previous estimates (2020). Though they qualify that some data is incomplete or missing, their comprehensive estimate suggests a consistent population of approximately 50,000 during the 1980s, or about 0.33% of the total population of Czechoslovakia during that period (ibid.).

Contemporary immigration patterns

Published estimates of the number of Vietnamese nationals living in former Czechoslovakia began in 1998, when the Statistical Office began tracking on an annual basis the number of Vietnamese nationals living in the Czech Republic, though it is not known whether data was collected for publication before 1998. Statistical yearbooks published in 2000 show that between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 1999, a total of 2,013 Vietnamese nationals arrived in the Czech Republic, a figure roughly equal to the number of people who arrived from Ukraine during the same period (Český Statistický Úřad 2000, 122). By 2004, the total population of Vietnamese nationals was publicly available, and between 2004 and 2008, the Vietnamese-national population in the Czech Republic nearly doubled to an estimated 60,255 from 34,248 (ibid., 141). These figures likely undercount Vietnamese holding other nationalities (e.g., ethnically- or linguistically-identified Vietnamese-Czech citizens) and undocumented migrants to the Czech Republic from Vietnam. Perhaps surprisingly, they underscore that most permanent immigration of Vietnamese to the Czech Republic has occurred in the last fifteen years. Unofficial estimates today place the total number of Vietnamese-identifying inhabitants as high as 90,000 (Hüwelmeier 2015). The lack of official counts of the language and ethnic origin of the Vietnamese population of the Czech Republic presents an obstacle to achieving an accurate understanding of its total Vietnamese population.

Brouček and Martínková (2016) argue that post-1989 Vietnamese migration patterns to the Czech Republic and Slovakia differ significantly from pre-1989 patterns. They assert first that the pre-1989 patterns of migration from Vietnam to the Czech Republic were motivated primarily by the political considerations negotiated between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam. However, they argue that current migration patterns are the result of Vietnamese individuals' and familial response to economic opportunity (ibid.). "They have come to sacrifice the *presence* of their lives for material profit, though all-day work and living in *makeshift circumstances*", they write of the Vietnamese-Czech community (emphasis in original) (ibid., 7). Brouček and Martínková claim many Vietnamese migrants have chosen to leave Vietnam as a response to "severe economic distress": the often-temporary transition to life in the Czech Republic presents a viable alternative for those unable to establish financial stability in Vietnam (ibid., 13). They note that stereotypes about the Vietnamese-Czech community persist among Czechs; in particular, they claim assertions of widespread organised criminal

activity within the Vietnamese-Czech community have become more prevalent in Czech media since the beginning of the decade (ibid., 163).

Alena Alamgir (2020) offers additional nuance to the motivations of Vietnamese workers who made the journey to Czechoslovakia, pointing out that individuals and families had varying motivations for relocation to Central and Eastern Europe. Alamgir argues that individual/familial economic considerations motivated migration even before 1989; at the same time, political considerations of the Vietnamese-Czech relationship have continued to influence migration patterns into the present day (ibid.). Alamgir (2013) has also asserted that before 1989, official Czechoslovak state ideology supposedly precluded the possibility of racism under socialism. Still, racial attitudes were inherent to judgements of Vietnamese migrants' ability to demonstrate "honest socialist labour" – criticisms of Vietnamese work ethic by Czechs were infused with racial undertones. Cloaking racial resentment within the ideology of the state allowed racist attitudes regarding Vietnamese migrants to persist, and those attitudes form the basis of continued discriminatory behaviour by Czechs toward members of the Vietnamese-Czech community (ibid., 76–77).

Existing literature suggests public cultural exchange between Czechs and Vietnamese-Czechs is carried out primarily in the context of commerce – and that commercial spaces function as spaces in which Czechs and Vietnamese-Czech are willing and able to cooperate for mutual benefit.

Media and scholarly representations of the Vietnamese-Czech

Čada, et al. (2016) argue that members of the Vietnamese-Czech minority have established a positive public self-image in the proliferation of their ethnic-national cuisine around the city of Prague, which has become ubiquitous in Prague and other cities in Czechia in the past decade. They argue the establishment of Vietnamese restaurants has bolstered the portrayal of Vietnamese-Czech people in Czech media as "acting subjects with their own agency"; second, Vietnamese cuisine is seen by "Czech middle class consumers" as a "welcome addition to the construction of Prague as a modern and cosmopolitan city" and to the "otherwise rather dull Czech gastroscape" (ibid.). The result is a common "gastroscape" in Prague, in which Vietnamese food is brought into material proximity with the daily experience of many Praguers, the majority of whom are Czech. Still, Čada argues, the success of Vietnamese cuisine depends to some extent on catering to Czech tastes: Čada et al. illustrate how one small group of "creative class" Praguers engaged in a tour of Sapa Market rely on the authority

of restaurant critics and "foodies" to judge the "[e]xotisicm, authenticity, and difference" of Vietnamese food (ibid.). Restaurateurs must therefore appeal to Czech tastes while also emphasising "authenticity" and difference. The positive self-image of the Vietnamese-Czech in the minds of Czechs is premised on the benefits that *Czechs* receive, and dependent on the adherence by Vietnamese-Czech restaurateurs to the tastes of their Czech customers.

The emergence of a more positive media representation from the Czech perspective of Vietnamese people living in Czechia depends on a narrative of diligent labour and honest entrepreneurship. Vietnamese-Czechs have come to be viewed by Czechs in a positive light as a consequence of their efforts to establish businesses and a common perception that they work harder and more consistently than Czechs. A common refrain in my interviews and conversations while in Prague was the assertion, mostly by Czechs, that many Czechs preferred the simplicity of working a set schedule and collecting a regular salary, whereas many Vietnamese-Czechs sought out opportunities to build independent businesses and worked tirelessly to achieve financial success. While these stereotypes skewed toward what I am sure my subjects believed were positive characterisations, as I will show, this particular stereotype has insidious origins.

The belief among Czechs that Vietnamese-Czech people work exceptionally hard echoes the socialist-era concept of "honest socialist labour" articulated to different political-economic circumstances. Alamgir illustrates the centrality of labour to pre-1989 Czechoslovakian state-socialist racial discourse, arguing the state sought to articulate race as a mutable characteristic which could be changed and even "erased" by one's ability to demonstrate "honest socialist labour", that is, productive work in service of the state. Official ideology *a priori* "prevented" racism from existing in Czechoslovakia; however, Alamgir demonstrates how Czechoslovaks deployed "honest socialist labour" as a proxy for racialised criticism of guest workers (Cubans, Vietnamese, Ethiopians, and others) and of members of the Roma minority:

> [A] man testifying to the police about a brawl in a beer pub is quoted as saying that the Vietnamese sitting at a neighbouring table were loud, and that he [the Czech man] and his companions "were critical of them, and we were saying that they should return back to Vietnam; they don't work anyway and money is paid to them unnecessarily" (Alamgir 2013).

For state authorities, criticism of a group's gratitude toward and productivity on behalf of the state was a tolerable resignification of racism that also promoted the primary importance of the subject's labour relationship to the state. "Honest socialist labour" was the precept by which guest workers and ethnic minorities could solidify their position as subjects entitled to state protection; at the same time, Czechoslovaks who deployed evidence of its absence in others could enforce an oblique racial hierarchy that was officially prohibited.

Neither an exoticized formulation of race nor one based in "honest socialist labour" is mutually exclusive; that is, one does not preclude the other. Still, the tendency in English-language media (a significant source of information on Sapa for visitors, especially) is to prefer exoticized narratives.

English-language and foreign media

Relatively few articles concerning Sapa have been published in English-language media; however, within this limited set, two dominant trends have emerged. Stories written for a tourist audience ("feature-style articles") tend to focus on Sapa's exotic character, emphasising the "otherness" of the marketplace. In particular, a trope has emerged that visiting Sapa is like visiting Vietnam itself:

> Inside the lot that constitutes Sapa, Prague's 'Little Vietnam,' it's easy to pretend one has travelled to another country ... At Sapa, you can pretend, if only for an afternoon, you have been transported to another country entirely (Storm 2015).

> [S]kip the travel agent -- you don't need a ticket to Vietnam ... I feel like I have been transported to some far away land, certainly nothing like historical, baroque Prague ... I see Vietnamese merchants not only trading, but also cooking meals mostly intended for their fellow Vietnamese workers (Crane 2015).

> SAPA [sic] is about as close as you are going to get to feeling like you are in Hanoi ... while you are still, in fact, in Prague ... At certain moments, and from certain angles, you can almost forget the prefab housing which surrounds the Vietnamese market, and believe that you are on a completely different continent (Johnston 2008).

A 2010 episode of the American television show *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations* features a three-minute segment on Prague's Vietnamese-Czech community that includes a visit to Sapa. Bourdain's guest, Tina, a Vietnamese-Czech woman whom he meets at the renowned First Republic-era Café Savoy,

describes Sapa: "at the market, Sapa, there is everything you need" (Bourdain 2010). Bourdain narrates their subsequent visit: "Sapa is like a commercial compound. One-hundred-percent Vietnamese and one-hundred-percent unhappy about cameras within the perimeter. Getting a pho shop to agree to be filmed here took a lot of doing" (ibid.).

We cannot read too much into such a short segment. Yet Bourdain tends to reproduce existing stereotypes about Sapa as a closed, extraterritorial "compound" made up by a monolithic "Vietnamese" (notably, not "Vietnamese-Czech") population that is sceptical of if not hostile to outsiders: Bourdain narrates his crew's difficulty negotiating filming permission with Sapa's managers, and characterises them as "the mysterious market overlords, who told us we could shoot only in the shop and not other businesses. Everything *nice* and *friendly*", quips Bourdain (ibid.; emphases added).

A 2010 Vice magazine article entitled "Big Fun in Little Hanoi" (a revealing reference to the 1986 martial arts comedy *Big Trouble in Little China* starring Kurt Russell) offers perhaps the most caricatured representation of Sapa:

> "Wow, it looks like a Jackie Chan movie", shouts our marvelled friend as we plunge into the metal inside of the Vietnamese marketplace, SAPA ... we're surrounded by small restaurants offering exotic food and huge halls loaded to the rooftop with cheap clothes ... [Y]ou catch a whiff of something similar to monkey faeces every now and then ... besides sweaty shop-keepers, you may very well come across individuals capable of inducing some serious erotic tickling (Děd and de Babraque 2010).

While the offensive tone of this particular article is an extreme example, such a condescending attitude toward Vietnamese-Czech people is typical of media published for Czech-speaking and English-speaking audiences alike (this particular article was published by Vice in Czech first and later translated to English): In every case these authors represent Sapa as an essentially Vietnamese space. With the added implication that to experience Sapa's "Vietnamese-ness" is to be alienated from Prague itself, the authors implore readers to forget the surrounding landscape – suggesting Sapa's physical space is produced as a reflection of the essentially Vietnamese character of the people who work at the market, "Vietnamese merchants" and their "fellow ... workers" (Crane 2015), but not as a product of the social, political, and economic relations that undergird the broader cityscape of Prague. These "one-hundred percent

Vietnamese" characteristics, the authors imply, render the marketplace a space apart, discontiguous to its surroundings and necessarily understood as distinct from it.

In contrast to feature-style articles, news articles published in English-language media typically report on crime. A 2016 newswire report from Czech Radio reads: "Hygiene officers inspecting Prague's Vietnamese Sapa market uncovered 35 tons of uncertified frozen meat in storage ... According to the inspectors the meat was sold to Vietnamese restaurants around town, presenting a serious health risk. Sapa management faces a million crown fine. The matter is being further investigated" (Lazarová 2016). A 2010 Radio Prague story reported, "The [Libuš] town hall has recently complained of growing tension between the Czech and Vietnamese communities in the area, where they say the latter is forming a ghetto [at Sapa]. Although the police have noted no significant increase in crime, the district mayor has warned of problems on the horizon" (Falvey 2010). Despite lacking any substantive allegations or evidence, articles such as these have continued to paint an insidious portrait of Sapa. A 2018 Radio Prague headline read, "Police Crack Down on Illegal Tiger Trade": "[T]he sites raided by the police included Sapa, a large Vietnamese market place [sic] on the southern outskirts of Prague... detained was a Vietnamese national, who is suspected of organising the criminal activity and ensuring the sale of these products in the Sapa market and elsewhere" (Fraňková 2018). Such articles tend to deal in suspicion, with only a thin veneer of objectivity toward the circumstances of alleged criminal acts. Like features articles, these examples of news coverage are characterised by a sensational tone and reinforce conceptions of the marketplace as a space apart from Prague's cityscape, even as a "ghetto". But Sapa cannot be understood as separate from the cityscape. Sapa and its surroundings are constitutive of Prague's cityscape. A Lefebvrian critique of media representations of Sapa would point out that such characterisations "fall into the trap of treating space 'in itself', as space as such" (Lefebvre 1991, 90). The marketplace cannot therefore be treated as a thing "in itself" or as a thing apart, but rather should be understood as one locus of latent social, political, and economic processes that have characterised the Transition.

The treatment of Sapa as separate from Prague implies a desire on the part of the majority to see itself as a unitary whole, without having to account for or accommodate the ways in which that whole-ness tends to exclude and erase the thousands of ethnic non-Czechs who are nonetheless Czechian – in citizenship, in language, and in other ways. The distancing of Sapa in media reinforces

the idea that Sapa and its multinational community are not representative of Czechia, rather, they are an aberration in its midst. Though perhaps less overt, media representations like these are not unconnected to the racism of far-right and neo-Nazi groups toward Vietnamese-Czechs, Roma, and other minority peoples. Such groups have spatialised their ethno-nationalist worldview in Czechia with protest chants of "Czechia for the Czechs" (Cameron 2013).

Fractured and Multiple Geographies

I have explored how Sapa has been conceptualised as a "Vietnamese" space. Such characterisations are fraught with essentialisation and obscure the overlapping identities, functions, and practices located at Sapa. Furthermore, they encourage an essential worldview which excludes and erases the existing multinational realities of Czechia. Analysing this landscape in its multiplicity requires seeing Sapa differently and suspending the essentialised perspective.

Massey (2013) writes that urban space is "relational, not a mosaic of simply juxtaposed differences" conceptualised as "a meeting-place, of jostling, potentially conflicting, trajectories ... this implies an identity that is, internally, fractured and multiple" (ibid.). In examining Sapa, one can see the market not as a place where differences are juxtaposed, but rather where trajectories – of individuals, from merchants to visitors, or the trajectories of capital – intersect and enter into negotiation. Following Massey's (1994) rumination on Kilburn High Road in London, I wish to suggest that Sapa's spatial identity need not be statically defined – it is neither "seamless" nor coherently understood in the same way by everyone (ibid.).

Visiting the market, one is immediately struck by the relative diversity of individuals engaged in commerce. Czechia is 97% ethnically Czech; yet within Sapa people of many nationalities, ethnicities, and languages work alongside one another. At Sapa I met merchants from across Eurasia: Turkey, Mongolia, India, China, Ukraine, and Vietnam. I discussed in French with a man from Delhi the prices for goods manufactured in China and food grown just down the highway, south of Prague. I observed cars and trucks from across Europe – South, Central, East, and West – making deliveries and pickups. A similar impression may be drawn from the range of license plates observable on trucks and vans: mostly Czechian, Slovakian, Polish, German, and Hungarian, but also Bulgarian and Turkish; Russian and Ukrainian. Far from a monocultural enclave I found Sapa to be more akin to a microcosm of a port city: outward-looking, multilingual, and preoccupied with trade.

So, too, does the vibrant, multilingual streetscape inside Sapa reflect this linguistic, cultural, and social "jostling" of those who visit the marketplace. The aforementioned air travel advertisement (see Figure 3) reflects one way in which differences are accommodated: a multilingual Czech- and Vietnamese-language sign advertising flights on the Russian flag carrier airline to Hanoi. Other symbols aim to communicate with a specifically Vietnamese-speaking audience; for example, the on-site Buddhist temple, where signs are written exclusively in Vietnamese and the flag of Vietnam flies over the shrine (see Figure 2).

Contrary to widespread characterisations of Sapa as a closed, even secretive, ethnic enclave, the marketplace I experienced was a markedly internationalised space where disparate countries of origin and polyglot communication are the norm. Indeed, it is because of this international perspective that market activity is possible: Sapa primarily connects the supply chains of East and Southeast Asia with those of Central and Eastern Europe, acting as a gateway not only to Prague and Czechia but also to Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Austria, Germany and beyond. Consider the scenario of a single suitcase that might pass through Sapa: In a factory outside Yiwu, China, a hard-sided suitcase is pressed from a thin layer of plastic. It is shipped to a distribution centre where it is loaded along with hundreds of identical suitcases onto a freight train bound for Czechia via Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland. In two weeks, it will be loaded onto a truck in Prague and transferred to a merchant holding Czech citizenship and born to Vietnamese parents in what used to be East Germany. At Sapa it will sold among a lot of suitcases to a retailer in Bratislava, Slovakia and eventually purchased by a Cuban graduate student. Such transactions occur every day at Sapa.

Sapa need not be understood as an "enclave" or even as a "community" in order to be thought of spatially; on the contrary, spatialising Sapa necessitates a fuller unfolding of its internal fragmentation and conflicts while also recognising that linkages to Sapa's "outside" are themselves constitutive of the marketplace, and vice versa. Massey (1994) guides this approach toward an unbounded definition of the Sapa as a locus of intersecting processes, practices, and identities.

Sapa has been influenced by many groups and formed in a heterogenous context. Approaching one aspect of Sapa's organisation, namely, informality in the private sector following the collapse of Socialism, I aim in the final section of this paper to parse one band of the spectrum of complex interrelated configurations of the post-socialist city.

Informality and the "Secondary Economy"

To explore one additional perspective on the interrelated configurations of Sapa as a post-socialist space, I turn next to the process by which informality endemic to the socialist economy has come to constitute a motivating force of market activity within present-day Czechia. Informal economic practices rooted in the "secondary economies" of the socialist era helped to undergird and accelerate the expansion of marketplaces after 1989. Vietnamese guest workers residing in Czechoslovakia during the socialist period were accustomed to navigating the secondary economies and the "grey-market" import/export system between their two countries (Williams and Baláž 2005; Alamgir 2018). At the same time, trade licenses constituted one of the only ways for Vietnamese-Czechs to obtain visas to remain in Czechoslovakia legally (Williams and Baláž 2005). Sapa Market was part of a broader trend illustrative of the diverse economic responses to the command economy's collapse.

Informality and "open" borders

Under Socialism, the urban marketplace as a spatial form did not disappear. Rather, state-owned firms took over the operation of traditional marketplaces, as in the case of Pražka trznice, Prague's traditional farmers market. Informal markets, which were officially tolerated to varying extents across Central and Eastern Europe, were an integral part of the region's "shortage economies", in which consumer goods were in short supply (Sik and Wallace 1999). Neef (2002) argues that informal economic activity flourished in the immediate post-socialist period amid the collapse of more centralized distribution channels. That informal economic activity was already prevalent in most CEE command economies allowed the rapid growth of the informal sector during the transition (ibid.). The most visible of these informal structures before the transition were open-air markets found to varying extents in cities in Central and Eastern Europe (ibid.). Informal though they were, open-air markets helped fulfil the needs of consumers who contended with frequent disruptions in the provision of certain goods via official channels. Owing to this essential role in the command economy, open-air markets survived and thrived amid the transition, not merely maintaining but expanding their important role in the everyday economy (ibid.). According to Sik and Wallace, the relationship between formal Communist structure and informal "secondary" structures before the transition provided a framework for life in a market society:

> People used to behaving resourcefully by combining different sources of economic activity continued to use these skills in a new environment, and the skills used for surviving in a Communist society turned out to be very useful ones for surviving in a post-Communist one as well (Piirainen, 1997; Wallace, 1998) ... Far from not having the values associated with market capitalism, they developed these values very quickly and in fact were already familiar with them from activity in the former second economy (Sik and Wallace, 1999, 700).

The shortages endemic to the command economy before 1989 worsened in the immediate post-socialist period. Yet as macro systems faltered, newly liberalised travel policies, long restricted in Czechoslovakia and across the region, allowed individuals to cross into Western territory and engage in small-scale transnational trade. The lethargy of the formal sector stood in stark contrast with the dynamism and agility of these early entrepreneurs and informal economy: soon, practically anything that could be sold was being trafficked among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Sik and Wallace 1999).

The quirks of border liberalisation played a key role in the proliferation of marketplaces that were run by and in many cases catered to Asian migrants to Czechoslovakia, in particular the Vietnamese-Czechs. Klaus Molterer and Joachim Hackl (n.d.) argue that the Czechoslovak handling of its hard border with Austria resulted in a 2-km strip of land between Austrian and Czechoslovak customs that remained "in between" jurisdictions after the opening of the border in 1989:

> The unique situation along the Czechoslovakian border allowed the development of duty-free shops set in between two customs posts enabling the sale of goods exempt from taxation for a fraction of the Austrian price level. The first duty-free Shop, named "Excalibur City", opened in 1992 on the grounds of former Hatě, one of the villages demolished during the clearance of the border area [in 1950] (ibid.).

Higher-tax goods such as alcohol and cigarettes were available to Western consumers at cut-rate prices at border-region markets like Excalibur City. These liminal spaces attracted marginal labour: sex workers from across the Eastern Bloc, members of the Roma minority, and, of particular interest to this paper, Vietnamese people rendered unemployed and lacking a clear path to permanent residency with the collapse of communism (ibid.).

Vignettes like these reflect the numerous responses by individuals to systemic economic issues before and during the transition. The alternative economic practices developed under socialism, especially informality, undergirded the expansion of marketplaces into the urban realm of the post-socialist city, and at the same time came to provide for thousands of Vietnamese guest workers a livelihood and legal basis for remaining in Czechoslovakia.

A diverse economy

Gibson-Graham (2002) has argued for a conceptual frame in which activities often defined under the umbrella of "capitalism" are parsed into non-essential, discursive categories. Their work offers a framework for a more granular approach to understanding "the economy" outside a hegemonic framing of capitalism. What Gibson-Graham has called the "diverse economy" attempts to recognise alternative- and non-market, non-wage, and non-capitalist activities as necessarily constitutive of "the economy", rather than separate from it. In a diverse economy approach, the binary frames of market/non-market or capitalist/non-capitalist are resignified as "multiple particularities" of given economic landscapes. Gibson-Graham consider capital relations but do not hegemonize them: a diverse economy examines cultures of bartering, care labour within families, non-profit advocacy, etc. as elements of "the economy" rather than its externalities. Situating these practices as distinct from "capitalism", Gibson-Graham works to show how economies are constituted by wide varieties of socioeconomic relationships, processes, and practices (ibid.; see Table 2).

Following Gibson-Graham, Sapa can be approached as exemplary of a diverse economy. At Sapa, informal economic relations are pervasive. Bargaining is the norm; deals are often made on promise of payment or a handshake; cash is overwhelmingly preferred. Tereza Friedingerová, a scholar of and advocate for the Vietnamese-Czech community with close ties to Sapa told me of large Vietnamese-Czech families at Sapa:

> They don't use the traditional finance market ... they get investment money within the [Vietnamese] diaspora ... They don't sign any contract – they say, hey, I need 3 million crowns. "Okay, come tomorrow, and we'll get 3 million cash". Everything is based on trust (personal communication, 29 May, 2018).

Informality extends to rental agreements: multilevel subleases of market stalls allow newcomers to gain access to the market's customers if a space opens up,

Transactions	Labor	Enterprise
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
Alternative Market Sale of public goods Ethical "fair-trade" markets Local trading systems Alternative currencies Underground market Co-op exchange Barter Informal market	*Alternative Paid* Self-employed Cooperative Indentured Reciprocal labor In-kind Work for welfare	*Alternative Capitalist* State enterprise Green capitalist Socially responsible firm Nonprofit
Nonmarket Household flows Gift giving Indigenous exchange State allocations State appropriations Gleaning Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, poaching	*Unpaid* Housework Family care Neighborhood work Volunteer Self-provisioning labor Slave labor	*Noncapitalist* Communal Independent Feudal Slave

Table 2: Gibson-Graham's diverse economy, diagrammed (Gibson-Graham 2002, xiii).

leaving little if any written record. Non-wage and non-market activities are common, too: children watch over parents' stalls in their absence. Mothers tend to children in addition to their responsibilities as shopkeepers. And, commerce remains only one aspect of life at Sapa. Sapa's Buddhist shrine, its kindergarten, and its full calendar of social events, from New Year's celebrations to beauty pageants, each constitute an element of non-commercial, non-capitalist activity which nonetheless characterises the marketplace.

These "openings" provided by Gibson-Graham point to how Sapa can be understood not only as a "marketplace" but as something more – at the same time, they show how the term marketplace, despite its association with capitalist commercialism, is itself a layered term, especially in the post-socialist context. Gibson-Graham offers the conceptual frame that helps to situate Sapa not only as a locus of post-socialist "capitalism" but also as an embodiment of the contradictions and complexities of the post-socialist transition. Political, economic, and social relationships – bilateral economic ties, representations

of race, supply chains – whose roots trace to the socialist era are transformed and reproduced by contemporary flows of goods and labour. Gibson-Graham reveals how these diverse relationships are not always subsumed by capitalism but rather can be distinguished from and placed into dialogue with it.

Conclusion: Toward the City as a Text

Sapa developed in the context of far-reaching regional changes, and exploring its development helps to unfold and inspect an example of post-socialist transition in the city. During its seven-decade history, the Sapa site has been constantly formed and re-formed in the mould of new socio-spatial relations. Sapa can be said to be a Vietnamese-Czech cultural space, a marketplace, an urban place. It can be called a capitalist space or a post-socialist space. But its portrait cannot be, nor should it be, flattened into a caricature. At the same time, it need not be limited to a single portrait at all. This paper has been an attempt to offer new insights and perspectives, to offer another representation.

Seeking not to resolve the sometimes-contradictory nature of Sapa, I suggest that it can function as a kind of case study of the differential geographies and idiosyncrasies of post-socialism itself. Sapa can serve as an example of the imbricated configurations of economic, political, and social relations that have proliferated since 1989, and how they are articulated to the everyday lives of the people who inhabit and produce them. This possibility points toward the need to further encourage a regionally-specific urban geography attentive to everyday spaces. The methodological challenges of conducting research on everyday space are myriad precisely because of its everyday-ness; its impermanence. However, archival GIS and growing digital paper trails available thanks to social media and digital governance initiatives, in addition to interviews and observation, present new pathways into overlooked spaces.

Ezra Rawitsch works across urban geography, design, and digital mapping to study and improve cities. His research focuses on the political economies and built environments of cities in transition, particularly in post-socialist states. He currently works as an urbanist for DRAW Brooklyn, developing sustainability, mobility, and resilience through urban design for New York and for cities globally. He is also the cartographer of the Los Angeles County Almanac, a project of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West. Rawitsch received his B.A. in Geography in 2019 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was a Morehead-Cain Scholar.

References

Alamgir, Alena K. 2013. "Race is Elsewhere: State-Socialist ideology and the Racialisation of Vietnamese Workers in Czechoslovakia". *Race and Class* 54(4): 67–85. http://doi.org/10.1177/0306396813476171

———. 2018. "The Moped Diaries: Remittances in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Migration Scheme". In *Work Out of Place*, edited by Mahua Sarkar, 101–121. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Alamgir, Alena K., and Christina Schwenkel. 2020. "From Socialist Assistance to National Self-Interest: Vietnamese Labor Migration into CMEA Countries". In *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, edited by Mark James, Kalinovsky Artemy M., and Marung Steffi, 100–24. Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.: Indiana University Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctvx8b7ph.8.

Berdahl, Daphne, Matti Bunzl, and Martha Lampland. 2000. *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press.

Bourdain, Anthony. 2010. "Prague". In *No Reservations*. Season 6, Episode 4, directed by Anthony Bourdain, featuring Anthony Bourdain. Aired 1 February, 2010. CNN.

Brouček, Stanislav, and Petra Martínková. 2016. *The Visible and Invisible Vietnamese in the Czech Republic: The Problems of Adaptation of the Modern-Day Ethnic Group in the Local Environment of the Czech Majority*. Prague, Czechia: Prague Institute of Ethnology CAS

Čada, Karl, Jakub Grygar, and Tereza Freidingerová. 2016. "Vietnamese Diaspora in Prague: Food, Consumption, and Socio-Material Proximity in the Making of a Cosmopolitan City". Unpublished manuscript: Charles University, Prague, Czechia.

Cameron, Rob. 2013. "Czech Neo-Nazi Marches Target Roma". *Deutsche Welle*. 30 August, 2013. https://p.dw.com/p/19Z1T

Carey, Nick. 2001. "Football Association Committee Resigns Over Chvalovsky Affair". *Radio Praha*. 4 April, 2001. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/football-association-committee-resigns-over-chvalovsky-affair

Český Statistický Úřad. 2000. *Statistická Ročenka České Republiky.* Prague: Český Statistický Úřad.

———. 2009. *Statistická Ročenka České Republiky*. Prague: Český Statistický Úřad,

Cizner, Jan. 2000. "Satrapa: dobrá idea, špatné hospodaření". *Mladá fronta dnes*. 22 January, 2000. http://www.agris.cz/clanek/93847

Crane, Halley. 2015. "A Vietnamese Paradise in the Heart of the Czech Republic". *Radio Praha*. 28 February, 2015. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/an-american-foodie-goes-to-prague/a-vietnamese-paradise-in-the-heart-of-the-czech-republic

Czepczyński, Mariusz. 2008. *Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities: Representation of Powers and Needs*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate.

Děd, Michael, and Yvette de Babraque. 2010. "Big Fun in Little Hanoi". *Vice Travel. Vice Media*. 24 August, 2010. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/kw75pa/big-fun-in-little-hanoi

Drbohlav, Dusan, and Dita Čermáková. 2016. "'A New Song or Evergreen...' The Spatial concentration of Vietnamese Migrants' Businesses on Prague's Sapa Site". *Osterreichische Zeitschrift Fur Soziologie* 41(4): 427–447.

Drbohlav, Dusan, and Dagmar Dzúrová. 2007. "'Where Are They Going?': Immigrant Inclusion in the Czech Republic (A Case Study on Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Armenians in Prague)". *International Migration* 45(2): 69–95. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00404.x

Falvey, Christian. 2010. "Prague District Mayor Warns of Worsening Relations in 'Little Hanoi'". *Radio Praha*. 6 April, 2010. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/prague-district-mayor-warns-of-worsening-relations-in-little-hanoi

Federální Statistický Úřad. 1990. *Statistická Ročenka České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky*. Prague: Federální Statistický Úřad.

Fiedlerová, Klara, and Luděk Sýkora. 2015. "Everyday Conviviality in Emerging Multicultural Neighborhood: Insights from Postsocialist City". Conference paper. Presented at RC21 International Conference, Urbino, Italy, 27–29 August, 2015.

Flint, Andrew. 2017. "The Unlikely Rise and Fall of the Strangest Village Football Club in Europe". *The Guardian*. 26 September, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/football/these-football-times/2017/sep/26/chmel-blsany-czech-republic-strangest-village-football-club-europe

Fraňková, Ruth. 2017. "Police Crack Down On Illegal Tiger Trade". *Radio Praha*. 26 September, 2017. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/police-crack-down-on-illegal-tiger-trade,

Freidingerová, Tereza, and Andrea Svobodová. 2015. "Sapa in Prague. A Gate for the Vietnamese into the Czech Society. Or Vice Versa?" *Visegrad Revue*. 2 January, 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20150207041927/http://visegradrevue.eu/sapa-in-prague-a-gate-for-the-vietnamese-into-the-czech-society-or-vice-versa/

Gal, Susan. 2002. "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction". *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13(1): 77–95.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2002. "Beyond Global vs. Local: Economic Politics Outside the Binary Frame". In *Geographies of Power: Placing Scale*, edited by Andrew Herod and Melissa W. Wright, 25–60. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hirt, Sonia. 2012. *Iron Curtains: Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-Socialist City*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hüwelmeier, Gertrud. 2013. "Postsocialist Bazaars: Diversity, Solidarity, and Conflict in the Marketplace". *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 5(1): 52–72.

IPR Praha. N.d. *Archiv leteckých snímků*. Prague Institute of Planning and Development (Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy). Accessed 21 September, 2020. app.iprpraha.cz/apl/app/ortofoto-archiv/.

Johnston, Rosie. 2008. "Sapa: Prague's 'Little Vietnam'". *Radio Praha*. 30 April, 2008. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/spotlight/sapa-pragues-little-vietnam

Kurzy.cz. N.d. "Obchodní rejstřík, rejstřík firem v ČR, vztahy a vazby z justice.cz". *Kurzy.cz*. Accessed 21 September, 2020. https://rejstrik-firem.kurzy.cz/.

Lazarová, Daniela. 2016. "Sapa Market in Trouble Over Uncertified Meat". *Radio Praha*. Czech Radio, 23 September, 2016. https://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/sapa-market-in-trouble-over-uncertified-meat

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell.

Massey, Doreen B. 1994. *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2013. *World City*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.

Molterer, Klaus. and Hackl, Joachim. N.d. "Vietnamese Markets on the Czech Border: Informal Street Trade as a Border Phenomenon". *Other Markets*. Accessed 21 September, 2020. http://www.othermarkets.org/index.php?tdid=6&txt=1

Neef, Ranier. 2002. "Observations on the Concept and Forms of the Informal Economy in Eastern Europe". In *The Social Impact of Informal Economies in Eastern Europe,* edited by Manuela Stanculescu, 1–27. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Rodrigue, Jean-Paul, and Theo Notteboom. 2009. "The Geography of Containerization: Half a Century of Revolution, Adaptation and Diffusion". *GeoJournal* 74(1): 1–5.

Sik, Endre, and Claire Wallace. 2008. "The Development of Open-Air Markets in East-Central Europe". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23(1): 697–714. http://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00223

Stalinov, Kiril. 2007. "Democracy, Markets, and Public Space in the Transitional Societies of Central and Eastern Europe". In *The Post-Socialist City*, edited by Kiril Stalinov, 269–283. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Statní Statistický Úřad 1970. *Statistická Ročenka Československé Socialistické Republiky*. Prague: Statní Statistický Úřad.

———. 1980. *Statistická Ročenka Československé Socialistické Republiky*. Prague: Statní Statistický Úřad.

Storm, Anna. 2015. "Sapa, Prague's 'Little Vietnam'". *Prague.TV*. 7 April, 2015. https://prague.tv/en/s72/c209/n2584-Sapa-Prague-s-Little-Vietnam

Vertovec, Steven. 2009. *Transnationalism*. Abingdon-on-Thames, England: Routledge.

Wiliams, A. M., and Vladimír Baláž. 2005. "Vietnamese Community in Slovakia". *Sociológia* 37(3) 249–274.

"MAKÓ – NOT ONLY *HAGYMA*"?: COMPETING HISTORIES AND NARRATIVES OF ONION PRODUCTION AND SPA TOURISM IN A HUNGARIAN TOWN

Vivien Apjok
(University of Szeged)

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to present the role that onions and spa tourism play in local identity in the Hungarian town of Makó, as well as the possible explanations that cause the two phenomena to manifest differently in the local (urban and community) self-image. What the two phenomena have in common is the economic aspect, which in the past and in the present constitutes the main sector of the town, but we can see that this orientation is also perceived differently at many points. The question is relevant from an anthropological point of view because we can witness stacked layers of meaning that in some cases support or conflict with each other, and these affect both the self-image of the locals and the image of the town. The interpretive framework of the article is the theory of competing histories, incorporating concepts of tourism, festivals, identity, collective memory, and narrative research.*

The field of research is Makó, a small town in southeastern Hungary which is primarily known for its onion production but which a few years ago was also placed on the tourist map, on a national and international scale, in connection with the Hagymatikum Spa. This study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) what is the role of onions (agriculture) and spas (tourism) in the local identity of Makó; (2) how are the narratives of the two phenomena structured socially and historically; and (3) how are they intertwined in the endeavours of contemporary identity-construction? These questions are further interpreted through the theoretical framework of competing local histories and narratives that affect the construction of the local identity.

Keywords: *locality, tourism, festivals, history, identity construction*

Introduction

The phrase in the title ("Makó – not only *hagyma*!")[1] was uttered in this form in 2014 by a staff member of Makó's Hagymatikum Spa after a British couple purchased their tickets for the renovated spa. With this sentence, the institution's staff responded to the couple's words of praise for Makó's thermal waters (Matkovich 2014). The term, translated in a somewhat ambiguous way, became the new slogan of the town of Makó in 2012, the year the renovated spa opened in town. It was meant to express that although Makó is primarily renowned for its onions, the time had come to associate another item with the place. The mayor of the town in 2012, Péter Buzás (in office from 1994–2014), explained, but also criticized, the new slogan:

> We have been working for more than a year to have more than just onions. In my opinion, Makó is still identified with the onion. [...] I think it's important that onions are the hallmark of Makó, but also that we add even more (personal communication, 2013).

In the mayor's wording, this brought the two "products" of the town into a "hierarchical" relationship, which also signals tensions among the locals regarding the local identity.

The slogan is not only intended to mark the change in the image of the place, but is also related to a phenomenon that may be of interest to cultural anthropological research. The sign of congruence between the onion and Makó was questioned with this slogan, and at the same time it resulted in the shift of the identity of the town. However, the self-image of a settlement is important not only from a marketing and economic point of view, but also because it concerns the self-image of a local community. The concept of local identity relevant in this case describes the phenomenon in which the basis of individual or community self-determination is tied to a place rather than to a religious or ethnic affiliation (see below). However, the issues raised in relation to the motto extend beyond the matter of local identity. The phenomenon affects the local economy, collective memory, local narratives, and more generally, the role of these factors in local identity construction.

[1] *Hagyma* means "onions" in Hungarian.

Although the abovementioned topics have been given much attention and elaboration in the literature of the social sciences, Makó has not yet become the focus of studies on similar subjects. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) what is the role of onions (agriculture) and spas (tourism) in the local identity of Makó; (2) how are the narratives of the two phenomena structured socially and historically; and (3) how are they intertwined in the endeavours of contemporary identity-construction? These questions are further interpreted through the theoretical framework of competing local histories and narratives that affect the construction of the local identity.

Theoretical Framework: Identity, Locality, and Competing Histories and Narratives

As Anthony P. Cohen argues in his book *The Symbolic Construction of Community:* "community [...] is where one learns and continues to practice how to 'be social'. [...] We could say it is where one acquires 'culture'. [...] People's experience and understanding of their community thus resides in their orientation to its symbolism" (Cohen 1993, 15–16). This quote refers to the phenomenon, also seen in Makó, that the local community can interpret itself along its created symbols. Further, as András A. Gergely points out: "Not only the ethnic population defined a city as a specific area, but also the 'city' in itself. The city is not just 'one world', it is a mapped public space" (1996). As the quote suggests, the urban space and the city (or town) itself can be an important organizing medium of local identity.

An integral part of this approach is not only the perception and use of urban space, but also its connection with time and community, which also determine the social relations of a particular space, since "the defining element of this relationship is history, the most intense intersection of social reality" (A. Gergely 1996). Gábor Gyáni (2008) also emphasizes this issue when he discusses the concept of "collective identity". The connection between collective identity and collective memory (Assmann 2004) is therefore also highlighted by some of the most prominent researchers of the topic, for instance, Maurice Halbwachs ([1925] 1992), and Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (1996). As related to their work, Gyáni (2008) further suggests that the two aspects of collective memory and identity formation are distinguished: one is "spontaneous" or "organic" (bottom-up), created by the social group, or the local community; and the other is "created", constructed by social and/or political power. Gyáni

further connects the notion of a constructed collective identity to the concepts of national identity, which can also be linked to Benedict Anderson's theory about imagined communities (Anderson 2006), and perceives locality in this way as a subnational identity. These subnational or local identities are then also shaped by local history and memory, which "construct history for the town and its inhabitants. They create an archive to store documents of the past, exhibit objects documenting historical time in a museum, perpetuate roles and occasions for talking about the past" (Gyáni 2008). Furthermore, written forms of stories and narratives that serve as the basis of local identity cannot be found in the pages of history textbooks; they are perpetuated instead by local history writing (often considered inferior to national history writing) (Gyáni 2008).

Ferenc Tóth, a local ethnographer and historian, is the central figure in Makó history writing, and thus in the formation of local community knowledge, memory, and identity (more below). Tóth, who lived from 1928–2018, started his research and publishing activities about Makó around 1950 (Makó Híradó 2013). His legacy is notable in the town of Makó, and his results are included in museum exhibitions, publications, newspapers, and speeches. For example, as a resident of Makó – and as a folk dancer and member of the local brass orchestra – I listened to the opening speeches of countless official town ceremonies from 1996–2014: national holidays, the Day of Makó, and the Onion Festival. On these occasions, I observed a continuous reference to the work of Ferenc Tóth and Makó's agricultural past ("a glorious past of onion gardening") by Péter Buzás, the mayor of the town from 1994–2014. Éva Erzsébet Farkas, who became the mayor after him, however, builds her speeches along other rhetorics, mainly using the dichotomy of modernity and tradition, and the "civilian" lifestyle and mentality (see below). Along these lines, it can also be seen that the leaders of the town are themselves "users" of the historical narratives of Makó (many significantly created by Ferenc Tóth), but they also interpret and shape them on their own.

The common past, with its narratives and emphasis on the local community, can in this way be legitimized in the "process of making cultural heritage" (Csurgó-Szatmári 2014; Pap 2014). In the case of Makó, the onions as cultural heritage and as "hungaricum" (defined as something uniquely Hungarian) resonate with this possible interpretation.[2]

[2] The Hungaricum Act, issued by the Hungarian Parliament in 2012, defines the concept of hungaricum as "a collective term with a unified classification and registration system to donate a value worthy

In summary, the essential organizing principles of the "local identity" discussed in this paper are collective memory and common knowledge based on local history writing. Collective memories and common knowledge become collective and identity-shaping when they are recalled, or talked about: in this way, they turn into a narrative. The act of creating a narrative is organized and managed in this form, and the local intellectual elite (researchers, town leaders) have a significant role in the process. However, competing narratives often exist in this regard.

The term "competing histories" has no elaborate definition. It refers primarily to the title of a volume published by Mike Berry and Greg Philo in 2006 that examines the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Jon E. Taylor also uses the term in a similar way in his book *A President, a Church and Trails West: Competing Histories in Independence, Missouri* (2008). Numerous studies demonstrate the widespread application of competing histories as a theoretical framework in which a common point is that the research problem of the studied field is about the interpretation of two or more disparate narratives shaping particular identities and political discussions. In works using competing histories as a theoretical framework, it is common for the research problem to deal with identity (ethnic, local), cultural heritage, and their political nuances (Goodman 2000; Berry and Philo 2006; Taylor 2008; Liivoja 2013; Thompson 2017; Cook 2018). Carpini suggests in regard to the widespread application of this theoretical framework that she has "'found' the issues of competing history in various ways, including survey projects, mitigation projects, or public input/community engagement work. They have taken on many forms and each has presented its own unique set of challenges" (Carpini 2019).

Competing narratives appear primarily in social science studies that deal with national or local politics, and with issues of political identity (see MacClancy 2002; Dawson and Buchanan 2005; Blomqvist 2009; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018). As in the case of competing histories, this concept does not have a uniform definition either. As Eliaz and Spiegler argue "according to this view, divergent opinions involve more than heterogeneous preferences or information: they can arise from conflicting stories about political reality. Accordingly, public-opinion makers try to shape the popular narratives" (Eliaz and Spiegler 2020, 2).

of distinction and emphasis which, with its uniqueness and quality characteristic of the Hungarians, is the top performance of the Hungarians" (hungarikum n.d.).

Competing histories and competing narratives as a theoretical framework help to interpret the question that has also emerged in connection with my own research: how do different (local) stories and narratives influence Makó's local identity, and the local community's self-image, and how are they hegemonised by political power?

Research Design, Sources, and Methodology

The research discussed in this study is the result of ten years of fragmentary participatory observation. I carried out intensive fieldwork in Makó between the years 2011–2013, 2014–2015, and 2018–2019, during which I focused on a variety of topics, but in all of them the relationship between local identity, onions, and tourism appeared. The first years of my research (2011–2013) dealt with the Onion Festival. From 2014–2015, I studied the issues of living in the border areas (harmashatarok 2014). And in the last period of my research (2018–2019), I focused on spa tourism.

Apart from the intensive research phases, I have acquired an extensive general knowledge about Makó, as I was born in the town. This kind of insider perspective has both its advantages and disadvantages. In addition to the benefits of having a knowledge of specific cultural patterns and social networks, I must also reckon with a certain degree of cultural blindness and filtering, which stems from the fact that I am a member of the researched community (Kapitány and Kapitány, 2002). However, using another approach, the person of the researcher can also be used as an ethnographic source, as pointed out by Collins and Gallinat (2010), as well as by Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010), the latter being major proponents of the autoethnography theory: "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). Accordingly, I also put my own personal memories at the service of the research, keeping in mind the objective academic approach.

The sources of my research include written, oral, primary, secondary, and historical materials. For historical research, I used press materials, archival documents, and online articles. For interpreting the local narratives, I mainly relied on local history writings, which were also largely included in the previously mentioned sources. I used scholarly, popular, and trade publications to collect academic, non-academic, and specific professional knowledge and data related to my research topic (USC Libraries 2020).

I have used questionnaires and short, in-depth interviews. In connection with the research of the Onion Festival, I incorporated 25 questionnaires, ten semi-structured interviews, and three in-depth interviews. On the topic of living in border areas, I included 40 questionnaires (representative), 16 semi-structured interviews, and eight in-depth interviews. I did not use questionnaires on the issue of spas and tourism; instead I observed social media interfaces (open-access Facebook groups, public profiles), opinion sections, and statistics from tourist sites. In addition, I conducted semi-structured and in-depth interviews with Makó residents on these topics. Social media interfaces and contemporary online press articles also offered great help in the analysis of the most recent local attitudes as related to my topics of research. In addition to local history writings, as well as the scholarly literature on identity, narrative research, and festival research, I relied heavily on my previously published and unpublished writings (Apjok 2013, 2015, 2018, 2020).

In addition to the field observations and face-to-face interviews, I also used the method of online ethnography. Budka and Kremser (2004) point out that online research displays three dimensions simultaneously: it describes the relationship between humans and technology, it studies technology as a means of shaping society, and it is a social forum and a meeting place. In the case of my research, the latter dimension is typical, as an "offline" pre-existing group (residents of Makó) is also concentrated in online communities. Pink and coauthors (2015) thus interpret online ethnography as an ethnographic research that gains insight into the activities and motivations of an individual or group similar to classical ethnography, while the encounters take place through a medium (e.g., social media platforms). The resulting "ethnographic text" which is thus created is not necessarily textual, nor visual, but in all cases is digital. I need to add that I was present in the Facebook groups as a passive observer, as I didn't share content myself, and I didn't respond to content shared by others. In my article, I mark the names of informants and users of social media platforms with the initials of their names, with the exception of public actors, for which I use whole names.

Historical Narrative of Makó Onions

In this subsection, I first describe the impact of onion growing in Makó on the local mentality and identity from a historical perspective. Following this, I briefly outline the role of the work of Ferenc Tóth (1928–2018), a local historian and

ethnographer in Makó, in light of the creation of the historical and contemporary onion narrative contributing to the construction of Makó's local identity.

The current population of Makó is about 23,000 people (nepesseg 2019). The town is located in the southeastern region of Hungary, 15 kilometres from the Romanian border and 30 kilometres from the city of Szeged. Makó is situated on the right bank of the Maros River, which has determined the socio-geographical position of the town from its beginnings (Tóth 1999). Until the end of the 20th century, Makó's main economic sector was agriculture (Tóth 1999). Its specific product is onions. Makó therefore reflects a similar pattern to other settlements in the Great Hungarian Plain, each recognized by its own locally specific agricultural or gastronomic product: paprika powder for Kalocsa (kalocsa 2020), cucumber for Méhkerék (Magyari 2011), tomato and paprika for Szentes (Imre 2020), fish soup for Baja and Szeged (Ínyenc 2020), and sausage for Békéscsaba and Gyula (Táfelspicc 2016).

In the history of Makó, onion growing was not only of economic importance, but it also contributed significantly to narratives about local social and cultural identity. Based on local history research by Ferenc Tóth, onion cultivation helped create the conditions for the social transformation of Makó in the 19th century. The essence of this transformation was a change in the way of life and mentality from the previous feudal order to the new model of Western European civil societies throughout Hungary (Kósa 1990). Based on local historical research by Tóth, it can be said that in the case of Makó, the development of a local, specific method of cultivation and the resulting economic success initiated the mentioned social transformation.[3] According to Tóth, the mentioned transformation had already taken place in Makó in 1861 (Tóth 2008a), although in Hungary the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 created the conditions for this social change in general (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998). Ferenc Tóth thus writes about the mentality of the onion-growing people[4] of Makó and the related civil-social transformation:

[3] The first data on the modern history of onion growing in Makó dates from 1755, while sources suggest that onion growing took place in the Makó area even before the Turkish occupation (which lasted from 1541–1699). Onion cultivation requires an appropriate proportion of arable land, sunlight, and precipitation. Due to the low rainfall, it was unable to grow seedlings successfully from seed in Makó, so the onion gardeners of the 18th century invented a special two-year cultivation method by "folk breeding". Thanks to this procedure, the onion in Makó has become outstanding in quality and has become known not only in the country, but also in Europe and worldwide (Tóth 1998).

[4] Makó was not only engaged in onion growing in agriculture, there were also grain growers. At the same time, onions were the product that made Makó famous, and it also became a symbol of the

Figure 1. An artwork from 1856, by Austrian painter Joseph Böss, depicting "Makó people". Source: Hungarian National Museum – Hungarian Historical Gallery (sulinet.hu).

settlement. The research of Ferenc Tóth also points out that grain growers and onion growers, for example, were religiously separated from each other in Makó (Tóth 2008a). Due to the limited scope of this paper, I do not want to explain this in more detail.

> The onion gardener arguably worked a lot, but he also lived well. He soon took off his folk costume, outgrew the small and poor (one room and one kitchen) house, and replaced the old furniture. Their celebratory dress was no different from that of the citizens, their dwelling barely differed from the farmhouses [...]. All this was coupled with a strong political conviction (Tóth 2014a, 231).

The quote suggests that the identity of the onion gardeners in Makó was manifested in both material and intellectual form. The quoted source is also important for the topic of the creation of the narrative of Makó onions because this and similar descriptions about the onion gardeners by Tóth perpetuate and emphasize the image of a diligent, hard-working, progressive, and prosperous "peasant citizen" who is active in public life, too (Tóth 2008a, 2014b, 2014c). Tóth's writings often include nostalgic overtones, which put the image of the "ancestors" (the onion gardeners of the 19th century) in a somewhat romantic perspective. Thus, the writings of Ferenc Tóth are not only informative sources, but also "nourishing media" of the historical and recent image of Makó and its onion gardeners. The reason for this is that as a museologist and researcher, Tóth shared his research results not only with his professional circle, but also with the wider community.

From 1964–1988, Ferenc Tóth worked as an ethnographer-museologist and director of the József Attila Museum in Makó (Makó Híradó 2018a). During this period, he created two significant exhibitions presenting the history of onion growing in Makó. One has been located in the open-air exhibition of the József Attila Museum in Makó since 1992 (Tóth 2014c), while the other has been situated in the Ópusztaszer National Heritage Park in Ópusztaszer since 1981 (Tóth 2014a).[5] Both exhibitions present onion growing in Makó through the lifestyle and material culture (residence, tools, equipment) of onion gardeners. In both cases, peasant-citizen houses, which were built specifically for the showings, provide the venue for the exhibitions (Tóth 2014a, 2014c). The József Attila Museum has primarily a regional scope (museum.mako.hu), while the Ópusztaszer National Heritage Park has a national and international outreach (opusztaszer.hu). In this way, the exhibition in the József Attila Museum in Makó strengthens the consciousness of Makó residents about local history, and thus contributes to the shaping of the local identity. The exhibition in the Ópusztaszer National Heritage Park simultaneously links the terms "onion" and

[5] The distance between Ópusztaszer and Makó is about 60 kilometres.

"Makó" by making the exhibition known as "Makó House", thus designating the content of the "Makó image" for tourists visiting the national heritage park.

In addition to his work as a museologist, Ferenc Tóth was a prolific author. He published his professional results not only in scientific journals and publications, but also in the form of educational journal articles. Tóth was part of Makó's journalistic life for about 40 years. His writings for the wider community have appeared in the local press (e.g., *Makói História*,[6] *Marosvidék*),[7] regional journals, newspapers (*Szeged – a város folyóirata*,[8] *Csongrád Megyei Hírlap*),[9] and national newspapers (*Magyar Múzeumok*).[10] In 2014, 120 of his previously published writings were collected in a volume entitled *In the Enchantment of Makó* (Tóth 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). Two years later, in 2016, a collection of 150 of his earlier writings entitled *Pots from Makó* was also published (Tóth 2016). Thus, the newspaper articles he wrote about the history and ethnography of Makó did not disappear into oblivion, but with their republication and systematization became available also to present and future audiences. This means that the educational writings of Tóth that had previously existed only in fragments (e.g., the lifestyle of onion gardeners) were also given a new interpretive framework by the two volumes.

The significance of Ferenc Tóth in shaping the local identity of Makó residents can be seen not only through his publishing and museological work. During his years as a museologist and even after his retirement, he was active in the professional and public life of the town. This is evidenced not only by the fact that his activities were pervasive and supported by several municipalities and political atmospheres (Tóth 2008b), but also by the popular saying in Makó that "What Uncle Feri does not know about Makó is not worth knowing" (see Korom 2013; Korom 2018; Szabó 2018; Major 2018; and personal observations). Moreover, the nickname "Uncle Feri" also refers to his special role in the community.

Furthermore, an important and symbolic element of the historical narrative of the Makó onions is that the presentation of Ferenc Tóth's works (exhibitions, publications) has been linked to local cultural events many times. In 1995, the

6 Transl.: *History of Makó*.

7 Transl.: *Maros Countryside*.

8 Transl.: *Szeged – Journal of the City*.

9 Transl.: *Gazette of Csongrád County*.

10 Transl.: *Hungarian Museums*.

exhibition named "Onion House" (organized by Ferenc Tóth) was opened at the József Attila Museum as a part of the program of the local Onion Festival. In 1998 and 2001, the public presentations of the new volumes of the *Monograph of Makó* (editor-in-chief: Ferenc Tóth) were held at the Makó Onion Festival (Apjok 2013). The last part of the six-volume monograph, *Ethnography of Makó*, was completed in May of 2008 for the Day of Makó event (Ilyés 2008; Barna 2008; Tóth 2008b; Szilágyi 2008). In 2016, Ferenc Tóth's publication *Pots from Makó* was presented on January 22 for the occasion of the Day of Hungarian Culture (delmagyar 2016). The series of symbolic date choices confirms that the work of Ferenc Tóth has shaped the image of Makó: on the one hand, the local community can benefit from the common local knowledge in an organized way, and on the other hand, the town communicates that the work of Ferenc Tóth is outstanding at the cultural level of the town.

The Onion Festival of Makó: From Agriculture to Tourism

In this section, I present how the onion in Makó has become a symbol, a cultural heritage, and a brand. I do so in light of historical and recent data, highlighting the role of the Onion Festival, and its purpose, structure, and touristic aspects in this regard.

As onion production was established as Makó's main economic sector, Makó onions also gradually became a symbol of the town. In the case of the settlements mentioned at the beginning of the previous section (e.g., Szeged, Méhkerék, Gyula), the local gastronomic product similarly appears as a symbol for the village or town. Moreover, the iconic local gastronomic product (the onion, in case of Makó) also becomes the symbol of the main local cultural events, such as Makó's Onion Festival, which has been organized in Makó since 1991.

The Onion Festival fits into the line of local gastronomic festivals held in Hungary after the political transitions of 1989 (Pusztai 2007a). During this period, various other towns from the region endeavoured to present themselves publicly in a symbolic way, and this was often achieved by finding and emphasizing some marginal, unique aspect of the local culture. This uniqueness was then staged in a ritual form of gastronomic festivals, as in the example of the sausage festival in Békéscsaba, the fish soup festivals in Baja and Szeged (Pusztai 2007a, 2007b), and the cucumber festival in Méhkerék (1hungary 2020), among others. The focus of these festivals is on a local consumable product that determines the culinary character of the events. The purpose of these

events is multidimensional, extending beyond a mere product promotion and the accompanying entertainment (Pusztai 2003, 16). These festivals therefore also establish and reinforce the central gastronomic product as a symbol of locality, which simultaneously contributes to the creation of the local identity and community of the village or town (Pusztai 2007a, 29). As Gibson and Connell point out in relation to festivals:

> More generally, as officially endorsed events, festivals always have the capacity to selectively seek and represent some elements of local cultures and identities, intensifying social exclusion – inadvertently or otherwise. In various ways, local social tensions may be refracted through festivals, as much as community is engendered (Gibson and Connell 2011, xvi).

To create a complex image of the settlement through a gastronomy festival, finding the symbol of the place in the form of the local product alone is not enough. It is instead necessary to build a complete brand around it, as happened in Makó when onions became a brand and registered trademark of the town in 2001 (Origo 2001). "Branding" is in this sense inherent in local-regional self-definition, and carries both an emotional and an economic factor: brands are in themselves concrete representations of value and emotion complexes that guarantee outstanding quality without trial and a value with which people can identify (Pusztai 2007a, 235). Moreover, the branding of the festival and its central product (onions, fish soup, or cucumber) can be particularly important in relation to tourism.

Tourism is a multisectoral phenomenon that includes the selling of food, transportation, entertainment, hospitality, and other services (Leaders International 2020). Due to this characteristic, tourism is relevant not only in economic terms but also in social and cultural terms. An anthropological approach to tourism can examine, among other topics, cultural and religious tourism, the host-guest relationships, the relationship between cultural heritage and local identity, festivals, and gastronomy (Bannikov 2016). From the point of view of my topic, the latter two are especially relevant.

Food is more than a necessity; it is also a determinant of human culture (think of Italy or France, which are known for their culinary culture). It plays an important role in local representation, so not only national dishes but also local specialties exist. A tourist, whose goal is to visit a destination different from their own in some way, to gain experiences, to experience Otherness, usually

wants to take part in the tasting of the culinary specialties of a given place (Pusztai 2007a). The concept of food tourism describes, on the one hand, how gastronomy can function as a tourist attraction and, on the other, how it affects local-regional identity (Everett and Aitchison 2008; Baldacchino 2015; Frisvoll, Forbord and Blekesaune 2016). Food tourism can contribute to a village or town in several ways. As suggested by Frisvoll, Forbord, and Blekesaune (2016) based on a number of studies, local food economies can stimulate rural development, and tourism, and can influence the shaping of a local identity. In their study, the three authors also highlight that, from a tourism perspective, the consumption of local food is also symbolically and culturally the consumption of the "countryside" (Frisvoll, Forbord, and Blekesaune 2016). Experiencing locality and authenticity is key for the tourist, who is usually looking for something special and characteristic of the locality. One of the forums for this symbolic-cultural consumption of the "authentic countryside" can be local (gastronomic) festivals. As will be seen, in the case of Makó and the Onion Festival, this aspect of tourism is only addressed in the last third of the festival's history.

The Makó Onion Festival has a 30-year history. As there is no way to review the full story in detail here, I highlight the changes in the meaning and goals of the festival, in the conscious shaping of the profile of the event. The original aim of the Onion Festival was to promote onion production and agriculture. To do this, one of the principals of a high school in Makó envisioned a one-day exhibition of agricultural machinery, combined with an onion market. The idea was eventually implemented at the town level after a member of parliament from Makó embraced it (Józsefné Mágori, personal communication, 2013; see Apjok 2013). The Onion Festival is organized each year on the second weekend of September. Until 1995, the Onion Festival operated more as a professional forum where economic actors (politicians and farmers alike) discussed the present and future of local onion production. The entertainment programs consisted mainly of performances of local folklore and brass orchestra cultural groups (Apjok 2013) However, the year 1995 brought a change in this structure. In 1994, when Péter Buzás was elected mayor, he imagined the design of the event differently than in previous years, as evidenced by the following excerpt from the interview I conducted with him:

> Around 1995–96 we said we wanted to elevate the cavalcade character of the opening ceremony, and formal character of whole fair, so we created a "folk festival" [...] We evaluated the festival and concluded that what could attract people there

> is the cultural and popular show. [...] We figured out that there should be a parade as well, as this event can be filled with people if we take the schoolchildren and their parents there (personal communication, 2013).

Thus, Péter Buzás, the mayor of the town from 1994–2014, explained the further development of the festival, emphasizing the need for a greater integration of the local population into its programs.

The festival was a three-day event from 1996–2006. During this period, the Agricultural Workshop (orig.: Mezőgazdasági Tanműhely) on the outskirts of Makó provided the venue for the festival. As there was no local public transport in the town, it was possible to travel from the town centre to the Onion Festival by a small festival train. Between 2007 and 2009, the festival venue remained at the Agricultural Workshop (see Figure 2), but the duration was shortened to two days. In 2010 and 2011, the festival was moved to the downtown area and was further cut down to one day. However, many of the locals perceived the changes in a negative way. Based on the questionnaire and short interviews I made with some of the locals in 2011 and 2012, 19 of the 32 informants supported the previous Agricultural Workshop as a festival venue. The main reasons for the justification: tradition and custom, a space other than the ordinary, the atmosphere of the festival, and the very fact that you have to "travel" to the outskirts of the town to visit the festival – even with a small festival train, which to the visitors represented an experience in itself (Apjok 2013).

The reason for the large-scale change in 2011 was partly financial and partly due to the lack of a clear organizational concept. As Péter Buzás commented:

> Then after a while we realized that the festival was writhing – in fact, a certain degree of wrestling had always characterized it. [...] And the last stage came, as the Onion Festival was transformed: it fell, it suffered, it stopped, the external meeting of the agricultural commission stopped, then we considered holding it only every two years, to bring it to the main square. We brought it in, it failed, it became a political forum. [...] Then we said let's forget this professionalism [aspect]. The fish soup festival in Baja is not about when and how to lay eggs, but they cook very good fish soup and eat it. Here the future will be the same for us. We can reinvent ourselves along these lines [...] We would have pushed for tourism earlier, but it just didn't happen. The nature and idea of the event did not make this possible. It was not suitable for it. The original concept of the festival was wrong (personal communication, 2013).

Figure 2. Above, the old venue of the Onion Festival (Agricultural Workshop) on the outskirts of Makó (photo from 2008), and below, the new venue, in the centre of the town (photo from 2019). Sources: Wikipedia.hu and mcsipos.hu.

The idea of change expressed in the quote above took shape in 2012. The Hagymatikum Spa opened in Makó in January 2012, so the Onion Festival held in September of that year further emphasized the tourism aspect, as it was pointed out to me by Péter Buzás (personal communication, 2013), and was mentioned in the local press, too (delmagyar 2012; Németh 2012; Szabó 2012; delmagyar 2013). In 2012, the festival moved to the main square of Makó, placed around the onionflower-shaped fountain, a few steps away from the above-mentioned spa. In 2013, the local press emphasized the gastronomic nature of the festival and its tourist significance (delmagyar 2013; Makó Híradó 2013). Afterward, the Onion Festivals of the period 2012–2020 have been consciously designed with a pronounced tourist profile, emphasizing the gastronomic image of the festival (mako 2016; Makó Híradó 2018b). The presentation, tasting,

and joint preparation of onion dishes became an element of the festival that strengthened the idea of "consuming the countryside" mentioned in literature (Frisvoll, Forbord, and Blekesaune 2016). This culinary incorporation of onions clearly refers to the gastro-tourism aspirations of the Onion Festival. Furthermore, the fact that the festival was placed at the heart of the town was meant to communicate that the Onion Festival and Makó are inseparable and that they form a common identity in this way. In addition, tourists visiting the Hagymatikum Spa can also take part in the festival, and the other local attractions (the museum, and Makó's historic buildings) are in this way also easily accessible for tourists coming to the Onion Festival. Those informants, who preferred downtown as the venue for the Onion Festival over the Agricultural Workshop, and the entertainment profile over the professional one, also highlighted the tourism opportunities that appeared with these changes:

> There will be professional and entrepreneurial forums every day. Given that it has been called a festival since the beginning, it is indeed reasonable to create a real festival atmosphere with several stages and lots of concerts. If it were just a professional part, I think the event would attract very few Makó residents. So with concerts, thousands of people can make a huge party (KZ, personal communication, 2018).

> We live in the time of gastro festivals. It is not possible to organize a tourism event successfully with professional programs. I think it's an attractive program that moves all walks of life, bringing liveliness to town year after year! There is a need for this kind of community forging events (FT, personal communication 2018).

> At the festival, exhibitors, artisans, and downtown restaurants and cafes and the spa can benefit from local visitors and tourists, since it is more a community event in the main square than a professional one at the old venue (NN, personal communication 2012).

Spa and Tourism in Makó as a "New" Breakout Point of the Town

Makó's spa-oriented tourism aspirations became tangible in the mid-2000s, especially after Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004 (europa n.d). The aim of the town management at that time was to make Makó an attractive tourist

destination nationally and internationally by modernizing its existing thermal spa and supplementing it with additional infrastructure (Kovács Istvánné 2008). In 2012, the Hagymatikum Spa centre opened in the area of the existing thermal spa, which had opened in 1962 but underwent significant alterations afterwards (see Figure 3; Apjok 2018). The plan to renovate the spa has resonated greatly in the town, and the project has been the scene of many political battles (Illyés 2007; Szabó 2007, 2008; delmagyar 2008; Bakos 2010; Magyar Narancs 2017; MN 2017; Rényi 2017; MTI/hvg 2018). The development, which was largely carried out with EU support and through self-sufficiency, also caused resentment among the locals, which was based on the idea of "tourism as a foreign body in Makó's organization". The following contrasting thoughts from my interviews and from social media also express these attitudes among local populations:

> Makó is an agricultural town. We should deal with onions because this has a tradition here. The spa does not have it (KJ, personal communication, 2012).

> It would be necessary to teach people about this new industry, because you cannot become a good tourism professional by yourself. [...] People do not understand tourism here (KG, personal communication, 2013).

> The spa is not ours either. There is no swimming pool anymore. Instead of tourism, we should invest in a pool where locals could swim (VL, personal communication 2015).

> The people of Makó will also realize that none of the useful investments will take place in their town (TIR, personal communication, 2019).

> I don't believe that because of one spa we will be at the top of tourism. There are many farmers and workers. There are still onions from Makó. Agriculture should be preferred (HIA, personal communication, 2020).

These few opinions also show that tourism is considered foreign for many of the Makó locals for various reasons. The main counter-argument against the renovation of the spa and the introduction of spa tourism is that in the case of Makó, it is not considered traditional in cultural and economic terms. These opinions refer to Makó's agricultural past, justifying the role of the Makó onion narrative in local identity construction.

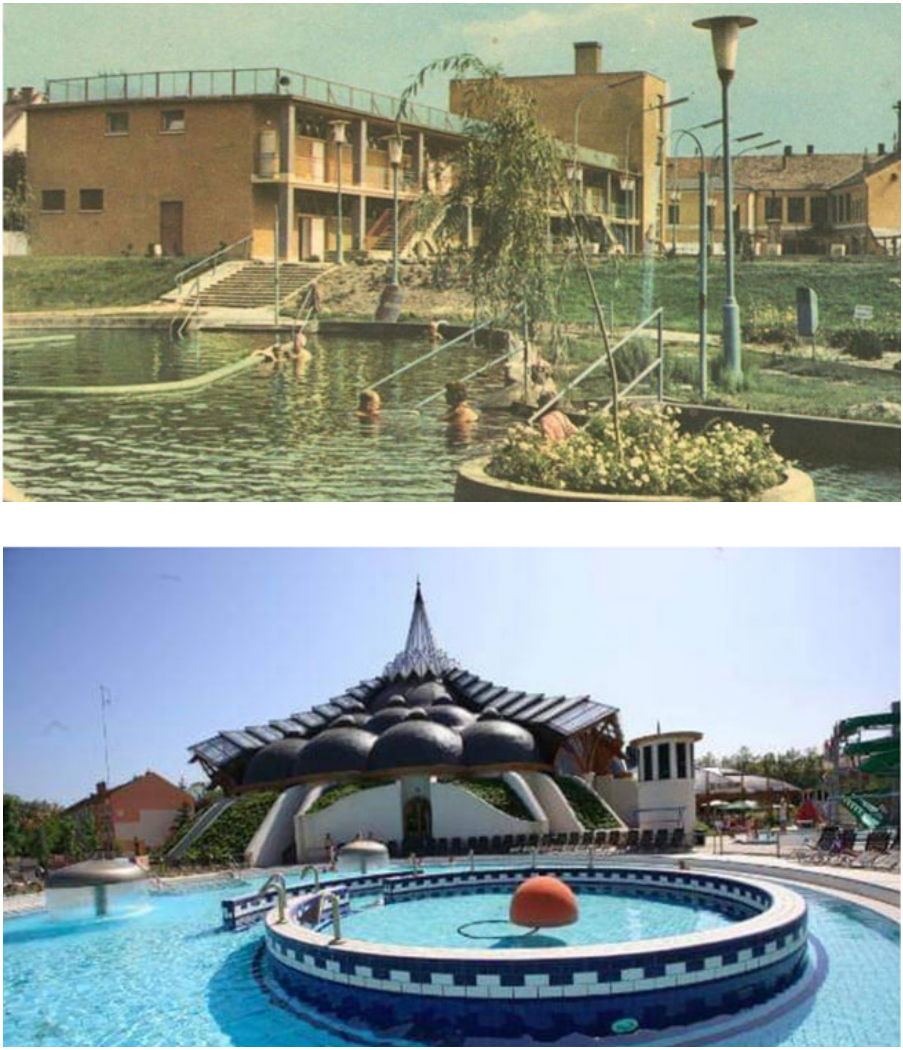

Figure 3. Above, the old thermal spa (photo from the 1960s) and below, the new Hagymatikum Spa photographed from almost the same angle (photo from 2019).

Local opinions heard during my fieldwork in 2014 led me to examine the differences between the competing narratives of Makó's onions and Makó's spa tourism. I wondered whether the aversions formulated in connection with spa tourism could be linked to the historical narrative of spa tourism in Makó. Seeing

how the Makó onions as a local heritage was incorporated into the local identity thanks to the narratives surrounding it, I was interested in whether aversions to spa tourism are caused by the fact that the narrative of spa tourism is fragmentary and does not span decades in urban history, like the onions narrative does.

According to my historical ethnographic research, the idea of spa tourism first appeared in the local press in 1936. The article in the daily newspaper *Makói Ujság* entitled "Why Does Makó Not Have Tourism?" explains that the banks of the Maros River, which runs next to Makó, would provide an excellent basis for local tourism due to its unique natural environment (as the Maros's riverbank is surrounded by ancient trees). This, as the author of the article writes, would require not only creating accommodations and restaurants, but also reprogramming the Makó mentality. This article alone would base tourism on the Maros's mud, which it considers to be a feature for which even Swiss and Danish guests would choose Makó (gy.m. 1936). A reader's letter received in response to this newspaper article sees the issue of spa tourism in Makó as unresolved due to infrastructural deficiencies. The letter draws attention to the fact that although domestic tourism increased significantly after the signing of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, not all cities and towns in Hungary were able to adapt to it, despite its favourable effects (Lantos 1936).

The issue of spa tourism in Makó was also on the agenda of town management after the Second World War, in the communist-socialist era (1945–1989). The tourism goals of the town management of that era are clearly reflected in the minutes of the Executive Committee of the Makó Town Council from 1950–1990.[11] One of the goals of the Executive Committee was to make Makó a "spa town" in the late 1960s. The title of spa town was awarded to those Hungarian settlements that had not only a spa but also extensive infrastructure and tourism plans built around it (Makó Archive decree No. 34/1969. VB; Michalkó-Rátz 2011). The concept of a spa town in the communist-socialist period reflected the nationwide concept of spa towns between the two World Wars (Jusztin 2015), but there is no reference in the minutes of Makó's Executive Committee to the idea that came up in the press in 1936. The basis of the spa town concept during this time was the endowments of the Maros's riverbank and its natural environment, the Maros mud, and the thermal water of the downtown spa.

[11] Makó Archive – Hungarian National Archive, Csongrád-Csanád County Archive: "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Council of Makó", 1950–1990.

It is clear from the minutes of the Executive Committee that the tourist attractions were envisioned on the Maros's riverbank. To transform the space for tourism purposes, several areas of the coast that were previously dedicated to agricultural cultivation have been declared recreational areas (Makó Archive decree proposal No. 1968.02.20). In order to establish the tourism profile of the Maros's riverbank, the Executive Committee set up the Maros Riverbank Management Committee, which continuously consulted with the Szeged Tourist Office and the Hungarian Urban Society about the necessary arrangements (Makó Archive decree proposal No. 1968.02.20). The spa town concept was also built on health tourism. To this end, the thermal spa in the downtown area of Makó, which was built primarily for hygienic purposes, was intended to be transformed into a rheumatism hospital based on the plans of Dr. István Batka (1896–1971), a chief rheumatologist of the Makó hospital (Dehelán 2012; Medgyesi 2012). Batka prepared an 83-page draft in 1968 in which he explained that based on Maros's healing mud (which was declared medicinal in 1961) and Makó's thermal waters (which were later declared medicinal after Batka's death), Makó's future lay in spa development (Dehelán 2012; Medgyesi 2012). Batka's plans for a rheumatism hospital and his research, focused on medicinal mud and thermal water, were well known in Makó in the 1960s and 1980s, as many of my informants indicated in their recollections (personal communication, 2018–2019).

Just as the initial idea of spa tourism from between the two World Wars did not appear in the spa town aspirations of the second half of the 20th century, there is similarly no apparent reference to the plans of the communist-socialist era or the pre-WWII era in the concept of spa tourism as developed in Makó in the 2000s. However, an interesting parallel is that although the 2008 booklet about the spa development of the municipality led by Péter Buzás includes the slogan "Let's make Makó a spa town" (the same slogan that also appears in the minutes in the 1960s), there is no indication that the core of the current tourism idea is derived from the communist-socialist era (Kovács Istvánné 2008). However, the current plans reference the work of István Batka, regarding his research results on medicinal mud and thermal water. This is also evidenced by the fact that Batka's memory lives on to this day in the local community (Dehelán 2012; Medgyesi 2012). In honour of Batka, a statue of him was erected in 2014 in Makó's main square by the town management, with the support of the spa management and the local medical community. The statue was symbolically placed in front of the Hagymatikum Spa's medical wing in 2014, alluding to the

doctor's rheumatism hospital plans, with the label "The explorer of the Maros medicinal mud" placed on it (O.N. 2018).

Just as the narrative of the onions in Makó can be considered continuous, the narrative of Makó's spa tourism can be interpreted as fragmentary, based on disparate and discontinued sources listed above. The idea of tourism that first arose in 1936 has always been communicated by each different town administration as a "new breakout point" in each era (either in the communist-socialist period, or in the period of mayor Péter Buzás, from 2004–2014, and after 2014, in the time of mayor Éva Erzsébet Farkas). Given that each of the mentioned periods is linked to radically different political trends (far right for the pre-WWII era, communist-socialist dictatorship for the years 1945–1989, social democracy for the Buzás period, and the nationalist conservatism / Christian democracy of the Fidesz party for Éva Erzsébet Farkas's mandate), it is logical that the political colouring of Makó's tourism appears in both the town's managerial communication as well as in the community's interpretations of it. The fragmentary nature of the narrative is thus confirmed by the fact that the current town administration sought to legitimize its own activities by referring to tourism as a "new breaking point". Based on my sources, it can be assumed that each town's management was aware of the spa tourism aspirations of the previous eras, although these developments have evidently been disrupted and hampered by historical events and political changes (World War II, political transition in 1989). The new representative body, set up in 2014 under the leadership of the new mayor, Éva Erzsébet Farkas, directly carried forward the spa developments started in the previous era by Mayor Péter Buzás and his team. In view of these facts, it is particularly interesting that local political leaders are constantly referring to the idea of spa tourism as a "new breakout point"; however, this rhetoric can backfire if reservations among the locals about innovation are taken into account. Acceptance of change and innovation is more difficult the less the local community connects with them through its own history and through the local narratives. This tendency relates to the power of historical narratives in community-forming and identity construction, as outlined in the theoretical chapter above. The effect of such fragmented and disjointed historical narratives about Makó's tourism, as my interviews and social media communication have shown, is that many Makó residents do not see tourism as a traditional economic sector; they see spa development only as a political act.

The political interpretation of spa tourism also appears in the local community. Opinions from social media contain political criticisms of both Péter Buzás and Erzsébet Éva Farkas:

> I like it so much that the Fidesz people are beating their chests in Makó due to the development of tourism, while, as can be seen from a former article in *Délmagyar*, investments made with EU money were previously considered stupid by them (LK, personal communication, 2019).

> Debt, because the government has taken everything away from the municipalities. The government distributes the money of the people, NOT its own. [...] Anyway, can anyone tell me what the current mayor did for Makó? Even the money from the old tenders has just gotten here. How many jobs did this woman create? [...] We are surrounded by career politicians as well (OL, personal communication, 2019).

> The communists forget that there are many entrepreneurs in Makó, and Buzás brought the trenchers from Szabolcs when he worked public workers for pennies for four and six hours. Let's not faint from the big spa program. That's all he's done in 20 years (HJ, personal communication, 2019).

> Selling a building (dormitory), taking the town's TAXPAYERS into debt of 170 million HUF a year [for the spa] is glorious? (TI, personal communication, 2015).

The fact that since 2014, Mayor Éva Erzsébet Farkas and Makó's member of Parliament, János Lázár, have built their communication around the dichotomy of modernity and tradition may also contribute to the local perception that tourism does not have a historical continuity. In their statements, and in their greetings on Makó's website (mako.hu/koszonto), the onion equals tradition, and spa tourism equals modernity. In addition, they repeatedly emphasize that Éva Erzsébet Farkas and her colleagues in the Fidesz party ushered in a "new era" to the history of Makó. The above examples are also consistent with those described by Jeremy MacClancy in relation to the conflicting narratives surrounding tourism efforts:

> The predicaments of tourism can be drawn in the stark terms of good versus bad, of the upright against the voracious, of locals versus developers. However, closer examination reveals that the encounter with organized tourism cannot always be portrayed in black and white: far more often, the picture must be painted in diverse shades of grey. And it is here perhaps that social anthropology can make its greatest contribution to the study and understanding of tourism and its effects (MacClancy 2002, 421).

As this quote, as well as the opinions included above, suggest, the image of spa tourism in Makó is also discursively painted in black-and-white terms, although the phenomenon cannot be captured in such sharp contrasts. In political communication, tourism is new, and onion growing is old and traditional – yet they complement each other. In the perception of the local community, the spa involves financial loss, tied to political parties, while the onion symbolizes stability and security. However, while onion growing is in decline, tourism appears as an emerging economic sector in Makó.

Conclusion: Competing Histories and Competing Narratives of Agriculture and Tourism

In this paper I attempted to present the role of Makó onions and spa tourism in shaping local identity as constructed along different historical narratives. I aimed to present the possible explanations that cause the two phenomena to manifest differently in the local place and community self-image. What the two phenomena have in common is the economic aspect, which represents the main sectors of the town, but these manifestations carry different perceptions at many points. The question is relevant from an anthropological point of view because we can witness stacked layers of meaning that in some cases support each other or compete, and these affect both the self-image of the locals and the image of the town.

This study attempts to answer the following questions: (1) what is the role of onions (agriculture) and spas (tourism) in the local identity of Makó; (2) how are the narratives of the two phenomena structured socially and historically; and (3) how are they intertwined in the endeavours of contemporary identity-construction? In the following section, I answer the questions based on the analysis carried out in the paper.

The Makó onions are integral to the local identity. The role of onions in the local lifestyle, also built into the collective memory, gained its role in the shaping of local identity with its constant positive emphasis on local public narratives. This was created mainly by Ferenc Tóth and his work as an ethnographer and local historian, but also amplified by local public figures. The onions became an integral part of Makó's self-image, so that onion growing is no longer merely the main economic sector, but is also the symbol of the place, a brand and cultural heritage connecting both the historical past and the present. For the local place and community, the image of onions has been strengthened since 1991

Figure 4. "Makó. ___ only onions." Makó downtown. Photo by Vivien Apjok, 2012.

by a festival organized around them, which tried to promote both the agricultural product and the town of Makó. The Onion Festival enabled a common experience of local identity, while for the locals it also positively confirmed the legitimacy and importance of onions as a product and a symbol of Makó. This legitimacy was strengthened by the fact that in 2001 Makó onions became an official local brand and in 2014 an officially designated cultural heritage of the town. However, there was a shift in the construction of local identity and self-image at the town level in 2012, when the Hagymatikum Spa opened. Then the slogan of the city became "Makó – not only onions!" With this, the creators of the slogan (the current leaders of the town) endeavoured to expand the identity of the place to include the tourist profile of the town. However, this did not represent an undivided success among Makó residents, as my interviews and social media posts show, and as the image below also demonstrates (see Figure 4). With the word "not" removed, the sentence can be read both physically and semantically as a clear expression of the conflict between the agricultural and touristic aspirations of Makó residents.

The difference between the narrative of Makó onions and the narrative of spa tourism is clear. The narrative of onions is continuous and primarily positive, while that of spa tourism is fragmented and thus gives way to political conflicts. The fact that spa tourism is repeatedly referred to as a "new breakout point" by local political actors makes the image of spa tourism unstable in terms of whether the local community can connect to it or not. My research shows that the lack of historical continuity in the narrative of spa tourism makes locals distrustful of it, while interpreting the spa development as a political act.

Given that the onion is the strongest symbol of the town (as a brand and cultural heritage), it is logical that this symbolism is also used in communications about local spa tourism. The best example of this is the name "Hagymatikum" itself, which includes the root "hagyma", meaning "onions". The competing and overlapping narratives of the onion and the spa are therefore outlined also in Makó's tourist manifestations. This can also be seen in terms of what the town wants to communicate about itself to tourists visiting Makó, and in terms of how the various tourist websites represent Makó. The most important cornerstones of this communication are the presence of onions, medicinal water, and medicinal mud (mako n.d.; szallas n.d.; szentgellertborhaz n.d.; datekla n.d.; makotel n.d.; termeszetjaro n.d.; univcoupon n.d.; szegedtourism n.d.; hotelcorvus n.d.; hungarycard 2019; programturizmus 2020; magyarorszagom 2020).

My research currently suggests that collective memory, local knowledge, and a coherent narrative play a significant role in making onions an integral part of Makó's identity, and for the same reason, in making spa tourism not (yet) successfully integrated into the local self-image. Only time will tell if this will change.

Vivien Apjok is an assistant lecturer at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Szeged, Hungary. She is also a study manager and teacher for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programme: Choreomundus International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage, as well as a PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of History at the University of Szeged. Her scholarly interests include historical anthropology and the anthropological study of tourism (locality, identity, representation, dance, cultural heritage). In addition to educational and scholarly activities, Vivien Apjok is also active in organizational work (dedicated to educational and academic projects). Email: apjokvivien@gmail.com

References

1hungary. 2020. "Méhkerék". *Irány Magyarország*. Accessed August 16, 2020. http://www.1hungary.com/info/mehkerek/.

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

András, A. Gergely. 1996. *Kisebbségi tér és lokális identitás (II.) Társadalmi tér-képzet, kisvárosi tradíció*. Kiskunhalas. https://mek.oszk.hu/10600/10663/10663.htm.

Apjok, Vivien. 2013. *A makói Hagymafesztivál*. BA Thesis. Unpublished manuscript. Szeged.

———. 2015. "Határ? Tudat? Határtudat? A *határmentiség* kérdése Makón". In *Hármas határok néprajzi értelmezésben*, edited by Tünde Turai, 205–217. Budapest: MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet.

———. 2018. "A marosi gyógyiszap útja". In *József Attila Múzeum évkönyve II.*, edited by Éva Csengeriné Szabó, Géza Forgó, Gábor Nagy, and Zsuzsanna Szikszai, 442–453. Makó: József Attila Múzeum.

———. 2020. "Gazdasági tájból turisztikai táj? A makói (fürdő)turizmus története és értelmezési lehetőségei". In *Multidiszciplinaritás a turizmusban. X. Nemzetközi Turizmus Konferencia Tanulmánykötet*, edited by Attila Albert Tóth, Éva Papp, Erzsébet Printz-Markó, Marcell Kupi, and Nikolett Török, 6–20. Győr: Széchenyi István Egyetem.

Assmann, Jan. 2004. *A kulturális emlékezet*. Budapest: Atlantisz Könyvkiadó.

Bakos, András. 2010. "Vizsgálják a makói fürdőépítést". *Delmagyar.hu*. September 13, 2010. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/vizsgaljak-a-makoi-furdoepitest-3800119/.

Baldacchino, Godfrey. 2015. "Feeding the Rural Tourism Strategy? Food and Notions of Place and Identity". *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism: Rural Tourism: Insights from the North Atlantic* 15(2): 223–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1006390.

Bannikov, Konstantin. 2016. "Anthropology of Tourism". *Alp-Age*. March 1, 2016. https://alp-age.com/en/articles/51/159/.

Barna, Gábor. 2008. "Gondolatok a *Makó néprajza* című kötet bemutatójára". *Marosvidék* 3. https://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/telepulesek_ertekei/Mako/marosvidek/marosvidek_2008_3/pages/002_multunk_es_oroksegunk.htm.

Berry, Mike and Greg Philo. 2006. *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*. London: Pluto Press.

Blomqvist, Anders. 2009. "Competing Historical Narratives". *East Central Europe* 36: 138–146. https://doi.org/10.1163/187633009X411548.

Budka, Philipp and Manfred Kremser. 2004. "CyberAnthropology: Anthropology of CyberCulture". In *Contemporary Issues in Socio-Cultural Anthropology: Perspectives and Research Activities from Austria*, edited by Stefan Khittel, Barbara Plankensteiner, and Maria Six-Hohenbalken, 213–226. Vienna: Loecker.

Carpini, Heather Lynn. 2019. "Working with competing histories". National Council on Public History. January 29, 2019. https://ncph.org/history-at-work/working-with-competing-histories/.

Cohen, Anthony P. 1993. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London and New York: Routledge.

Collins, Peter and Anselma Gallinat. 2010. *The Ethnographic Self as a Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Cook, Christopher. 2018. "The Stolen Generations: competing histories". *NEW: Emerging Scholars in Australian Indigenous Studies* 4 (1): 27–32. https://doi.org/10.5130/nesais.v4i1.1512.

Csurgó, Bernadett and Attila Szatmári. 2014. "Vidéki kultúra, helyi közösség és lokális identitás. A kulturális örökség szerepe a lokális identitásépítésben és a helyi közösségfejlesztésben Hajdúdorogon és Hajdúhadházon". *Metszetek* 3: 33–50. http://real.mtak.hu/18763/7/201403_03_csurgo_szatmari_0-1.pdf.

datekla. N.d. "Makói Termál- és Gyógyfürdő". *Dél-Alföldi Gyógy- és Termálfürdők Közhasznú Egyesület*. Accessed July 16, 2020. http://www.datekla.eu/index.php?cid=1041&ln=hu&id=24.

Dawson, Patrick and David Buchanan. 2005. "The Way It Really Happened: Competing Narratives in the Political Process of Technological Change". *Human Relations*, 58(7): 845–865. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726705057807.

Dehelán, Aurélia. 2012. "Dr. Batka István, a lokálpatrióta orvos". *Marosvidék* 1: 3–5. http://marosvidek.hu/kiadasok/2012/1szam.pdf.

———. 2008. "Támogatja a Fidesz a makói fürdőberuházást". *Delmagyar.hu*. September 22, 2008. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/tamogatja-a-fidesz-a-makoi-furdoberuhazast-3973900/.

———. 2012. "Hagymafesztiválra készül Makó". *Delmagyar.hu*. September 02, 2012. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/hagymafesztivalra-keszul-mako-3011050/.

———. 2013. "Készülnek a Hagymafesztiválra". *Delmagyar.hu*. August 30, 2013. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/keszulnek-a-hagymafesztivalra-2965255/.

———. 2016. "Makói cserepekkel ünneplik a kultúrát". *Delmagyar.hu*. January 21, 2016. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/makoi-cserepekkel-unneplik-a-kulturat-1478326/.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1998. "Ausgleich. Austro-Hungarian History". Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified February 1, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/event/Ausgleich.

Eliaz, Kfir and Ran Spiegler. 2020. "A Model of Competing Narratives". Tel Aviv University. Accessed August 2, 2020. https://www.tau.ac.il/~rani/narratives.pdf.

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2010. "Autoethnography: An Overview". *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 12(1), http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108.

europa. N.d. "Magyarország". *Európai Unió*. Last modified July 2, 2020. https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/hungary_hu.

Everett, Sally and Cara Aitchison. 2008. "The Role of Food Tourism in Sustaining Regional Identity: A Case Study of Cornwall, South West England". *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 16(2): 150–167. https://doi.org/10.2167/jost696.0.

Frisvoll, Stein, Magnar Forbord, and Arild Blekesaune. 2016. "An Empirical Investigation of Tourists' Consumption of Local Food in Rural Tourism". *Scandinavian*

Journal of Hospitality and Tourism 16(1–2), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1066918.

Gibson, Chris and John Connell. 2011. *Festival Places: Revitalising Rural Australia*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Goodman, Susan. 2000. "Competing Histories: William Styron's The Confessions of Nat Turner and Sherley Ann Williams's Dessa Rose". In *The World Is Our Home: Society and Culture in Contemporary Southern Writing*, edited by Folks Jeffrey J. and Folks Nancy Summers, 12–28. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. https://doi:10.2307/j.ctt130j8ps.4.

Gyáni, Gábor. 2008. "Identitás, emlékezés, lokalitás". *2000 Irodalmi és Társadalmi havi lap*. Accessed April 25, 2020. http://ketezer.hu/2008/06/identitas-emlekezes-lokalitas/.

gy. m. 1936. "Makónak miért nincs idegenforgalma?" *Makói Ujság* 2(170): 1. Makó: Makói Friss Ujság nyomda- és lapkiadóvállalat.

Halbwachs, Maurice. [1925] 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

harmashatarok. 2014. "An Examination of Triple Borders in the South-Western, South-Eastern and North-Eastern Regions of Hungary". Accessed January 15, 2015. http://harmashatarok.nti.btk.mta.hu/index_en.html.

hotelcorvus. N.d. "Fürdőtúra az Alföldön". *Hotelcorvus.hu*. Accessed September 11, 2020. https://hotelcorvus.hu/furdotura-az-alfoldon.

hungarikum. N.d. "What is Hungarikum?" *Hungarikum.hu*. Accessed September 11, 2020. http://www.hungarikum.hu/en/content/what-hungarikum.

hungarycard. 2019. "Kényeztesse magát a fürdők fürdőjében a Makói Hagymatikumban!" *Hungarycard.hu*. Accessed September 11, 2020. https://hungarycard.hu/kenyeztesse-magat-a-furdok-furdojeben-a-makoi-hagymatikumban-2/.

Illyés, Szabolcs. 2007. "Parázs vita a fürdőberuházásról a makói testületi ülésen". *Delmagyar.hu*. December 19, 2007. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/parazs-vita-a-furdoberuhazasrol-a-makoi-testuleti-ulesen-2381863/.

———. 2008. "Makó monográfiája a legnagyobb". *Delmagyar.hu*. May 19, 2008. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/mako-monografiaja-a-legnagyobb-3865372/.

Imre, Péter. 2020. "Márka, védjegy a szentesi paradicsom és paprika". *Delmagyar.hu*. February 14, 2020. https://www.delmagyar.hu/kozelet/helyi-kozelet/marka-vedjegy-a-szentesi-paradicsom-es-paprika-4968345/.

Ínyenc, Fenevad. 2020. "Két magyar város évszázados harca: a szegedi vagy a bajai az igazi?" *Fenevad.blog.hu*. Accessed September 11, 2020. https://fenevad.blog.hu/2020/01/05/szegedi_vagy_bajai.

Jusztin, Márta. 2015. "A fürdőváros mint realitás és lehetőség a két világháború közötti Magyarországon". In *Fürdővárosok*, edited by István Galambos, Gábor Michalkó, András Törzsök, and Gábor Wirth, 55–64. Budapest: Történelmi Ismeretterjesztő Társulat Egyület / Magyar Földrajzi Társaság.

kalocsa. 2020. "Kalocsa, a paprika fővárosa" *Kalocsa.hu*. Accessed September 11, 2020. http://www.kalocsa.hu/gasztronomia/kalocsa-a-paprika-fovarosa/.

Kapitány, Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány. 2002. "Résztvevő megfigyelés a saját társadalomban – korszakok szimbolikája". In *Jelbeszéd az életünk 2*., edited by Ágnes Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány, 124–156. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

Korom, András. 2013. "Tóth Ferenc első 85 éve". *Makó Híradó*. January 5, 2013. https://makohirado.hu/2013/01/05/toth-ferenc-elso-85-eve/.

———. 2018. "Várostörténet után családtörténetet ír a 90 éves Tóth Feri bácsi". *Makó Híradó*. January 9, 2018. https://makohirado.hu/2018/01/09/varostortenet-utan-csaladtortenetet-ir-90-eves-toth-feri-bacsi/.

Kósa, László. 1990. *Paraszti polgárosulás és a népi kultúra táji megoszlása Magyarországon*. Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem Néprajzi Tanszék.

Kovács, Istvánné, and Mária Magdolna. 2008. "Fürdőfejlesztés – Ami eddig történt". *Network. Közösségek közösségi oldala*. Last modified May 6, 2008. http://mako2007.network.hu/blog/makoi-eletkepek-hirei/mako-legyen-furdovaros.

Lantos, Mihály. 1936. "Az Olvasót illeti a szó! Miért nincs Makónak idegenforgalma?" *Makói Ujság* 2(179): 2–3. Makó: Makói Friss Ujság nyomda- és lapkiadóvállalat.

Leaders International. 2020. "Tourism Value Chain Development". *Leaders International*. Accessed August 5, 2020. https://leadersinternational.org/tourism-value-chain-development/.

Liivoja, Rain. 2013. "Competing Histories: Soviet War Crimes in the Baltic States". In *The Hidden Histories of War Crimes Trials*, edited by Kevin Jon Heller, Gerry Simpson, 248–266. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MacClancy, Jeremy. 2002. "Paradise postponed: The predicaments of tourism". In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy, 418–429. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Magyari, Péter. 2011. "Mérgesek a kígyóuborkások". *Index.hu*. June 11, 2011. https://index.hu/belfold/2011/06/11/mergesek_a_kigyoubokrasok/.

Magyar Narancs. 2017. "Totál veszteséges a makói fürdő, de a kormány most beletol még 8 milliárdot". *Magyar Narancs*. December 30, 2017. https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/total-veszteseges-a-makoi-furdo-de-a-kormany-most-beletol-meg-8-milliardot-108517.

magyarorszagom. 2020. "Hungarikum: Mitől lett hires a makói hagyma?" *Magyarországom.hu*. Accessed July 22, 2020. https://www.magyarorszagom.hu/makoi-hagyma-hungarikum.html.

Major, Zsuzsanna. 2018. "Dr. Tóth Ferenc: Én igazán nagyon hálás vagyok a sorsnak, hogy makói lettem". *Értékes Ötletek Blog*. Accessed January 20, 2019. https://ertekesotletek.blog.hu/2018/08/20/dr_toth_ferenc_en_igazan_nagyon_halas_vagyok_a_sorsnak_hogy_makoi_lettem.

mako. N.d. "Turisztika". *Makó.hu*. Accessed April 25, 2020. http://mako.hu/turisztika/.

Makó Híradó. 2013. "Megnyílt a makói hagymafesztivál". *Makó Híradó*. September 07, 2013. https://makohirado.hu/2013/09/07/megnyilt-a-makoi-hagymafesztival/.

———. 2018a. "Elhunyt Dr. Tóth Ferenc, a legmakaibb makai". *Makó Híradó*. August 22, 2018. https://makohirado.hu/2018/08/22/elhunyt-dr-toth-ferenc-a-legmakaibb-makai/.

———. 2018b. "Turisztikai szempontból is jelentős a Hagymafesztivál". *Makó Híradó*. September 06, 2018. https://makohirado.hu/2018/09/06/turisztikai-szempontbol-is-jelentos-a-hagymafesztival/.

makotel. N.d. "Hagymatikum fürdő". *Makotel Apartman*. Accessed June 15, 2020. http://www.makotel.hu/.

Matkovich, Ilona. 2014. "'Not only hagyma' – Makó és a fürdőturizmus". *Magyar Narancs*. February 09, 2014. https://magyarnarancs.hu/kismagyarorszag/not-only-hagyma-mako-es-a-furdoturizmus-88669.

Medgyesi, Pál. 2012. "Dr. Batka István munkássága mérnökszemmel". *Marosvidék* 1: 6–12. http://marosvidek.hu/kiadasok/2012/1szam.pdf.

Michalkó, Gábor and Rátz Tamara. 2011. *Egészségturizmus és életminőség Magyarországon. Fejezetek az egészség, az utazás és a jól(l)ét magyarországi összefüggéseiről*. Budapest: MTA Földrajztudományi Kutatóintézet.

MN. 2017. "Milliárdokat ad a kormány a veszteséges makói fürdőre". *Magyar Nemzet*. December 30, 2017. https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/gazdasag-archivum/milliardokat-ad-a-kormany-a-veszteseges-makoi-termalfurdore-3868239/.

MTI/hvg. 2018. "9,5 milliárdot ad a kormány Makónak fürdőbővítésre". *hvg.hu*. January 2, 2018. https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20180102_mako_hagymatikum_uszoda_milliardok_bovitesre.

Origo. 2001. "Levédték a makói vöröshagyma nevét". *Origo*. April 3, 2001. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20010403levedtek.html.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Understanding Narratives for National Security: Proceedings of a Workshop*.Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25119.

Németh, Marietta. 2012. „Hagymafesztiválon bográcsozott a Délvilág stábja". *Delmagyar.hu*. September 09, 2012. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/a-hagymafesztivalon-bogracsozott-a-delvilag-stabja-3019843/.

nepesseg. 2019. "Makó népessége" *Népesség.com*. Accessed June 15, 2020. http://nepesseg.com/csongrad/mako.

Nora, Pierre and Lawrence D. Kritzman, eds. 1996. *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past, Volume 1 – Conflicts and Divisions*. New York: Columbia University Press.

O.N. [Oláh, Nóra]. 2018. "Batka István". *Makó szobrai. Plasztikák – szobrok – muráliák. Makói Kincsestár 4*, edited by Zsolt Urbancsok, 26–27. Makó: Szirbik Miklós Egyesület.

Pap, Ági. 2014. *Az épített örökség és a helyi identitás kapcsolatának cselekvőközpontú földrajzi vizsgálata budapesti mintaterületeken*. PhD Dissertation. http://doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/2243/1/Pap%20%C3%81gi_doktori%20disszert%C3%A1ci%C3%B3.pdf.

Pink, Sarah, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, Jo Tacchi. 2015. *Digital Ethnography. Principles and Practice*. Sage Publications Ltd.

programturizmus. 2020. "Makói szabadidő". *Programturizmus.hu*. Accessed August 16, 2020. https://www.programturizmus.hu/helykategoria-szabadido.mako.html.

Pusztai, Bertalan. 2003. "Megalkotott hagyományok és falusi turizmus". In *Megalkotott hagyományok és falusi turizmus. A pusztamérgesi eset,* edited by Bertalan Pusztai, 9–23. Szeged: SZTE Néprajzi Tanszék.

———. 2007a. "Autentikusság, rivalizálás, 'márkázás'. Megalkotott hagyományok használata a turizmusban". In *Hagyomány és eredetiség. Tabula könyvek 8*, edited by Gábor Wilhelm, 226–240. Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum.

———. 2007b. "'Bajászlé'. Identitás, kanonizáció és márkázás a bajai népünnepélyen. In *Turizmus, fesztiválok és helyi identitás: halászléfőzés Baján,* edited by Bertalan Pusztai and Neill Martin, 7–25. Szeged: SZTE Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék.

Rényi, Pál Dániel. 2017. "8 milliárdot ad a kormány a veszteséges makói termálfürdő fejlesztésére". *444.hu*. December 30, 2017. https://444.hu/2017/12/30/8-milliardot-ad-a-kormany-a-veszteseges-makoi-termalfurdo-fejlesztesere.

Szabó, Imre. 2007. "Nem csitul a fürdővita Makón" *Delmagyar.hu*. August 27, 2007. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/nem-csitul-a-furdovita-makon-2353003/.

———. 2008. "Kérdések záporoztak a makói fürdőfejlesztésről". *Delmagyar.hu*. May 02, 2008. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/kerdesek-zaporoztak-a-makoi-furdofejlesztesrol-3787174/.

———. 2012. "Hagymalovagok adják át a díjakat". *Delmagyar.hu*. September 06, 2012. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/hagymalovagok-adjak-at-a-dijakat-3016435/.

———. 2018. "Makó és környéke krónikása letette a tollat". *Delmagyar.hu*. August 22, 2018. https://www.delmagyar.hu/mako-es-kornyeke/mako-kronikasa-letette-a-tollat-894907/.

szallas. N.d. "Makói Hagymatikum Fürdő – Makó". *Szallas.hu*. Accessed September 14, 2020. https://szallas.hu/programok/makoi-hagymatikum-furdo-mako-p100.

szegedtourism. N.d. "Kirándulások a környéken – Makó". *Szeged*. Accessed June 15, 2020. http://szegedtourism.hu/hu/mako/.

szentgellertborhaz. N.d. "Hagymatikum, a fürdők fürdője". *Szent Gellért Borház és Vendégfogadó*. Accessed June 15, 2020. https://www.szentgellertborhaz.hu/galeria.html.

Szilágyi, Miklós. 2008. "Makó néprajza". *Marosvidék* 3. https://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/telepulesek_ertekei/Mako/marosvidek/marosvidek_2008_3/pages/002_multunk_es_oroksegunk.htm.

Taylor, Jon E. 2008. *A President, a Church and Trails West: Competing Histories in Independence*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Táfelspicc. 2016. "Eredeti csemegék: mit tud a gyulai és a csabai kolbász?" *Origo*. September 6, 2016. https://www.origo.hu/tafelspicc/20160909-eredeti-kolbaszok.html.

termeszetjaro. N.d. "Kelemen Panzió". *Természetjáró.hu*. Accessed August 16, 2020. https://www.termeszetjaro.hu/mobile/hu/lodging/panzio/kelemen-panzio/30376021/.

Thompson, Michelle. 2016. "Competing Histories in Shared Spaces and Intangibility in Heritage Conservation". Student paper. Carleton University. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318510672_Competing_Histories_in_Shared_Spaces_and_Intangibility_in_Heritage_Conservation.

Tóth, Ferenc. 1999. "Makói útikalauz". Accessed March 12, 2020. https://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/telepulesek_ertekei/Mako/pages/magyar/mframe.html

———. 2008a. *Makó néprajza*. *Makó Monográfiája 3*. Makó: Makó Város Önkormányzati Képviselő-testülete.

———. 2008b. "Monográfia született". *Marosvidék* 3. https://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/telepulesek_ertekei/Mako/marosvidek/marosvidek_2008_3/pages/002_multunk_es_oroksegunk.htm.

———. 2014a. "Makói hagymásház sikere Ópusztaszeren". *Makó igézetében. Cikkek, tanulmányok*, 230–232. Makó: self-published.
———. 2014b. "A makói hagymásház az ópusztaszeri emlékparkban". *Makó igézetében. Cikkek, tanulmányok*, 228–230. Makó: self-published.
———. 2014c. "Erdei Ferenc emlékház a makói skanzenben". *Makó igézetében. Cikkek, tanulmányok*, 228–230. Makó: self-published.
———. 2016. *Makói cserepek*. Makó: self-published.
univcoupon. N.d. "SZTE Kedvezmények". *SZTEKEDVEZMÉNYEK*. Accessed August 16, 2020. https://univcoupon.hu/kupon/csobbanj-velunk-makon-makoi-hagymatikum-gyogyfurdo-7179?utm_news=csobbanj-velunk-makon-makoi-hagymatikum-gyogyfurdo-7179.
USC Libraries. 2020. "Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper". *USC Libraries: Research Guide*. Last modified August 6, 2020. https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide.

YEAR OF THE SNAKE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH URBAN LEGEND OF THE VISTULA PYTHON

Mateusz Napiórkowski
(Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)

Abstract: *Stories about wild and domesticated animals are among the most popular categories of urban legends. In modern folklore, they appear mysteriously, often following strange or scary happenings, like a quite recent tale, created in 2018, when the molted skin of a large snake (later identified as an Indian python) was found near the banks of the Vistula River in the suburbs of Warsaw. Owing to the extensive media coverage, the news spread quickly throughout Poland. For obvious reasons, people wondered where the snake was hiding. Several eyewitnesses, who could see the predator (or something that resembled it), wanted to give an account. Such animals then "disappear" forever but leave their mark on pop culture. The snake myth thus gave rise to numerous stand-up comedy acts, amateur music videos, and a comic book. This study analyses a number of such examples, obtained from the Internet. It also focuses on the mechanisms of the formation of urban legends, and their relation to fake news. One of the main questions of the article is therefore: why do these kinds of stories gain such wide popularity? Furthermore, the aim of the study is to analyse the reactions of Internet users to the news about the python. The topic was commented on by people with different world and political views, so it is worth considering whether the message about the python could play an important role in the integration of Polish society, or as a just another platform for the exchange of thoughts.*

Keywords: *urban legends, modern folklore, Polish culture, Internet studies, fake news*

Introduction

In the summer of 2018 the Polish media reported the discovery of the skin of an Indian python near Warsaw (Dachnij 2018). The news spread quickly, becoming a nationwide sensation because the media ceaselessly fed people shocking details (Bukłaha 2018). However, for observers of social life it was clear that much of the information was entirely unreliable. In addition, there were certain similarities in this case with the stories of another exotic animal running wild in Poland, namely the puma. Rumours about this wild cat roaming freely through Polish villages are revived every year during the holiday season (see Kozicki 2019). Furthermore, contemporary folklorists are thoroughly familiar with the motif referred to as "Big Cats Running Wild", narratives about large exotic predators living outside their natural habitats. Popular almost all over the world, they can be found in many collections of so-called "urban legends" – according to Jan Harold Brunvand's definition, these are "apocryphal contemporary stories, told as true but incorporating traditional motifs, and usually attributed to a friend of a friend (FOAF)" (Brunvand 2012, 60–61). The case of the Vistula python seems to be just another story of this kind.[1] Since the topic is quite recent, it has not been mentioned in any study on urban legends. However, it has become an exceptional inspiration for many cultural texts, such as memes, comic books, and even stand-up comedy acts.

This paper therefore focuses on verbal forms of contemporary folklore, such as urban legends, which appeared in the comments of Internet users, and it examines the sources of such folklore myths from which the public derives information that has little or no credibility. Moreover, in view of the massive expansion of online news media, it is impossible to also ignore the problem of fake news, which contributes to misinformation, disinformation, or mal-information (Marwick 2018, 479). News from tabloids will be analysed in particular – this type of media, focused on a sensational message, provides a space where unconfirmed rumours circulate freely and reach a large audience. Although tabloids are generally believed to be a low-quality source of information, they are important for folklorists when studying the spreading of fictitious messages.

Furthermore, my analysis of the Vistula python case is aimed at learning about the various types of responses of contemporary Poles to python reports.

[1] The adjective "Vistula" came from the fact that the snake was found near the banks of the Vistula River.

In this way, the article also analyses active civic participation in an online public space. The purpose of the study is therefore to prove that the media chaos surrounding this topic led to the trivialization of the snake issue by provoking the previously mentioned diverse civic and artistic responses. Such projects also provided an excellent opportunity for the cooperation of people of different ages, because the subject intrigued both adults and children. Contemporary urban legends, as messages of intersocial folklore (Łuczeczko 2007, 97), can therefore be treated as an important area for research on social integration and citizen cultural engagement in current affairs. Although news media, and local news websites in particular, treated the issue with due seriousness, recommending that people not leave their houses (Wyborcza.pl 2018), public comments ranged from very serious to humorous and sarcastic (see comment section in Orszulak 2018a). The disrespectful attitude of society to the subject could be seen, among other places, in numerous pop-culture messages, which will also be presented in this article.

The non-participant online observation that I have been involved in since 2018 confirmed that web users not only observed but also created and spread python rumours and memes (Kozinets 2012, 14). Although the snake topic gained huge popularity on the Internet, it existed outside this environment as well. Moreover, the research on online communities can lead to conclusions that are useful for describing society in a broader cultural context, i.e., a community in general (Kozinets 2012, 49). This is especially relevant now, when our consumer needs are largely satisfied by the Internet. It should be emphasized that Internet users are primarily consumers of content available on Internet websites – therefore, under the influence of their preferences, customized advertisements appear in their computers. As the Vistula python becomes popular, it is not surprising to see advertisements referencing it. This issue will be clearly visible in the examples of real-time marketing in this article.

The choice of a non-participant online observation was dictated by the following conditions – the main object of research is the Internet community, which often becomes distrustful when the subject of the analysis is revealed to them. In addition, the article also analyses news from official portals. The choice of the Internet community was due to the fact that it is on the Internet that a large amount of data about the Vistula python could be effectively obtained in a short time. In order to find specific materials, I used the Google search engine, an extremely useful, although sometimes insufficient, tool. For that reason, while exploring texts on social networks such as Facebook or Instagram,

I used internal search engines, which allow the researcher to reach materials not always easily accessible from the level of the Google search. I also relied on the statistics produced by Polish media monitoring services and on articles from websites which gathered information about the python (for example in the form of memes: TOB 2018). The online media observation, which provides the basis for this article, has been conducted from the moment the Vistula python appeared in the network, in July 2018, and up to February 2020. Over the past year, however, official reports about the Vistula python have been extremely rare. Nonetheless, before investigating the python phenomenon and analysing a range of examples from the Internet, I first outline the mechanisms of the emergence and spread of contemporary folk tales, without which the Vistula python story would not exist.

Contemporary Folk Tales and Their Relation to Oral Tradition

Urban legends are contemporary stories told as true and attributed to a FOAF mechanism (Brunvand 2012, 60–61). Sometimes they are also called urban myths – the prefix "urban" appears here to distinguish them from the genre of traditional folklore, i.e. from myths whose action, unlike in urban legends, are set in the distant past, and are not based on actual events, and in which the presented world appears fantastic (Kosowska 1985, 75). On the other hand, urban myths are related to current, sensational events. However, in terms of functionality and structure, these dynamic and recurring contemporary narratives are similar to old folk tales derived from traditional folklore. Urban legends are therefore characterized by high variance and formulability, especially oral ones, which nowadays complement the stories circulating on the Internet (Hajduk-Nijakowska 2012, 10). The topics of urban legends are extremely diverse: from current events to pop culture themes borrowed from literature, films, and comic books. Moreover, urban legends often carry some specific functional features: they can be used for entertainment (telling them is then a form of passing time) or become a tool for educating the society (legends with a moral). Legends may also serve political and propaganda goals: the Colorado potato beetle from 1950 is a classic Polish example (PKF 1950).

Since legends appear suddenly and circulate freely, it is usually quite difficult to determine their origin. They evolve over time, making any verification impossible. In addition, their transmission is worthy of attention. In fact, it may be difficult to distinguish an urban legend from a simple rumour because they

are reproduced in a similar way, although the latter on a smaller scale (Jęczeń 2010, 155). For this reason, folklorists started referring to urban legends as "macrogossip" (Czubala 2014, 22).

The difference between this genre and other folk tales is the use of the "friend of a friend" or FOAF mechanism. The acronym of the "friend of a friend" phrase was proposed in the late 1970s by the English journalist and writer Rodney Dale (Dale 1978, 37). Dale pointed out that this formula is repeated in some of the contemporary narratives: people telling the story emphasize that they heard it from a friend, that they read about it somewhere, or that it has happened to "a friend of a friend" (Czubala 2014, 158). In this way the anonymity of the source of information (typical of folklore storytelling) is preserved. The teller disclaims responsibility, the legend circulates, and as the outline is retold, new details are added to refresh the storyline. This type of a "deaf phone" game eventually weakens the narrative and the legend disappears, only to reappear some time later (Czubala 2005, 7).

Similar folklore characteristics, such as FOAF and deaf phone, or their various types of functionality, can also be found in the narratives discussed in this article. A brief description of the urban legend phenomenon and the outlining of the mechanisms of its spread presented in this part of the article will be helpful in the study of the Vistula python phenomenon, which is the main subject of analysis in this paper. However, before I move on to the analysis of the snake, the narrative about the Polish puma living in the wild is also worth mentioning – it is a very similar thread, both in terms of official media coverage and public reaction.

The Role of the Media in Shaping "The Polish Puma" Story

One of the most popular examples of the "Big Cats Running Wild" theme is the story of the Surrey puma (Brunvand 2012, 211). This legend, known since the 1960s, enjoys unflagging popularity in the United Kingdom (Brunvand 2012, 61). According to witnesses, the beast appears suddenly in rather unfortunate places. There are many more similar accounts of other animal sightings, for instance of alligators in the New York sewers (see Brunvand 2012, 15). This particular type of urban legends is famous all over the world, and some of them can be compared to so-called migratory legends (Simpson and Roud 2000). A migratory legend is a "legend which is found repeatedly at different places, having the same plot in every case but with place names and/or topographical

details tailored to fit the individual site" (for more about migratory legends, see Simpson and Roud 2000, 252). Over time, they get tied to the local context (e.g., proper names and elements of culture are added) but this does not change the fact that they are of international recognition.

Although a puma roaming across Europe is a highly unusual sight, some reports may be based on facts. Problems with determining the source of information do not necessarily indicate the fictitious nature of the information. However, when the animal is seen in many different places at the same time (a macro-scale case), one may have reasonable suspicion that the majority of the accounts are not true.[2] In this context, the contribution of the media that publicize such events is indisputable. When public opinion is confronted with sensational news, the recommended course of action is to seek reliable sources. However, finding any trustworthy ones seems difficult nowadays, especially on the Internet. By publishing unverified messages, news websites add to the confusion instead of clearing it up. Quoting anonymous specialists (M.C. 2018) and referring to the accounts of mysterious eyewitnesses (Rakosz 2018) is extremely common. The existence of wild animals is "confirmed" by private videos and photographs, but these are usually blurry and unfocused. The captured shapes may well be of a puma or a large domestic cat (NTO.pl 2009). Nevertheless, stories about pumas or pythons are plausible because keeping exotic animals has become quite popular in Poland (Cieśla 2013). It sometimes happens that novice breeders cannot cope with the maintenance of demanding animals and abandon them (Portal 24jgora.pl 2017). This fact should be taken into account when trying to verify an animal legend.

The source-credibility problem is also related to the phenomenon of so-called fake news – unverified information intended to mislead the recipient (Palczewski 2018, 28). These false rumours contribute significantly to the popularization of legends about the puma or python. They include information presented in the mainstream media, messages shared in tabloids and local media, and satirical comments on current events (Marwick 2018, 475–476). Researchers indicate that fake news stories are generally created to intentionally spread lies or disinformation (Marwick 2018, 478), thus contributing to the formation of narratives that over time transform into urban legends. This phenomenon is strictly connected with online media, which face enormous time

[2] Based on the information collected in 2009, Filip Graliński examined the puma's locations and marked them on a map (Graliński 2009).

pressure in terms of publishing news (Frank 2015, 328). An explanation of the mechanism behind the transformation of fictional news into legends can be found in Bill Ellis's article "Fake News in the Contemporary Legend Dynamic": "If the story is [...] passed on by others who find it credible, even when they doubt its truth, it becomes a type of legend. Thus, fake news becomes part of a cultural debate process, a claim that cannot be confirmed based on secure standards of evidence. In other words, it becomes a form of legendry" (Ellis 2018, 401). It is difficult to determine whether python narratives were created on the basis of fake news, since the animal was never found, as I explain later in this article. In the meantime, many variants have begun to appear, and moreover, the threat of the exotic animal running freely in Poland qualifies these narratives as urban legends.

When it comes to official news, many websites compete for readers' attention – in such circumstances fact-checking is minimal (Himma-Kadakas 2017, 29). As a consequence, the Web is flooded with unverified information, which is not necessarily aimed at misleading the reader (Marwick 2018, 478). However, misinformation does not come only from official media sources. Research on Internet user behaviour has shown that the credibility of news published on social media depends on who recommends or shares it (Marwick 2018, 504). Without knowing the source of the news, people can unknowingly pass on false information. This is especially evident with news about sensational and controversial events. Alice E. Marwick acknowledges these characteristics and describes fake news as follows:

> "Fake news" content is clickbait. The goal of the fake news producer is to have as many people spread their content as possible. The easiest way to do that is to find a news item that will be shared by people of different political proclivities. This can be a sensational claim about vaccinations or conspiracies or animals – topics that appeal across party lines – or it can be a story that includes both conservative and liberal points of view (Marwick 2018, 502).

It should be emphasized that readers form some preliminary assumptions about the news even before reading it (Frank 2018, 386). Headlines that attract the attention of readers with their unusual and sensational information play an important role here. The emotionality of the message begins to dominate over the issue of the credibility of the content – interestingly, not only in the case of tabloids. Research shows that big news services (see TVN Warszawa 2018)

are associated with what is referred to as "presumption of legitimacy": readers devotedly believe in the reliability of the source of information (Frank 2018, 386). However, this is frequently a misperception.[3] In addition, readers' faith in the credibility of the online media reflects their previous faith in the credibility of newspapers and television (Himma-Kadakas 2017, 29). Although it is recommended that Internet users should carefully investigate the sources and, if possible, compare reports from various websites, fake news has become a major threat to public trust in the media. However, this tendency seems impossible to eliminate, considering the diversity of the Internet environment (Palczewski 2018, 28). After all, the spread of fake news depends largely on Internet users, and particularly on how important a given issue is to them (Marwick 2018, 487).

The activity of Web users in transmitting unverified information about the wild puma is also notable, although on a slightly smaller scale. Fake reports about this animal are popular in Poland and often recur. The alleged sightings of the cat were reported in 2009, 2011 (Strauchmann 2011), and 2015 (mab/mk 2015). According to several reports, in 2009 as many as five pumas were spotted in different places. The cats, two of which travelled from the Czech Republic to Poland, were believed to have escaped from a zoo or an illegal breeding farm in the Czech Republic. Naturally, there was a lot of Czech media attention on this news as well (Štůsek 2009).

The topic returned in 2011: the media reported sightings of a big cat that supposedly travelled from Poland to the Czech Republic. The headlines read: "Sensational news! Puma runs wild in South Moravia. Slovak and Czech media have already reported three sightings of an American puma in South Moravia. The director of the Opole Zoo believes that the cat could be their property!" (Strauchmann 2011). The suggestions that Poland had its own puma were obviously absurd. It should be noted, however, that this type of news usually appears just before or during the summer season – that is, when journalists lack attractive topics to write or talk about. Sadly, fake news stories are rarely corrected, and a few exceptions (e.g., when the media [TVN24 2009] mentioned that the puma seen in Silesia Province turned out to be an ordinary cat) seem to prove the rule. These types of retractions, however, were rare in the case of the python.

[3] For example, *Washington Post* and *New York Times* journalists can also fabricate news (Frank 2018, 381).

"Python Goes Hunting!" Press Reports About the Vistula Python

The first information about the Vistula python was released at the beginning of July 2018. An over five-meter-long exuviae of an Indian python was found on the banks of the Vistula River in the town of Gassy, near Warsaw.[4] The first press articles contained photographs of several employees of an animal rescue foundation holding the snake skin (Konieczek 2018). After the discovery of the reptile traces, the police and other emergency services arrived at the site, and the river patrols started searching the area. The press warned people to be cautious and keep away from the restricted zone until the case was resolved (Konieczek 2018). The news spread quickly, becoming a nationwide sensation. News websites published maps and infographics showing the area of python activity in an attempt to answer the question about its whereabouts (see Figure 1). However, most reports, published mainly on Polish websites associated with the tabloid press, such as *Super Express* (Super Express 2020) and *Fakt* (Fakt 2020), were based on pure speculation and repeated the same information. That is a common mechanism of the spread of fake news – under time pressures, many websites publish unverified information based solely on dubious evidence.

These articles seemed to have a great potential to transform into forms similar to urban legends. The sensational accounts influenced public opinion and led to the creation of numerous rumours. Soon almost all press publications came from nonexperts. That was partly connected with the fact that Polish celebrities, including the famous clairvoyant Krzysztof Jackowski, were often involved in the search. In the article "Krzysztof Jackowski Shows Us Where the Python Hides" on the *rmf.fm* tabloid website, one could read:

> Krzysztof Jackowski had a vision in which there was a six-meter python, the one which had caused so much panic among residents of Mazovian towns on the Vistula River. Where is the reptile hiding according to the clairvoyant? [...] According to the clairvoyant [...] the python has not travelled far. The man indicated a small beach by the Vistula near the village of Dębina [18 km north of Warsaw] as the whereabouts of the reptile terrorizing the neighbourhood (Staroń 2018).

[4] As a side note, it is worth adding that the Vistula python was mentioned in the entry about the town of Gassy in the Polish version of Wikipedia (Wikipedia 2020).

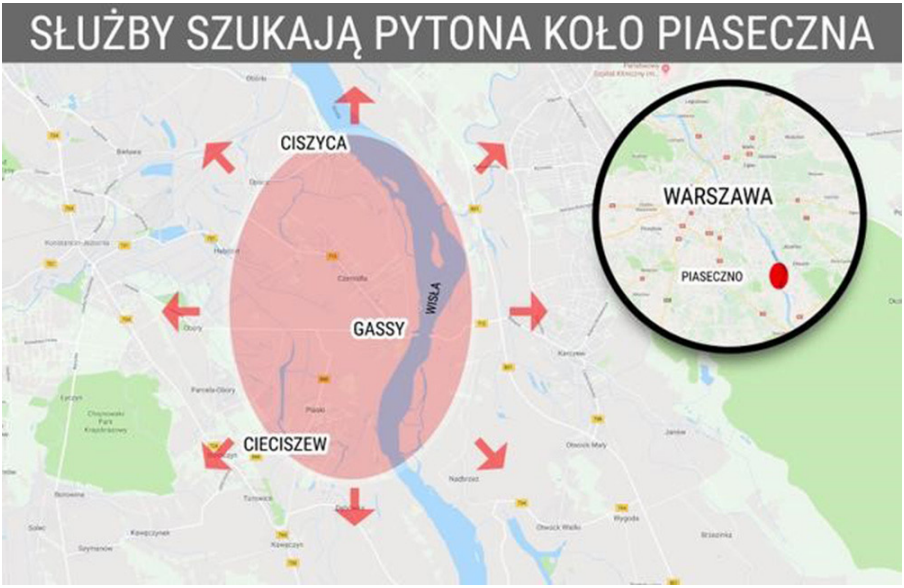

Figure 1. "The services are looking for a python near Piaseczno" – infographics showing the area of the snake search (Orszulak 2018a).

Another Polish celebrity, detective Krzysztof Rutkowski, also participated in the snake hunt (Solecka 2018). Gossip websites like *pudelek.pl* used the snake to gossip about showbiz personalities. People could learn that famous Polish singer Maryla Rodowicz was more worried about her cats than about her own life: "Maryla Rodowicz is not afraid of the python: 'I will eat the python before it eats me'" (Pudelek 2018). These types of celebrity responses to the news about the python were featured frequently in the news media. Some of these articles showed the supposedly bold attitudes of celebrities, while others presented a feeling of fear and uncertainty, but sensationalism dominated all of them. Nevertheless, these reports did not leave the reader indifferent to their content – most of the comments on this type of news were critical, as it turns out from my analysis of Internet users' responses in the next section of this article.

Soon, in the news media there were suggestions that the snake could already be very far from the place where its skin was found. Less than two weeks after the incident, the Toruń information website *ototoruń.pl* (the direct distance between Warsaw and Toruń is approximately 190 kilometres) published an account of a terrified resident:

> I was walking across the bridge when I saw a snake in the river!!!! THIS IS NOT A JOKE!!!! I called 112 [the emergency number] and they gave me the Toruń Crisis Management Centre phone number. [...] Please share! The snake was huge... Someone should take it seriously and do something about it! (TUB 2018).

Then when the whole nation was looking for the Vistula python, another snake went missing in the city of Bydgoszcz. The two-metre-long boa constrictor escaped from the breeding farm (confirmed information) but was soon captured (HW 2018). The power of gossip was so great and the relationship between the two events so obvious, that I received a message from a friend living in Bydgoszcz that the Vistula python was found in his hometown. In fact, the probability of encountering an exotic snake on Polish streets is very low, so these two facts were combined to make one story. This explains how event mixing leads to the emergence of subsequent variants of the urban legend; in a similar way, based on associations and randomness, numerous versions of the Polish puma stories were born (Graliński 2009).

Some time later, the news services reported on the aggressive behaviour of the python: according to *warszawawpigułce.pl*, an angler from Otwock saw something that resembled a snake attacking a beaver (Warszawawpigułce 2018a). The animal was also believed to have attacked a dog. The following article headline shocked the public: "The Vistula Python Ate a Dog! The Beast is Still at Large. Hunters Are at the Site" (Warszawawpigułce 2018b). Owing to the fact that some articles were based on foreign reports, the python issue was promoted to the international rank:

> The entire world is looking for the Vistula python. The issue is reported even in the Chinese media! [...] The whole world is interested in the fate of this dangerous animal living in the largest Polish river. The Vistula python has been mentioned by the British, German, and even Chinese media (AP 2018).[5]

The python's origin was also discussed. It was speculated that the animal escaped from an erotic photo session in Warsaw (Chełmiński 2018), but the photographer denied it (Patyk 2018a). At the same time a paraglider saw some men throwing a large snake into the Vistula River; as it later turned out, they

[5] The text refers to both the media of Polish communities living abroad and big foreign newspapers, e.g. *Der Spiegel* and the *Daily Telegraph* (AP 2018).

were the same people who worked on the set of the aforementioned session (BF 2018).

Initially, the need to look for the snake was not questioned. Over time, however, some, including wild animal experts, began to wonder whether the python really existed. Several videos on YouTube refuted these rumours, like, such as one in which some veterinary doctors arrived at the site where the exuviae had been found (Zwierzętomania 2018). Unlike the news reports on many websites, these films were usually very professional and reliable, and they were aimed at criticising the media trend of spreading panic. In addition, they provided basic information about the python's diet (small mammals, not humans), argued that the snake could not travel from Warsaw to Toruń, and warned that it was the animal that was actually in danger. In one video, a real Indian python was released into the rushes and tracked for some time (Plucik 2018). In this way, the myths presented in the media were debunked. Moreover, there were also voices suggesting that the skin could have been planted by the snake owner as a joke (TVN Warszawa 2018). It should be noted, however, that generally sensation prevailed over reason in media, hence this type of reliable material was not used by the mainstream services.

Furthermore, the reaction of animal rights activists deserve special attention. Although they did not underestimate the need for a snake hunt, they were generally more interested in people's attitudes on the topic. For example, in the intensely titled article "Urgent: Deadly Dangerous People Are a Threat to the Python", Karolina Kuszlewicz discusses the issue of the inhumane treatment of exotic animals and the fashion of keeping them in entirely inappropriate conditions (Kuszlewicz 2018). These opinions contrasted the publicized comments, as they usually added an informative dimension, as well as an emphatic one.

The final piece of news about the python was broadcast at the end of September 2018. It was assumed that the snake had died because of low temperatures (Dolak 2018). Neither the animal nor its owner was ever found, and the topic, abandoned by the media, was quickly forgotten. It did not reappear the next summer, although it must be remembered that the puma theme does not recur every year either, at least not as a nationwide sensation. In 2019 the Vistula python was only mentioned in an article which summarized all previous studies, but which did not provide any new information (Niedźwiecki 2019). It is now too early to say whether this topic was just a single-season sensation. Further observations are needed to clarify the issue. What is certain is that the number of forums providing information about the snake is astonishing.

However, this is the nature of the so-called "silly season", a period (such as late summer) when the mass media often focus on trivial or frivolous matters for lack of major news stories.

It is also worth noting that in their comments on the snake, many Internet users recalled a similar event from the 1980s, with a fantastic creature called Paskuda, a Polish cryptid similar to Nessie, living in Lake Zegrze near Warsaw. Lake monster reports recurred for several years. According to eyewitnesses, Paskuda fed on contaminated water, so soon after the construction of a nearby sewage treatment plant, the topic was abandoned. Later, the truth finally came to light: Paskuda, so frequently mentioned in *Summer with the Radio* broadcasts (especially in 1982), had been invented by the journalists of the Polskie Radio Program I (Polish Radio Channel 1) (Mielnik 2018). Moreover, it was created primarily for marketing reasons. The purpose was to encourage listeners to frequently listen to Polish Radio. There were no other hidden intentions behind Paskuda. However, this hoax indicates that media can have a powerful impact on the thinking and behaviour of citizens. It is particularly interesting that some Internet users compare the Vistula python topic to the monster created by Polish Radio – such statements clearly indicate how critical some Poles are about the snake issue, and also how sceptical they are of the media.

Internet Users' Responses to Media Reports of the Python

Apart from journalists, Internet users also wrote at length about the snake. Their opinions can be found below articles on news websites and in social media. Since it would be difficult to analyse all these entries, I focus only on select examples.

This material can be classified into four categories. The first category includes the comments of Internet users who were mostly interested in the python's whereabouts. The majority started with the FOAF formula, which leads to the claim that these are legendary narratives, for example: "A friend says that he saw something big in the Kępa Potocka canal a few weeks ago. But how could he see this in the dark?" (Internet user nicknamed Żoliborz-Bielany; Patyk 2018b). The python sighting in Toruń was also reported: "Last night several people on the Toruń riverbank saw a snake. It was not a native species, it was huge and was swimming against the current" (Internet user nicknamed Ola, TOB 2018). This type of statement usually complemented official information.

The second category of the comments discussed the dangers associated with the python running wild. These entries were always filled with intense emotions: "This python killed someone's dog!!! And then it attacked another animal in the forest!!! The psycho owner of this snake will pay for that" (an anonymous Internet user, Pudelek 2018). They were also dominated by the frustration caused by the sluggish response of emergency services:

> To be fucking honest, they should organise bigger search teams and look for that python. If it is already in Toruń, then they should increase the search area. People are afraid to leave their houses. Any noise scares them. I have a son and I'm afraid to let him play outside [...]. What kind of rescue teams are they if they cannot trace this stupid beast? (an Internet user nicknamed Paulina, RED RMF 2018).

Sometimes the comments contained drastic descriptions and associated the python with the mysterious disappearances of people. For example: "Then a child or an adult will disappear without a trace, and after a few months they will find a half-digested body in the stomach of the snake [...]. That's horrible" (an Internet user nicknamed Makabryczny, Orszulak 2018b). People were also frightened at the very thought of the snake staying in Poland forever:

> The person who bought the snake and released it should be publicly whipped and severely punished. This is not funny. People here are not used to this like in other countries [...]. We have problems with ticks here in Poland. Do we need another one? Do we want to look around at every step for a snake, a venomous spider, etc.? (an Internet user nicknamed Przyroda (Nature), Orszulak 2018b).

These examples show how some of the Internet users write comments to express their fear of the snake. One of the main purposes of such statements, therefore, is to defuse anxiety (i.e., they fulfil an emotional function).

In the third category, some statements showed concern about the python and attention to animal rights. Similarly to animal experts, some Internet users pointed out that the Indian python would not survive long in the Polish climate, that it was harmless and in danger from humans: "From what I've heard in the news, you are going to kill it – what monsters are you??? The animal is not guilty! You can sedate it and take it to the zoo. Be humans, not monsters!!!" (an anonymous Internet user, Orszulak 2018a). Many comments touched upon people's responsibility for the python. One of the entries reads: "Hey, what are

you afraid of? This animal is harmless. A poor, scared animal that needs help, and all you do is panic" (an Internet user nicknamed fanśmierci9; Dziennik.pl 2018). However, the author's nickname (fanśmierci9, i.e., "fanofdeath9") may indicate irony; therefore the comment should not be fully trusted. This example shows that in addition to the informative function, such opinions may be created for entertainment purposes.

In the fourth and final category, there were sarcastic comments to the python story, with both extremely malicious and genuinely funny statements among them:

> Most certainly Russia started a hybrid war after being eliminated from the World Cup. First, Indian python troops set off. They are moving on at night towards the decision-making centres of the country. Such a python can be a threat not only for fishermen, but also for tank crews because it can get inside tanks through the gun (Internet user, Do Rzeczy 2018).

The phenomenon can also be turned into a first-person narrative, which requires additional creativity of the author:

> Hello people. It's me, the Python. My name is Jacek and I want to apologize for frightening the good people of this beautiful country and its cities. I've decided to run away from home, getting supplies in Toruń, and now I am going to my beloved girlfriend. Her name is Nessy, she lives in Scotland. Take care, Poles (an Internet user nicknamed Python Jacek from Wisła, Dziennik.pl 2018).

In some of the comments from the fourth category, the snake also emerged in political references and critical remarks to the government. In the Polish language the word "snake" is commonly associated with negative qualities and is therefore used to describe bad and deceitful people: "And I came across a real snake pit [pol. *kłębowisko żmij*] in the very centre of Warsaw on Wiejska Street" (an Internet user nicknamed Mnia, Patyk 2018b).[6]

Summing up, the comments of Internet users are varied. Most of them were informative, although some also passed for entertainment purposes, and some fulfilled the function of an emotional release. Although many of them made political references, they should not be treated as a separate category.

[6] Sessions of the Polish Parliament and Senate take place in the building on Wiejska Street.

Despite the fact that the comments on the Vistula python can be considered as a democratic discussion in the public sphere, the references to politics, with few exceptions, were too superficial and general, and usually showed a negative attitude to any kind of authority. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the first official news about the python was full of emotions and could scare Internet users. However, the topic quickly found its way into the tabloids – apart from the element of sensationalism and inducing fear, texts included some information about the lives of celebrities at the same time, and this peculiar mixing made the information move towards the grotesque and absurd. Therefore, over time, the comments of Internet users began to express doubts, sometimes even empathic statements towards the animal – ones in which the python's defencelessness was emphasized. Ultimately, the subject was reduced to a joke, and thus the snake problem was trivialized.

One important feature was that Internet users' comments rarely referred to press articles directly. More often they expressed opinions and listed sightings of the Vistula python. Generally they were usually quite concise, although there were exceptions, like some comments presented in this section. Only a few bore a similarity to the style of urban legends, for example, by using the FOAF mechanism. It should be remembered, however, that this genre is still evolving, adapting to the rules of the online environment (Czubala 2014, 7). The example of the Vistula python indicates that in the online environment, these types of motifs are gaining a new performative dimension and means of expression that cannot be found in the oral tradition, like exchanges between people from different places and the non-simultaneous creating and receiving of content. It is recommended that further analyses should focus on these issues and evaluate how they affect the lifespan of a particular narrative over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, such diverse comments of Internet users about the python would be impossible if not for the numerous media articles under which the free exchange of ideas and information was possible. "No matter what you write, it is important that you write" – this unwritten social media rule applies to the news as well. Numerous, often contradictory reports on the whereabouts of the python, as well as grotesque information about the struggle of Polish celebrities with a dangerous animal, eventually led to the entire topic being ridiculed, introducing a category of sarcastic and humorous comments. This tendency, in which entertaining content was created, was also visible in the cultural texts based on python narratives, which I analyse in the next section.

The Vistula Python in Polish Pop Culture

The analysed case seems unique not only because it provoked huge amounts of press reactions. The python quickly became the subject of online artistic projects, including ones that were humorous and often critical of various social phenomena. Obviously, that would not have been possible without the Internet, which accelerated and extended their spread. According to the Polish monitoring media service Press-Service (Press Service 2018a), the total number of materials concerning the Vistula python found on the Internet from July 7 to July 16, 2018 was over 22,000 (see Figure 2). Unfortunately, comparing these data to other similar cases (e.g., Internet puma reports in 2015) is impossible, as there are no relevant statistics. Nevertheless, the number is impressive. The highest number of materials, almost 16,000, were shared on Facebook. Twitter came in second with 2128 results, followed by YouTube (348), Instagram (343), Wykop (101),[7] and then various blogs and forums (47). The Press Service infographic also included mentions on other websites (1829), radio and television texts (1209), and press reports (149).

Figure 2. "Python from the Vistula" – infographic showing the number of all publications about the snake (Press Service 2018b).

[7] Wykop.pl is a popular Polish news website.

Without a doubt, the most popular forms of expressing opinions about the hysteria associated with the python were Internet memes, which humorously portrayed the attempts to capture the snake and focused on the inefficiency of search services and tracking dogs (see Figure 3). The animal was also present in political memes; in 2018 the following phrase was popular in Poland: "How can I do that [various actions added to the meme] when the Polish constitution is being broken?" This text referred to the slogans of the political opposition to the constitutional violations of the Polish right-wing government – a constitutional court crisis began in 2015 and lasted long after. While the majority of these images featured well-known personalities, actors, athletes, and politicians, some showed the Vistula python, which could not "crawl" peacefully, apparently due to the Polish constitution being broken (see Figure 4). In this way, a political problem which had been circulating in the news media for a long time was trivialized and reduced to humorous memes.

Another category of memes includes sexual innuendo references, in which the snake was compared to a penis. Pictures of the so-called "Janusz Nosacz", a long-nosed monkey (lat. *Nasalis larvatus*) who is often referred to as the carrier of the flaws of Polish society, were used in this context. In one particular meme (see Figure 5), a monkey – a symbolic image of a Pole (Kurdyła 2020) – compares its penis to the python. This is an example that trivializes the case of the python, turning it into a playful jest.

Figure 3. "'The tracking dog confirmed the presence of the python. There are new traces'. 'Yes, I confirm'" – an example of a humorous internet meme (Wykop 2018).

Figure 4. "How am I to crawl calmly when the constitution is being broken in Poland?" – a meme on political issues (Express Bydgoski 2018).

Figure 5. "'A snake has escaped near Warsaw'. 'I did not fasten the fly, so it ran away'" – meme as an unrefined joke (Besty 2018).

Figure 6. A photomontage showing Detective Rutkowski and the snake (Red 2018).

In this context, memes related to the abovementioned Krzysztof Rutkowski seem particularly attractive. Media reports that featured photographs of the detective searching for the snake were quickly adapted by Internet users. On his Instagram profile, the detective himself shared a picture in which the python was hanging from his neck (see Figure 6). An obvious photo montage, it was funny enough for the celebrity to show it to his fans and followers. Since there was a plethora of concepts associating the snake with the famous detective, one of the news websites listed the most interesting ones (TOB 2018).

The huge popularity of the Vistula python ensured its entry into the world of advertising. Real-time marketing, a current trend on the Internet, is used by many companies for product promotion (Maddala 2017). Therefore the python appeared in supposedly humorous commercials of plastic pipes, which were supposed to serve as cases for a snake (see Figure 7), then in ads for pickled cucumbers because they looked just like a snake (see Figure 8). A python also appeared as the mascot of a well-known furniture company (Pinkbesyja 2018).

Figure 7. "Imet recommends: a six-meter-long python case" – advertising in real-time marketing (Imet 2018).

Figure 8. "We got him" – another example of real-time marketing (Krakus 2018).

Figure 9. "Vistula python – eat a python before it eats you" – Python in the form of a roll (Picuki 2018).

The python was also used to promote commercial services: one of Warsaw's restaurants has put it in their menu (Natkabistro 2018). One of the escape rooms created a picture informing that in their room the python would be found within one hour (Escape Room 2018), a language school shared graphics to teach the currently popular word "python" (EDGARD jezykiobce.pl 2018), and even a beauty salon referred to a python encouraging women to paint their nails the colours of the snake (We Love Nails 2018). More often, however, this seemed forced and unnatural; the companies simply wanted to seize the opportunity to gain some recognition. Nevertheless, there were also ingenious references among them: the owner of the Wanda bakery in Otwock started selling snake-shaped braided yeast buns, advertised with the following slogan: "Eat the python before it eats you" (see Figure 9). The entrepreneur said in an interview: "Especially children like these buns. Grandparents buy them for their grandchildren. We are surprised by the social media interest" (Śmigiel 2018). As can be seen, after the snake story had been exploited to the fullest extent, it returned as a casual and amusing element attracting customer attention.

However, humour did not appear only in commercial advertisements. Articles published on the popular ASZdziennik.pl website had a similarly lighthearted tone. I did not intend to put this example among the press materials, because ASZdziennik primarily has an entertainment function, not an informational one – the website is the equivalent of the American satirical service theonion.com. ASZdziennik, famous for its sarcastic fake news, also brought up the snake topic. It is worth noting that 2018 was another year of unrest caused by the European migration crisis, so the python also appeared in this context. One of the headlines related to the migration crisis read: "Indian python stopped by the police near the Vistula. Its blood alcohol content was a whooping 4.7%. The animal insulted the policemen and some refugees" (ASZdziennik 2018). These pieces of information are considered by some researchers as a fake news, though created with the intent to amuse (Frank 2018, 379). Readers, misinterpreting the ironic statements, share them with their friends (Brodie 2018, 454). However, the reputation of ASZdziennik seems so well established in Poland that hopefully the online community recognizes its satirical attitude to reality.

Amateur films about the snake were also very popular. The Internet was flooded with videos about the snake hunt, including materials prepared by Urbex History, a group of explorers who visit mysterious and abandoned places (Urbex History 2018). Most frequently, however, the explorers were not very well equipped, and they made up for the lack of high-quality cameras with exaggerated acting and heavy editing (Dodo 2018). Such pilgrimages to places known from news reports associated with urban legends are called legend-tripping (Kinsella 2011, 28). They are aimed at verifying the accounts, which commonly abound in supernatural elements. Although no variants of the python story based on supernatural phenomena were produced, these journeys progressed according to a similar scheme: the search team visited the place mentioned in the legend and tried to reconstruct the circumstances of the actual event. In addition, a number of humorous podcasts and comedy acts revolving around the python motif can also be found on YouTube (see Cerstve Zarty 2018; Dwóch Typów 2018).

One of the most delightful python-inspired video films is *Snake Busters* (Snake Busters 2018). The adaptation of the popular theme song for the 1984 movie *Ghostbusters* was made by some children and the father of one of them. This shows that the topic of an urban legend can promote cooperation between generations: the father recorded the film in which the children played the busters of the snake. Without intergenerational dialogue, such a film would probably

never have been created. *Snake Busters* is an extremely interesting case because through co-creation and cooperation, both adults and children can comment on the python tale (and have a good time). Intergenerational cooperation is visible here in the division of responsibilities – the father deals with technical and logistic issues, while the children contribute their creative input. Popular culture also plays a very important role here – although only the father can remember the release of *Ghost Busters* in the 1980s, this movie has become a permanent part of the pop culture canon. Thanks to this, references to the original will also be familiar to younger audience.

Another example showing that urban legends reach the youngest is a short, 16-page comic book entitled *About a Python That Terrorized Warsaw and Scared Tourists*, published in 2018 (Jasiński and Jasiński 2018). It was created by Maciej Jasiński, a Polish screenwriter and comic book writer and his seven-year-old son Ksawery. This is yet another interesting example of the collaboration between an adult and a child: Maciej wrote the text, while Ksawery illustrated it (Gildia.pl 2018). Owing to the boy's efforts and illustrations, Batman was employed to fight the snake. Nevertheless, the python topic was not taken lightly – the superhero presents his opinions about the snake and knows that he faces a situation similar to those known from urban legends. Batman says that the python feeds on media energy and that the media itself makes the fight against it so tough – referring here to the popularity that rumours spread from media circulation, which makes it difficult to debunk them (see Figure 10). Ultimately, Batman advises Poles to find a replacement topic which will make the python fall into oblivion. Paradoxically, even for the youngest readers, this simple comic can be a valuable source of knowledge about urban legends and critical media literacy – it teaches them how to approach media and fake news. However, since only a limited edition of 50 copies was published, the book did not achieve widespread popularity. Still, it is another example of how urban legends enable intergenerational communication.

As is apparent from the analysed examples, the python had a huge humorous potential. Other examples include Andrzej Milewski's series of comic drawings (Andrzej Rysuje 2018), famous for political references (see Figure 11). Another reaction came from Mateusz Ożyński (fanpage Czcij niedźwiedzia [Honour the bear]; see Figure 12). These concepts are definitely unique and noteworthy. Some of these comics link the topic of the python with current political problems. However, it is difficult to find in them any deeper reflections on political or ideological issues – they are limited to criticisms of the current

Figure 10. "I discovered that the python feeds on energy from the media" – the Vistula python in the comic (Jasiński and Jasiński 2018).

Figure 11. "'And this, my son, is the Warsaw mermaid'. 'No idiot, it's a python'" – another example of the python in a comic (Andrzej Rysuje 2018).

Figure 12. "'The snake from the Vistula', the services warn. 'The snake is hungry and the weather is good for him'. 'He can eat a child or a dog'. 'Do not take apples from him'". Example from a comic book (Czcij niedźwiedzia 2018).

government of the Law and Justice Party, which is criticized by both the left and the right side of the Polish political scene. In this case, the python thread becomes merely an excuse for superficial political references. Surprisingly, according to some researchers, the Vistula python issue united people with different views and interests. This phenomenon, observed by journalist Małgorzata Karolina Piekarska just a week after the first media reports, was commented in her blog:

> The Indian python, whose skin was found in Gassy near Konstancin, was widely discussed by both right-wing and left-wing portals, pro- and anti-government ones. The reptile united us [...]. Everyone joked about it, or used it to comment on Polish social and political issues. And thus during the press meeting I learnt from memes, jokes, and other humorous comments that the snake had escaped because of the violation of the Constitution, or possibly from the hospital, perhaps joining the protest of resident doctors (Piekarska 2018).

Although the examples presented by the journalist are clearly associated with one side of the political dispute, it should be remembered that not all humorous content about the python was political. Mockery of authorities looking for a python, or comments below online articles about how the writers had nothing better to write about so they wrote about the snake – these are some of the non-political examples of activities practiced by many people in regard to the Vistula python stories, and in this context they represent a discourse that reaches beyond political divisions. In this regard, the serpent narratives became a public platform through which different, not only political, perspectives were expressed, and therefore it brought people together in a discussion, although not necessarily uniting them.

Conclusions

The Vistula python occurrence, initially known and distorted by official media reports, soon evolved into an artistic theme. This was probably caused by public frustration over the prolonged and unsuccessful search for the reptile, as well as by the media's saturation with the topic. Owing to the accumulation of dramatic and contradictory media messages, the topic was often perceived as grotesque. Instead of arousing fear, the snake began to amuse people, and was incorporated into many Internet memes, YouTube videos, and comedy acts. Discussed by

both adults and children, the topic encouraged creativity, providing space for intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.

The great popularity of the python narrative did not come out of nowhere – Internet news services wrote a lot about the snake. The comments of Internet users were usually a reaction to that news, and the content of those comments is characterized by high variability. When it comes to their functions, we usually find the informational and entertainment purposes, along with the emotional function of discharging anxiety. At the beginning, many reactions were streaked with uncertainty and fear, but over time, irritation and exhaustion over the topic became clearly visible. Ultimately, the serious topic of the dangerous snake was trivialized, as evidenced by numerous ironic and humorous reactions. Stories that have not happened to the Internet users personally also prevailed – the information was usually second-hand, as is typical for urban legends. Finally, the Vistula python also became a symbol used in real-time marketing processes as the Internet is an environment focused on content consumption. Therefore, it can be concluded that the financial intentions of companies creating their advertisements based on python reports contributed to a further broadening of the customers for the serpent narrative.

As has been said, the python story facilitated social integration. It must also be mentioned that it was an element of intercultural dialogue, because although this particular theme was of Polish origin, the motif of the puma crossing Polish borders is known to Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks. In 2019, when the information about a dangerous puma in the Czech Republic was announced in Poland, a Polish-Czech phrase book entitled "How to Chase Away the Czech Puma" was published in the Polish tabloid *Fakt* (Kwejk 2018). It contains useful phrases for a possible encounter with the animal, but the translation is sloppy – the author most probably used the available online Polish-Czech translator, therefore the text contains mistakes. In Poland, the Czech language seems particularly interesting because of the extensive similarity of both languages. Interestingly, the facetious text was noticed by the Czech media (Pisingerová 2019). Although the motif of a puma crossing borders requires further research, these examples may be a starting point for a comparative analysis of how the theme developed in different countries.

When comparing the origin of the python phenomenon with the previously mentioned fantastic creature called Paskuda, they seem to be different. Paskuda was an example of fabricated, satirical fake news, disclaimed after some time. While in the case of the python, the first published photos and the snake search

were real. In fact, it has not yet been determined whether the python was just a hoax. In this case, only three months after the first reports (October 2018), the sensational theme was forgotten. However, the question remains: will the theme ever reappear? The snake is much more realistic and believable than other imaginary creatures that often occur in different folk tales. It should also be remembered that motifs associated with urban legends rarely disappear forever. Instead, they re-emerge from time to time.

Nevertheless, an excellent summary of the phenomenon of the 2018 Vistula python is provided by the poem by Kajetan Kusina "Epitaph for the Vistula Python" found on the *Kusi na kulturę* fanpage on Facebook (Kusi na Kulturę 2018). According to the author of this text, finding the snake is the goal that causes people to bury the hatchet and unite for a "better cause":

"Epitaph for the Vistula Python"
O, mighty Python, you ruled the Vistula this summer
but suddenly disappeared – what a bummer!
How many warriors tried to catch you
To slay your body – for sure a few.
It was just ninety days
But our hearts thumped in wild ways
You were as fast as a thunderbolt
No one could capture you, just your molt.
Maybe that was your advice
That we shout "Get the nasty-nice"
What you gave our nation
was a common goal creation.
Hidden in the river hole
You played an important role.

Mateusz Napiórkowski is a MSc, PhD student at the Department of Cultural Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His specialization is in cultural studies and folkloristics. The main subjects of his scholarly interests are urban legends and related narrative forms – including fake news. Selected publications: "The Fire of the Students Dormitory No. 4 – Toruń's Urban Legends and Students' Folklore" (2016) and "Netlore Urban Legends as an Expression of Unrest in the Modern World" (2018). He is particularly interested in legendary narratives that appear in various cultural texts, but often in non-obvious contexts.
Email: matti.nap@gmail.com

References

Andrzej Rysuje 2018. "Dzień dobry w piątek". Twitter. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://twitter.com/gazeta_wyborcza/status/1017666310669512704/photo/1.

AP. 2018. "Cały świat szuka nadwiślańskiego pytona. Piszą o nim nawet w Chinach!". *Super Express*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.se.pl/warszawa/nadwislanskiego-pytona-szuka-caly-swiat-aa-oHdJ-SfNZ-ihRr.html.

ASZdziennik. 2018. "Pyton tygrysi zatrzymany nad Wisłą. Miał 4,7 promila, obrażał policjantów i ubliżał uchodźcom". *ASZ Dziennik*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://aszdziennik.pl/123723,pyton-z-warszawy-zatrzymany-nad-wisla-w-stanie-upojenia-obrazal-policjanto.

Besty. 2018. "Wokolicach Warszawy". *Besty.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://besty.pl/3946579.

BF. 2018. "Sprawdzają właścicieli pytonów w całym kraju. Jest dochodzenie policji". *Gazeta.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://metrowarszawa.gazeta.pl/metrowarszawa/7,141637,23672778,sprawdzaja-wlascicieli-pytonow-w-calym-kraju-jest-dochodzenie.html.

Brodie, Ian. 2018. "Pretend News, False News, Fake News: The Onion as Put-On, Prank, and Legend". *The Journal of American Folklore* 522: 451–459.

Brunvand, Jan Harold. 1996. *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Publishing Company.

Brunvand, Jan Harold. 2012. *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends, Second Edition*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Bukłaha, Zuzanna. 2018. "Nowy trop w sprawie pytona? Jego właściciel mógł umrzeć, a wąż zostać wypuszczony na wolność". *Wyborcza.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,23869223,nowy-trop-w-sprawie-pytona-jego-wlasciciel-mogl-umrzec-a.html.

Cerstve Zarty. 2018. "Divadlo STANDUP". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8M0exYsi5Jw.

Chełmiński, Jakub. 2018. "Pyton pozował w erotycznej sesji na plaży nad Wisłą. Czy to jego szuka policja?" *Wyborcza.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,23661375,pyton-pozowal-w-rozbieranej-sesji-na-plazy-nad-wisla.html.

Cieśla, Aleksandra. 2013. "Rośnie moda na egzotyczne zwierzęta. Dlatego, że podnoszą prestiż właściciela?" *GazetaWrocławska.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://gazetawroclawska.pl/rosnie-moda-na-egzotyczne-zwierzeta-dlatego-ze-podnosza-prestiz-wlasciciela/ar/752813.

Czcij niedźwiedzia. 2018. "Sam diabeł". Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/zespolmysleniaironicznego/photos/a.112079778802235/1957578030919058/?type=3&theater.

Czubala, Dionizjusz. 2014. *Polskie legendy miejskie*. Katowice: Thesaurus Silesiae.

———. 2005. *Wokół legendy miejskiej*. Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo ATH.

Dachnij, Kamil. 2018. "Pyton tygrysi na wolności. Czy jest groźny dla człowieka?". *NaTemat.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://natemat.pl/243199,dlaczego-pyton-tygrysi-jest-grozny-co-moze-zrobic.

Dale, Rodney. 1978. *The Tumour in the Whale: A Collection of Modern Myths*. London: Duckworth.
Do Rzeczy. 2018. "Pyton gigant pod Warszawą. Może pożreć nawet rybaka". *DoRzeczy.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/69993/Pyton-gigant-pod-Warszawa-Moze-pozrec-nawet-rybaka.html.
Dodo. 2018. "Zostałem ugryziony przez węża spod Warszawy". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajERJOsN0Gw; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrTxyozzyEE.
Dolak, Mateusz. 2018. "Pyton nadwiślański nie żyje. Zakończono akcję poszukiwawczą". *Super Express*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.se.pl/warszawa/poszukiwany-pyton-nie-zyje-akcja-poszukiwawcza-zakonczona-aa-LK-Sp-JTUs-4ewu.html.
Dwów. 2018. "Epizod 01 Zgubiliśmy Węża". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cjnKzgQU3w&t=2112s.
Dziennik.pl. 2018. "Gdzie się ukrywa pyton tygrysi? Eksperci analizują teraz zdjęcia z obszaru poszukiwań". *Dziennik.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/577692,pyton-tygrysi-gdzie-jest-pyton-waz-wisla-poszukiwania-jak-sie-zachowac.html,komentarze-najnowsze,1.
EDGARD jezykiobce.pl. 2018. "Wo ist der Python?" Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/jezykiobcepl/photos/a.138082462869403/2282896931721268/?type=3.
Ellis, Bill. 2018. "Fake News in the Contemporary Legend Dynamic". *The Journal of American Folklore* 522: 398–404.
Escape Room. 2018. "U nas pyton znalazłby się w godzinę". Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/elementEscapeRoomBydgoszcz/photos/a.1266737620034%20816/2078532988855271/?type=3.
Express Bydgoski. 2018. "Pół Polski szuka pytona, drugie pół się śmieje". *Expressbydgoski.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://expressbydgoski.pl/pol-polski-szuka-pytona-drugie-pol-sie-smieje-zobaczcie-memy/ga/13349827/zd/30188305.
Fakt. 2020. *Fakt.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020.
Frank, Russell. 2015. "Caveat Lector: Fake News as Folklore". *The Journal of American Folklore* 509: 315–332.
———. 2018. "Fake News vs. 'Foke' News: A Brief, Personal, Recent History". *The Journal of American Folklore* 522: 379–387.
Gildia.pl. 2018. „O pytonie, który sterroryzował Warszawę i turystów wystraszył – opis". *Gildia.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.komiks.gildia.pl/komiksy/o-pytonie-ktory-sterroryzowal-warszawe-i-turystow-wystraszyl/1.
Graliński, Filip. 2009. "Puma w Polsce". *Atrapa.net*. Accessed April 12, 2020. http://atrapa.net/legendy/puma.htm.
Hajduk-Nijakowska, Janina. 2012. "Folklorystyczny nerw Internetu. Wspólnotowa przestrzeń emocji i wyobraźni". *Kultura Popularna* 3 (33): 6–18.
Himma-Kadakas, Marju. 2017. "Alternative Facts and Fake News Entering Journalistic Content Production Cycle". *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2: 25–40.

HW. 2018. "Zaginiony wąż boa dusiciel z osiedla Czyżkówko w Bydgoszczy odnalazł się!". *Bydgoszcz nasze miasto*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://bydgoszcz.naszemiasto.pl/zaginiony-waz-boa-dusiciel-z-osiedla-czyzkowko-w-bydgoszczy/ar/c8-4722433.

Imet. 2018. "System kanalizacji zewnętrznej PRAGMA". Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/phuimetwichowo/photos/a.270906823065146.1073741827.270849356404226/1061369917352162/?type=3&amp%3Bamp%3Bamp%3Btheater&amp%3Bamp%3Bamp%3B_fb_noscript=1&amp%3Bamp%3B_fb_noscript=1&amp%3B_fb_noscript=1&_fb_no.

Jasiński, Maciej and Ksawery Jasiński. 2018. *O pytonie, który sterroryzował Warszawę i turystów wystraszył*. Warszawa: Independent publishing.

Jęczeń, Agnieszka. 2010. "Narracyjny aspekt plotki w kulturze popularnej". *Media – Kultura – Komunikacja Społeczna* 6: 152–167.

Kinsella, Michael. 2011. *Legend-Tripping Online: Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Konieczek, Martyna. 2018. "Niebezpieczny pyton wciąż poszukiwany. Nowe ślady nad Wisłą. Policja apeluje: nie spacerujcie nad rzeką". *Warszawa nasze miasto*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/niebezpieczny-pyton-wciaz-poszukiwany-nowe-slady-nad-wisla/ar/c1-4719993.

Kosowska, Ewa. 1985. *Legenda. Kanon i transformacje. Św. Jerzy w polskiej kulturze ludowej*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Kozicki, Wojciech. 2018. "Puma w Polsce! Pokazali nagranie wideo". *Planeta.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.planeta.pl/Wiadomosci/Polska/Puma-grasuje-w-Polsce!-Kierowca-pokazal-tajemnicze-nagranie-wideo.

Kozinets, Robert V. 2012. *Netnografia. Badania etnograficzne online*. Transl. Maja Brzozowska-Brywczyńska. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Krakus. 2018. "Mamy go". *Smaki.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://smaki.pl/galeria/12927/11/pomyslowa-kampania-reklamowa-ogorkow-krakus.html.

Kurdyła, Krzysztof. 2020. „Nosacz sundajski jako stereotypowy Polak + najlepsze aplikacje do memów". *Antyweb.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://antyweb.pl/nosacz-sundajski-jako-stereotypowy-polak-najlepsze-aplikacje-do-memow/.

Kusi na Kulturę. 2018. „Epitafium dla Pytona znad Wisły". Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/kusinakulture/posts/1432286090248476.

Kuszlewicz, Karolina. 2018. "Pilne. Śmiertelnie niebezpieczni ludzie zagrożeniem dla pytona". *Krytyka Polityczna*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/pyton-warszawa-prawa-dzikich-zwierzat/.

Kwejk. 2018. "Jak przepędzić czeską pumę". *Kwejk.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://kwejk.pl/obrazek/3405685/jak-przepedzic-czeska-pume.html.

Łuczeczko, Paweł. 2007. "Z Trobriandów do Torunia, czyli funkcjonalna analiza studenckiej anegdoty. Z badań nad folklorem współczesnym studentów UMK w Toruniu". In *Z trzeciego brzegu Wisły. Szkice z antropologii Torunia*, edited by Hubert Czachowski, Olga Kwiatkowska, Adrian Mianecki, Artur Trapszyc, 95–111. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK.

M.C. 2018. "Pyton tygrysi w Warszawie – węża nie znaleziono, ale...". *Eska.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.eska.pl/news/pyton-tygrysi-w-warszawie-weza-nie-znaleziono-ale-aa-89eq-aF7Q-xCAK.html.

mab/mk. 2015. "Uwaga! W polskich lasach grasuje puma". *TVN Meteo*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://tvnmeteo.tvn24.pl/informacje-pogoda/polska,28/uwaga-w-polskich-lasach-grasuje-puma,173785,1,0.html.

Maddala, Chiranjeevi. 2017. "What is Real-Time Marketing? 5 Best Examples of Real-Time Marketing". *Digital Ready*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://digitalready.co/blog/what-is-real-time-marketing-and-5-best-examples-of-real-time-marketing.

Marwick, Alice E. 2018. "Why Do People Share Fake News? A Sociotechnical Model of Media Effects". *Georgetown Law Technology Review* 2: 474–512.

Mielnik, Jakub. 2018. "Gwiazdy sezonu ogórkowego". *Wprost.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/10143876/gwiazdy-sezonu-ogorkowego.html.

Napiórkowski, Mateusz. 2016. "The Fire of the Students Dormitory No. 4 – Torun's Urban Legends and Students' Folklore". *Rocznik Toruński* 43: 273–292.

———. 2018. "Netlore Urban Legends as an Expression of Unrest in the Modern World". *Literatura i Kultura Popularna* 24: 357–368.

Natkabistro. 2018. "Wszyscy szukają pytona..." Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/Natkabistro/photos/a.420473381740016/511375662649787/?type=3&theater.

Niedźwiecki, Mariusz. 2018. "Wąż, którego nie było? Minął rok od poszukiwań pytona nad Wisłą". *Radio dla Ciebie*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.rdc.pl/informacje/waz-ktorego-nie-bylo-minal-rok-od-poszukiwan-pytona-tygrysiego-nad-wisla/.

NTO.pl. 2009. "Drapieżny kot sfilmowany na Opolszczyźnie..." YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=27&v=psgil6b_Xd4.

Orszulak, Tomasz. 2018a. "Pyton nad Wisłą, policja ostrzega mieszkańców. W tym miejscu trzeba bardzo uważać". *WawaLove*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://wawalove.wp.pl/pyton-nad-wisla-policja-ostrzega-mieszkancow-w-tym-miejscu-trzeba-bardzo-uwazac-6271854540556417a.

———. 2018b. "Pyton tygrysi nad Wisłą. Trwają poszukiwania, w miejscowości Gassy znaleziono nowe ślady węża". *O2.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.o2.pl/artykul/pyton-tygrysi-nad-wisla-trwaja-poszukiwania-w-miejscowosci-gassy-znaleziono-nowe-slady-weza-6271822254995585a.

Palczewski, Marek. 2018. "Entry: Fake news". In *Mały leksykon postprawdy*, edited by Małgorzata Wójcik, 28. Accessed June 2, 2020. https://wid.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/E_wydanie-Ma%C5%82y-Leksykon-Postprawdy.pdf.

Patyk, Mateusz. 2018a. "Pyton z Warszawy brał udział w rozbieranej sesji? Fotograf zgłosił się na policję". *WawaLove*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://wawalove.wp.pl/pyton-z-warszawy-bral-udzial-w-rozbieranej-sesji-fotograf-zglosil-sie-na-policje-6272550117890177a.

———. 2018b. "Sensacyjny wątek w sprawie pytona spod Warszawy. Policja bada nowy trop". *WawaLove*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://wawalove.wp.pl/sensacyjny-watek-w-sprawie-pytona-spod-warszawy-policja-bada-nowy-trop-6292418154518145a.

Picuki. 2018. "Pyton Warszawski". *Picuki.com*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.picuki.com/tag/pytonwarszawski.

Piekarska, Małgorzata Karolina. 2018. "Nic nie łączy tak jak... wąż". *W świecie absurdów* (blog). Accessed April 12, 2020. http://blog.piekarska.com.pl/?p=139814.

Pinkbestyja. 2018. "Też go szukacie?" Instagram. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.instagram.com/p/BlTiERGhQXz/?utm_source=ig_embed.

Pisingerová, Barbora. 2019. "Jít pryč puma! Česká šelma míří do Polska, Poláci baví speciálním slovníčkem". *Frekvence1.com*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.frekvence1.cz/clanky/jit-pryc-puma-ceska-selma-miri-do-polska-polaci-bavi-specialnim-slovnickem.shtml.

PKF. 1950. "The War Against the Colorado Potato Beetle". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky6jeUuVNgo.

Plucik, Witold. 2018. "Pyton Warszawski – szybka akcja". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28FL56bzLpg.

Portal 24jgora.pl. 2017. "Ktoś wyrzucił z domu pytona królewskiego". *24jgora.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://24jgora.pl/artykul/ktos-wyrzucil-z-domu/534830.

Press Service. 2018a. "Press-Service Monitoring Mediów". Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/PSMMonitoring.

———. 2018b. "Co w trawie piszczy?" Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://pl-pl.facebook.com/PSMMonitoring/photos/a.120948501253345/2172689586079216/?type=3&theater.

Pudelek. 2018. "Maryla Rodowicz nie boi się pytona: Prędzej ja go zjem niż on mnie". *Pudelek.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.pudelek.pl/artykul/132523/maryla_rodowicz_nie_boi_sie_pytona_predzej_ja_go_zjem_niz_on_mnie/.

Rakosza, Kamil. 2018. "Rzucił się na bobra. Wędkarz spod Warszawy opowiada o spotkaniu z pytonem tygrysim". *NaTemat.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://natemat.pl/243397,poszukiwanie-pytona-tygrysiego-waz-byl-widziany-w-okolicach-otwocka.

Red. 2018. "Krzysztof Rutkowski opublikował zdjęcie... z pytonem". *Dziennikbaltycki.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://dziennikbaltycki.pl/krzysztof-rutkowski-opublikowal-zdjecie-z-pytonem-a-nie-mowilem-ze-bede-go-mial-oglosil-znany-detektyw/ar/13359015.

RED RMF. 2018. "W Warszawie odnaleziono wylinkę blisko 6-metrowego pytona tygrysiego. UWAGA, wąż może być niebezpieczny dla ludzi! [zdjęcia]". *Express Bydgoski*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://expressbydgoski.pl/w-warszawie-odnaleziono-wylinke-blisko-6metrowego-pytona-tygrysiego-uwaga-waz-moze-byc-niebezpieczny-dla-ludzi-zdjecia/ar/c1-13324054.

Simpson, Jacqueline, and Steve Roud. 2000. *A Dictionary of English Folklore*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Snake Busters. 2018. "Wąż Busters – jak złapaliśmy pytona znad Wisły". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCNNR_vBHO4.

Solecka, Katarzyna. 2018. "Detektyw Rutkowski na tropie pytona: Jak będzie trzeba, to użyjemy śmigłowca". *Rmf.fm*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.rmf.fm/magazyn/news,17635,detektyw-rutkowski-na-tropie-pytona-jak-bedzie-trzeba-to-uzyjemy-smiglowca.html.

Staroń, Maria. 2018. "Krzysztof Jackowski wskazał, gdzie znajduje się poszukiwany pyton tygrysi". *Rmf.fm*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.rmf.fm/magazyn/news,17610,krzysztof-jackowski-wskazal-gdzie-znajduje-sie-poszukiwany-pyton-tygrysi-mapa.html.

Strauchmann, Krzysztof. 2011. "Sensacja! Puma grasuje na południowych Morawach". *Nowa Trybuna Opolska*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://nto.pl/sensacja-puma-grasuje-na-poludniowych-morawach/ar/4453467.

Štůsek, Michal. 2009. "Puma už je na Bruntálsku, zabila koloucha". *Aktuálně.cz*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://magazin.aktualne.cz/puma-uz-je-na-bruntalsku-zabila-koloucha/r~i:article:640344/.

Super Express. 2020. *Se.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020.

Śmigiel, Martyna. 2018. "Pytona tygrysiego znajdziesz nie nad Wisłą, ale w piekarni. Sprzedają tam chałkę Pyton w kształcie węża". *Wyborcza.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,23745823,pytona-tygrysiego-znajdziesz-nie-nad-wisla-ale-w-piekarni.html.

Tob. 2018. "Krzysztof Rutkowski szuka pytona w Toruniu nad Wisłą. Internauci bezlitośni [NAJŚMIESZNIEJSZE MEMY]". *Nowości.com*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://nowosci.com.pl/krzysztof-rutkowski-szuka-pytona-w-toruniu-nad-wisla-internauci-bezlitosni-najsmieszniejsze-memy/ar/13348101.

TUB. 2018. "Czytelniczka: widziałam ogromnego węża! Czy to poszukiwany pyton tygrysi? [FOTO]". *Ototorun.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://ototorun.pl/artykul/czytelniczka-widzialam/483058.

TVN Warszawa. 2018. "Wylinka pięciometrowego węża nad Wisłą. Służby proszą o ostrożność". *Tvn24.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://tvn24.pl/tvnwarszawa/najnowsze/wylinka-pieciometrowego-weza-nad-wisla-sluzby-prosza-o-ostroznosc-263976.

TVN24. 2009. "Puma okazała się wyrośniętym kotem". *Tvn24.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://tvn24.pl/polska/puma-okazala-sie-wyrosnietym-kotem-ra100435-3597932.

Urbex History. 2018. "Poszukiwania pytona pod Warszawą". YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKLjw_C4RWc.

Warszawawpigułce. 2018a. "Pyton ruszył na żer! Tuż przed Otwockiem gad zaatakował bobra!" *Warszawawpigułce.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawawpigulce.pl/pyton-ruszyl-na-zer-tuz-przed-otwockiem-gad-zaatakowal-bobra/.

———. 2018b. "Pyton nad Wisłą pożarł psa! Wciąż jest na wolności. Odławiacze na miejscu". *Warszawawpigułce.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawawpigulce.pl/pyton-nad-wisla-pozarl-psa-wciaz-jest-na-wolnosci-odlawiacze-na-miejscu/.

We Love Nails. 2018. "Nadwiślański pyton na paznokciach?" Facebook. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2043153472382493.

Wikipedia. 2020. "Gassy". Wikipedia. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gassy.

Wyborcza.pl. 2018. "Pyton nad Wisłą? Pod Warszawą trwają poszukiwania ogromnego gada, który mógł uciec z hodowli". *Wyborcza.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,23652091,pyton-nad-wisla-pod-warszawa-trwaja-poszukiwania-ogromnego.html.

Wykop. 2018. "Pyton istnieje. Na jego ślad trafił pies tropiący". *Wykop.pl*. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.wykop.pl/link/4430285/pyton-istnieje-na-jego-slad-trafil-pies-tropiacy/.

Zwierzętomania. 2018. "Analiza – PYTON znad Wisły. Prawda, czy żart?" YouTube. Accessed April 12, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdFtpfMf4P8.

NEARLY CARBON NEUTRAL CONFERENCES IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC: A REVIEW ESSAY

Lee Bidgood
(East Tennessee State University)

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we often gathered as scholars. We talked, ate, drank, chatted, argued, and learned together at annual meetings. En route, we would likely have taken a series of flights from our particular local airport that would gradually surround us with more and more people who do what we do; at a larger regional or international hub, we might find ourselves on a flight filled with colleagues and professional acquaintances all headed for the same conference – finishing up presentations on laptops, catching each other up on the latest disciplinary news and gossip.

Imagining the bustle and energy of these academic meetings – while sitting at the same desk where I have been "teaching online" for the past six months – leaves me nostalgic. I feel disconnected from my professional peers, and from the process of academic discourse. As the date for the Society for Ethnomusicology meeting approaches, I am ambivalent about the online reformulation of this event. I imagine that many of you, like me, are not sure how online versions of conferences will hold up – and if we could possibly take from them something that would inform and revitalise us as teachers, researchers, and writers. Does it seem possible to draw from a virtual conference the spark, inspiration, and energy that an in-person event, full of interactions, unplanned happenstances and human connections used to give us?

As in so many areas of our new pandemic normality, it is likely not healthy to feed our nostalgia for things no longer possible. This essay does look back, but is an attempt to find a way forward. In the years preceding our current COVID situation, other factors were prompting scholars and academics to find new ways to create and maintain professional and personal community through conferences that differ from the "traditional" in-person model.

I present here a review of the "Nearly Carbon Neutral" (NCN) model for academic conferences, in hopes that it might provide us with more ideas and practical advice on how to stay connected with our colleagues, how to connect

our local workplaces and communities with other locales and professional circles, and how to take care of each other in a difficult time.

The Nearly Carbon Neutral model was developed not due to global epidemiological reasons, but for planetary health. The term was coined by organisers of a conference that took place in 2016, an event designed to address issues of climate change from humanities perspectives. Coordinated by the Environmental Humanities Initiative at the University of California Santa Barbara (USA), the project took shape due to the efforts of UCSB professor Ken Hiltner and his colleagues. Hiltner's "white paper" apologia/guide (n.d.) is the main item under review in this essay. This document, widely referred-to by academics seeking distanced and digital alternatives to traditional "fly-in" meetings, is openly available on the UCSB website (https://hiltner.english.ucsb.edu/index.php/ncnc-guide/) and is also discussed in his Routledge volume *Writing a New Environmental Era: Moving Forward to Nature* (2019). The current website version of the document includes an appendix chapter that (due to its relevance in light of the current pandemic) the publisher allowed Hiltner to share, providing open access to discussion of responses to the NCN model, how this model fits with traditional workplace expectations (i.e., do NCN-type conference presentations "count" during hiring or promotion reviews), and other specific concerns.

The NCN approach starts with presenter-submitted videos that can combine video of the speaker and/or a screen recording of a presentation (slides, photos, video, etc). These videos are typically grouped into panels (as at a traditional in-person conference) and shared via a conference website. During the "open" window during which the conference takes place (generally 2–3 weeks), participants can take part in the "Question-and-answer" session for each panel that is conducted in text via an online forum. As the NCN guide states, "[b]ecause comments can be made at any time in any time zone, participants from across the globe can equally take part in the conference" (Hiltner n.d.).

The NCN project was started at UCSB to address concerns about the environmental impact of academic conferences. The Guide states that "[r]oughly one third of UCSB's carbon footprint comes from faculty and staff flying to conferences, talks, and meetings. All this air travel annually releases over 55,000,000 pounds of CO2 or equivalent gasses directly into the upper atmosphere [...] equal to the total annual carbon footprint of a city of 27,500 people in the Philippines" (ibid.). These days, travel decisions are affected by COVID-related concerns, of course, but also by other issues related to health and climate, for example dramatic and extreme weather events such as the winter storm that disrupted the 2018 Modern Language Association convention

in New York City (Quintana 2018). All in all, it might be time to reconsider the relevance and sustainability of our traditions for conferences in the academy.

The NCN model also addresses issues of social justice, making it possible for more people to participate in conference experiences, thus broadening access to the discourse and community of scholars. While the availability of technology infrastructure is not universal, many more people can connect to an online conference than can attend an in-person "fly-in" conference. This structural practicality, as well as the accessibility of the pre-recorded video format (the ability to close-caption videos in more than one language, for example), include more and more kinds of people from more places – making the NCN model one that addresses many current concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In addition to lowering the threshold of participation for participants, the NCN model provides a model for institutions and groups to hold events that would not otherwise be possible. The low cost of running such an event allows people in marginalised groups, or rural areas, for example, to create events that address their local concerns and priorities. The NCN model also allows for the running of niche conferences that would not be possible using a traditional in-person format. In addition to the eight NCN conferences associated with UCSB focused on environmental justice and environmental humanities, a variety of other institutional units and disciplinary subgroups have used the format, with examples including the "Feral" conference organised by the Massey University Political Ecology Research Centre (NZ) and the Centre for Space, Place, and Society at Wageningen University (NL), as well as events organised by the Environmental Studies Association of Canada and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. While many adopters of the format are based in environmental science and environmental studies, organisers outside of these fields are using the format as well, including the Society for Cultural Anthropology and the organisers of the Nearly Carbon Neutral Geometric Topology Conference.

For those of us on the older side of the generational map, it may seem impossible to foster community through online interactions; for younger people whose social sphere is increasingly constructed with online interactions, the NCN model might seem like a familiar format. The move to online instruction, and administration during the COVID pandemic has normalised many aspects of the NCN format, and its online interactions now seem less exotic than they did before 2020. Hiltner's guide ventures to say that the UCSB NCN conferences "generated three times more discussion than takes place at a traditional Q&A [...] while different from a traditional conference, meaningful personal interaction was not only possible, but in certain respects superior" (Hiltner n.d.). The NCN guide

is pragmatic, stating that "it is unlikely that an online conference experience will ever replicate face-to-face interaction [...] However, given the horrific environmental costs and inherently exclusionary nature of traditional conferences, the time has come to radically rethink this cornerstone practice of our profession" (ibid.).

The regional chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology in which I take part, like many of the organisations and sub-groups in other corners of academia is considering implementing elements of the NCN model in our future annual conferences, seeing the limitations on in-person meetings both as an obstacle and call to action, but also as a possibility to be grasped – we now have the chance to be more inclusive and comprehensive in serving marginalised and underprivileged students, researchers, teachers, and other professionals in our region. I personally hope that more institutions and organisations in the Czech Republic will offer more events online and in open forums, as I would love to participate in them, reconnecting with colleagues who I met during my Fulbright year teaching and researching at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic.

I imagine that many of us find ourselves in the same boat: we are searching for solutions and ideas for how to "do what we do" as researchers, teachers, writers, and activists within the limitations of the pandemic. While our instinct might be to direct our attention inwards in a time of health crisis, social unrest, and economic hardship, the NCN model calls us to – in spite of these significant obstacles – prioritise the maintenance of professional academic community, and the mentoring and incorporation of growing generations of scholars who work in and outside of the academy. Our disciplinary communities are a resource that we should not neglect, especially in a time in which governments and large parts of the public do not always see the value of academic institutions and the trained specialists who inhabit them. The organisational work by Hiltner and his colleagues at UCSB and the expansion of the NCN model by a variety of disciplinary and institutional adopters provide us a set of best practices for and examples of environmentally, socially, and epidemiologically sustainable scholarly meetings.

References

Hiltner, Ken. N.d. "A Nearly Carbon-Neutral Conference Model". Accessed September 21, 2020. https://hiltner.english.ucsb.edu/index.php/ncnc-guide/.

———. 2019. *Writing a New Environmental Era: Moving Forward to Nature*. First Edition. Routledge.

Quintana, Chris. 2018. "Crippling Winter Storm Came at the Worst Possible Time for Conference-Going Academics". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. January 4, 2018. https://www.chronicle.com/article/crippling-winter-storm-came-at-the-worst-possible-time-for-conference-going-academics/.

Trever Hagen
Living in the Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground

Oxford University Press, 2019

The book *Living in the Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground* seems to be the culmination of Hagen's publishing activities related to the Czech "underground" and especially to the music ensemble The Plastic People of the Universe. Prior to this work, the Czech underground and its association with the anti-communist political opposition was already explored by Skilling (1980). Afterwards, several English-language academic popular music studies on rock and underground music during state socialism in the Eastern bloc appeared in the 1990s (Ramet 1990; Ryback 1990; Mitchell 1992). The Czech underground as a style of music and as a socio-cultural phenomenon associated with the anti-communist state opposition has probably become one of the most salient topics of Czech music history and of late socialism in Czechoslovakia, and it has also reached a broader international audience. In light of this, several detailed works by the former underground representatives themselves have been recently published in Czech by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Academia, as well as by a few other publishers in the Czech Republic (Stárek and Kudrna 2017; Kudrna 2018).

In his book, which is very well-structured and reads smoothly, sociologist Trever Hagen successfully follows up on an established body of previous research published in both Czech and in English, as he enriches it with the perspective of music sociology. His study therefore examines music as a key element "in" and "as" society, as well as treating music as a key component in producing social relations. In this way, Hagen greatly exemplifies Simon Frith's argument that "making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them" (Frith 1996, 111). Drawing from the example of the Czech underground community, the author aims to demonstrate how an intergenerational and socially heterogeneous group of people in the period from the 1950s to 1980s communed together through music, and how, in this regard, their "communing" was aesthetically mediated. To do so, Hagen aptly uses the concept of "cultural ecology" (in chapter one), introduced by the music sociologist Tia DeNora (2000) and the music psychologist Eric F. Clarke (2005), which can be understood as "the various places, venues, props, narratives, people, bodies, and symbols that come to be connected together using music (as bridging material) to create a space from which to understand the world and act upon it" (3). Hagen regards underground musicking in socialist Czechoslovakia as a cultural resource that was appropriated by its practitioners to furnish a particular "cultural ecology" and sustain a particular way of life. At the same time, the underground "cultural ecology" of the "second" (or "non-official") culture allowed for the rejection and substitution of perceived noxious, oppressive, and unwanted practices associated with the "first", or "official", culture. Thus, both the musical and non-musical activities of the representatives of the "second culture" served not as an intentional form of political opposition,

a direct action, or a protest against the communist regime, but rather as a strategy of "resistance-as-immunity". Referring to works by the musicologist and psychologist Even Ruud (2013), Hagen shows how, in this way, music was used to alleviate and protect against "unhealthy" social environments, as it served as kind of "cultural immunogen" (17–18). Furthermore, Hagen reveals how Czech underground music functioned as an aesthetically mediated community activity and as a learned way of togetherness that helped reject the threatening cultural forces.

Concerning methodology, Hagen's publication draws on ethnographic research, including participant observation and interviews. In addition, it is also enriched by an analysis of archival data from the Security Services Archive, deposited in Prague's Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. The author's ethnographic approach is subsequently also reflected in the book's writing style: while almost all the chapters deal with past events, they are simultaneously also accompanied with ethnographic glimpses into more or less contemporary musical events in the 1990s and 2000s. In turn, these events directly refer to the pre-1989 Czech underground activities in their programme and audience. Hagen, for example, personally witnessed the festival *U Skaláka – Magorovo Vydří at Meziříčko* (in existence since 1989), as well as several other events. Furthermore, he also conducted interviews with the most salient personalities of the Czech underground scene and with some academics writing about it (e.g. with the editor and translator Martin Machovec). Moreover, the most cited figure in the book is František Stárek (quoted in seven interviews from 2008 to 2011), the former underground musician and editor-in-chief of the 1980s samizdat periodical *Vokno*, and co-author of the recent Czech television documentary, *Fenomén underground*. Stárek, who is also a current employee of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, seems to be one of the author's main gatekeepers to the underground community.

However, it is a pity that the story lacks the perspective of the female underground community members, as well as some viewpoints from non-musicians and "ordinary" underground sympathisers who were "mere participants", not chief performers and intellectual leaders. Instead, the latter are of the most interest to Hagen. Although the underground formed a community with a strong internal solidarity and achieved recognition within the anti-regime political opposition, it did not, however, as Hagen argues, receive wider public support in the 1980s. One may therefore ask what kind of issues could be possibly revealed by incorporating some more extensive biographical narratives with the "key", as well as the more "ordinary", underground sympathisers? It is necessary to mention here that the underground movement in Czechoslovakia attracted people of various family, social, class, educational, and occupational backgrounds. Therefore, it would be important to learn who were in fact the underground sympathisers? What were the differences, as well as communalities, within the scene?

In the remaining part of this review, I highlight the author's main points that are developed in particular chapters. From the perspective of the Czech reader, who might already be familiar with the locally published "underground" scholarship, Hagen tends to summarise and refashion

some known data. Nevertheless, his contribution is a new interpretation of these known facts, including the presentation and analysis of interviews with some important witnesses, contributing the micro-historical perspective of directly involved actors to the work. Additionally, the interviewees evidently are also aware of the fact that they are telling their stories to a foreign scholar.

Chapter Two provides an introduction to the historical background of the Czech underground and its precursors, which can be traced back to the works of the Group 42 artists, the poetry of Egon Bondy, and the concepts of "total" realism and "non-artistry" (*neuměleckost*) (25–30). Since the 1960s, Czechoslovakia experienced the spread of rock 'n' roll music, the establishment of the local *bigbít* scene, and the successive development of an alternative cultural infrastructure based on the non-official self-distribution of texts (*samizdat*) or audio recordings (*magnitizdat*). Foreign radio broadcasts also played an especially important role in terms of distribution, providing the main opportunity for the informal musical learning of the new sounds coming from the West. In this way, music and other locally unavailable Western products were adopted through their imitation, as well as through the transformation and adjustment of local commodities and cultural artefacts to this Western influence (e.g. the local drink Kofola as an imitation of Coca-Cola; 31–36). In this way, Hagen argues, both the sound of The Velvet Underground, as well as the creativity of the Czech group Aktuál (established by artist and performer Milan Knížák), became the musical reference for The Plastic People of the Universe (aka The Plastics). This reference includes Aktuál's concept of anti-musicality and "destroyed sounds", and Czech lyrics, together with the performance of the absurd. Moreover, the Plastics began their musical journey by also incorporating more Western influences: a psychedelic rock 'n' roll sound, elaborate stage performances featuring pyrotechnic props, English lyrics, and costumes. However, Hagen claims that other local bands, such as The Primitives Group, were engaged in more than the musical imitation of Western sounds and ideas because their performances created an atmosphere of freedom that was otherwise unavailable in Czechoslovakia. These proto-underground bands represented the first model of a "cultural ecology" – a community which consisted of something more than a mere encounter between musicians and their audience. They represented a network of mutually cooperating people with a unique aesthetic approach and a particular way of life.

In chapters three and four, Hagen's book then examines how the Czech underground community was assembled within the conditions of the 1970s domestic cultural policy of so-called "normalisation". This included state censorship and the strategy of excluding those musicians whose lyrics and musical style were regarded by the Czechoslovak state establishment as non-conformist and suspect. In this regard, all musicians who intended to perform legally had to pass obligatory requalification exams, including a test of musical theoretical and practical skills, as well as demonstrating a knowledge of basic Marxism-Leninism principles. So, it was the governmental strategic obstacles which pushed the 1970s non-conformist

musicians into the underground. Moreover, these restrictions also affected their aesthetic, moving it towards a clearer expression of a raw and dark sound, created in opposition to the nice and optimistic ethos of the state's cultural preferences: in this way, musicians intended to produce music that intentionally challenged the official aesthetics. This was also the case with The Plastic People of the Universe, who refused to accept the state's requirements, and so they lost their "official" status of musicians. The band then started playing a distinctively different music repertoire than in the 1960s. For instance, they performed with long messy hair, and without make-up, costumes, or fire stage effects.

Furthermore, organisational approaches, including settings, also changed due to the different socio-political climate of the 1970s. In this time, organisers started organising musical events increasingly outside of Prague in the villages and towns of Czechoslovakia, developing the strategy of organising non-official and illegal performances distanced from the centres of Czechoslovakian public life. These concerts – particularly the three "Festivals of Second Culture" – were arranged by Ivan Martin Jirous as part of wedding celebrations, as they could otherwise not gain the status of legal concerts. The need for self-protection and togetherness became more apparent when the State Security authorities (STB) started to haunt underground community sympathisers, who in turn travelled far to organise and hear the music. In this context, Hagen shows how the Czech underground "cultural ecology" concentrated on the area of the ethnically cleansed and thus depopulated region of northwest Bohemia, what was formerly Sudetenland. This region, strongly marginalised from the 1950s, experienced a genocide during WWII and the subsequent post-war deportation of the German population by the Czechoslovak state. Especially because of the persecution of the underground community by the STB in the mid-1970s, the community decisively closed and developed a strategy of "cocooning". Thus, underground sympathisers established their own secluded "cultural ecology", which they referred to as the "Merry Ghetto" (76). They regarded it as their own secure space for self-realisation, a "parallel place where one could be a different self than was available in the official culture" (75). They thus produced "a form of social and cultural immunity to unwanted pollutants" (151). Contrary to some other countercultures, they emphasised distinct emotional and cognitive skills such as joy, merriness, collective spontaneity, creativity, trust, solidarity, and fellowship, rather than the "no future" dispositions of the punk culture which was emerging at that time in the West.

Drawing from Czechoslovak non-official culture and musicking in the 1970s and 1980s, the author then presents the development of a form of "aesthetic resistance" to "the sea of mental poverty" (92) and to the production of the late socialist state's official culture in chapters five and six. To demonstrate the concrete features of this "aesthetic resistance", Hagen presents further characteristics of local underground musical practices, and their aesthetic and cultural conceptualisations based on antithetic notions to the official aesthetic commitments of the communist regime. For underground sympathisers, this "stubbornness" became a fundamental moral expression, featuring the rejection

of values and objects identified with the official state establishment. This approach encompassed various strategies of rejecting the norms: the concept of "truth to self", primitive "non-musicality" (such as the performances by the bands Hever a Vaselina, Umělá hmota, or Aktuál), and playing "with spirit" (79–89). Besides the isolated and now consciously politicised underground community (in the sense of its direct identification with the Czech dissident movement), Hagen also presents a broader non-official culture and musicking in socialist Czechoslovakia, which encompassed various "alternative" musicians, musicians living in the so called "grey-zone" (among them, also "folk" musicians), the activities of the Jazz Section and the festival Prague Jazz Days, and the Brno Scene in the years 1982-84. Special clusters, such as Radotín High School nearby Prague, attended by the children of dissidents, also emerged in the 1980s. In addition, a more punk-oriented "second generation" of the undergrounders was born in the 1980s (e.g. the band Psí vojáci), and the Merry Ghetto provided them with an "agency sustaining habitat" (127).

As Hagen argues, the concept of "truth to self" also resonated with regional dissident movements in the wider region of East Central Europe and with their "anti-politics" or "non-political politics" principles. In this way, Czech underground music therefore also became associated with the Czechoslovak dissident movement. This also increased the *cause célèbre* position of the Plastics, offering them new distribution opportunities and further recognition abroad. While live performances were nearly impossible for the Plastics in the 1980s, their legend continued on in the recordings, through which they were described as the "truth-bearers" and exemplars of all independent activity to new generations. Here, Hagen mentions an important fact: those recordings that were smuggled from Czechoslovakia and produced in the West became recontextualised musical works, delivered to consumer groups that their authors were not originally intending to reach.

As music sociologist Anna Szemere shows with Hungarian examples, many underground cultures and countercultures from the ex-socialist states experienced an identity crisis after the fall of communism. Hagen argues that this is not the case with the Czech underground scene. As the title and contents of Hagen's penultimate chapter, "Underground Is Life", indicate, the Czech underground is still uniquely present. The book's conclusions therefore outline a brief analysis of the underground "renaissance" or "afterlife" after 1989 and up to the present. In chapters seven and eight, Hagen aims to show how the "afterlife" of the underground practices from the past "bear their weight in the present". Former dissidents and musicians who started to perform illegally in the 1970s now play at festivals such as *Magorovo Vydří* or *U Skaláka* – events intending to enact an underground ethos that continues to this day. As the author points out, the Plastics' performances have, for instance, also appeared at commemorative ceremonies dedicated to the persecution of the underground movement during the communist era. Quoting Václav Havel, Hagen refers to the current recognition of the 1970s underground members' activities as those of former "invisible workers of the opposition", who – among others – shaped the

process of building democratic conditions in the 1990s. Very important facts regarding the processes of cultural memory, nostalgia, and remembering are then just briefly mentioned: first, the Plastics appear at various events as a "memory-object" (148), as an instrument of collective remembering. Second, key "undergrounders" of the 1970s are present as "witnesses" of the communist era and act as mediators, helping to construct knowledge about past realities. Because of the book's wider historical scope, the author does not make an in-depth analysis of the different modes of contemporary perceptions and remembrances of the Czech underground and its current recognition as an important topic of Czech history in the second half of the 20th century.

In sum, Hagen's book on the one hand presents a basic and brief outline of the Czech underground for international readers who do not know much about Czechoslovakia and its cultural production in the 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, his work is not intended as a mere contribution to the historical study of music and resistance within the former Eastern bloc, nor does it only tell the story of the most famous underground band, The Plastic People of the Universe. Hagen's publication instead provides a relevant musical sociology perspective to the phenomena. With this approach, Hagen manages to demonstrate the broader significance of the Czech underground phenomenon, representing it not only from the perspective of the concept of "resistance". By describing the uses of music primarily as a social force, Hagen's book challenges the usual notion of the Czech underground as an explicit representative of the opposition to the Czech anti-communist state. Moreover, the usage and development of some of the main concepts in this book (e.g. cultural ecology, cultural immunogen) is Hagen's key contribution to the scholarship of music, making the book a very worthy read.

Zita Skořepová
(Czech Academy of Sciences)

References

Clarke, Eric F. 2005. *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*. New York: Oxford University Press.

DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frith, Simon. 1996. "Music and Identity". In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stewart Hall and Paul du Gay, 108–127. London: Sage.

Kudrna, Ladislav, ed. 2018. *Podhoubí underground*. Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů.

Mitchell, Tony. 1992. "Mixing Pop and Politics: Rock Music in Czechoslovakia Before and After the Velvet Revolution". *Popular Music* 11(2): 187–203.

Skilling, Gordon, H. 1980. "Charter 77 and the Musical Underground". *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 22(1): 1–14.

Ramet, Sabrina Petra. 1994. "Rock Music in Czechoslovakia". In *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, edited by Sabina Petra Ramet, 55–73. Boulder: Westview Press.

Ruud, Even. 2013. "Can Music Serve as a 'Cultural Immunogen'? An Explorative Study". *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being* 8(1).

Ryback, Timothy W. 1990. *Rock Around the Bloc: The History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stárek, František, Kudrna, Ladislav. 2017. "Kapela". *Pozadí akce, která stvořila Chartu 77*. Praha: Academia.

Frigyesi, Judit Niran
Writing on Water. The Sounds of Jewish Prayer

Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018

When we enter Prague's Old-New Synagogue on a Saturday morning, for example, a special, heterophonic soundscape opens up to our ears. We will be surprised even more, if we have already heard sound recordings of *hazzanim* – virtuoso synagogue singers. However, the records of their vocal art would represent only a fraction, a condensed glimpse of a multi-layered musical culture as a lived experience, the tip of an iceberg facing the outside world, the main part of which is audible as a whole only in a live setting, inside the synagogue. The musical performance of the ritual, which lasts over three hours on a Saturday morning, for example, is always a little different in sound, unrepeatable. Although seemingly bound by ritual rules and the traditional Jewish musical system, variability and improvisation play a significant role in it. To some extent, it is also shaped by chance, but its conditions are precisely defined. Ethnomusicologist Judit Niran Frigyesi, who has been studying the liturgical music of East Ashkenazi Jews for more than four decades, even compares it to an "avant-garde" noise-music or aleatoric music (2002, 143–44). But how is it possible to write meaningfully about such music practice (or about any, for that matter)? In her last book, *Writing on Water. The Sounds of Jewish Prayer* (for an earlier Hungarian version of the book, see Niran 2014), Niran Frigyesi shows us how this can be achieved. For instance, already in the first chapter, we can find the first of the countless examples of such writing:

> Budapest, 1976. I take my place of sacred isolation, the only woman and the only non-believer in the empty women's section of a secret Jewish prayer house. Soon, prayer will descend on me through the arabesque of white lace. And so I will remain: close to them, flying with the gestures of their souls, while tied to the earth by the loneliness of my alien existence. It begins slowly, almost unnoticeably. Speaking dissolves into a melodious noise and, like flecks of shimmer from the end of the world congeal in beams, the scattered words melt into chanting. I observe them as though this were a film. The morning prayer is like a flight of birds. Little muted cries fly off their lips and whirl about in all directions, and the sing song fragments braid themselves into solid vibration. I listen to the sounds as if they were music and as if music were a peregrination, a fairytale, a caressing hand, glitter and gleam of a trickling stream – ancient, transparent and legendary. Suddenly, a chill runs down my spine. It is as if a door, behind which a memory previously unknown and unrecognized lay hidden, had been flung open, their prayer and me – I, here, among them]...[I needed a few days to come to my senses. Even with a calm mind, I had to admit that I had never heard a sound more mysterious – and yet casual – than the sound of that prayer house (12–15).

Judit Niran Frigyesi – a musicologist, ethnomusicologist, writer, associate professor at Bar Ilan and Tel Aviv Universities, whose research focuses on 19th and 20th century music and literature, the music of Béla Bartók, ritual musics outside of the European tradition, and especially the prayer chant of Ashkenazi Jews, is known

as one of the icons of Jewish music studies. Her recent book brings us back to the very beginnings of her music-ethnography research in 1970s Hungary, grounded in stories about the forming moments of her academic journey. However, ethnomusicology is only one of the facets of her life imbued with creativity, while flitting between Tel Aviv, Budapest and New York. Frigyesi's artistic works include short stories, poems, photographs and photomontages, film and multi-media. This book, which, for her, is ultimately "an attempt to grasp the meaning of sound in prayer" (v), is a product of her diverse creative expressions. Although the text is full of "thick descriptions" of music practices and original interpretations of the elusive soundscapes of the secret and semi-secret traditional Budapest Jewish *shuls* (prayer rooms), the outcome is a multi-faceted reflexive narrative – a very poetic and contemplative ethnographic memoir.

As anthropologist Paul Stoller argues (2007, 182), memoirs are something that many anthropologists may want to pursue at some point on their path, because as a genre, they can extend substantially the readership for ethnographic literature. Nevertheless, Stoller also remarks that memoir is generally a slippery slope, as the text might become "a tedious exercise in solipsism" (ibid.) On the contrary, Niran Frigeysi's story is undoubtedly original and captivating. She endeavours to make sense of the knowledge of the sounding prayer embodied by her field consultants – mostly male Orthodox Jews, all of them holocaust survivors, who have been trying to become invisible in the niches of the communist-era Hungary. The book in this sense reveals a social world, hidden or publicly unspoken of, where sound, orality, and melodic flexibility are of crucial cultural value as religious ideals (see also Frigyesi 2001). The author describes her initial exploration and eventual immersion in this world characterised by silent sounds, indirect references and clues.

Yet what had initially started as an "innocent" research on the prayer chant's melodic structure, soon revealed the darker layers of the social reality of the Jewish minority in communist-era Hungary. The political regime's official antipathy toward religion, especially the Jewish one, becomes palpable through the fragments of recorded interviews, when the informants whispered that their places might have been bugged. On rare occasions, the author even brought her tape recorder to the prayer rooms to record full services. However, her endeavor quickly turned out to be not only ethically challenging, but even personally dangerous: it was well known that in some of the Jewish community centers, "there was no lack of undercover police" (43), and she was surrounded by people (friends and members of synagogues) who were directly threatened by the police. The author also describes a complicated situation in the book, when her elder informant encouraged her to record his interview during the Shabbat (therefore omitting a religious prohibition) in one of the community buildings, but then, he hid the switched-off recorder in a closet before the members had arrived for an afternoon communal meal. That evening, she has been secretely threatened by another member of the community, accusing her of being a spy (59). Another time, she was given "recommendations" to emigrate (193–4). She eventually left the

country in 1980, together with her research partner, who had meanwhile become her husband. The act of emigration not only cut her off from her family, friends, teachers, and informants, but it also forcefully impacted the much more subtle, deeply personal processes running underneath – coping with trauma and negotiating her own identity. From a personal perspective, the author describes the suffering of the children of the holocaust survivors, being haunted by the tragedy from the family's past, which has been generally buried in a heavy silence, and pierced with occassional indirect comments about "those who did not come back".

Throughout the book, it becomes obvious that the field research that Niran Frigyesi was consigned to as a young student at the Budapest Academy of Music by Benjamin Rajeczky (more or less coincidentally because of a grant from an ethnomusicologist from behind the "iron curtain", Alexander Ringer, and with an initial comparative research problem which turned out to be non-functional) eventually changed her life. At first, this represented only an interesting research topic for her, which no one in Hungary had dealt with so far. As she has not talked about her Jewishness at the Academy, she kept wondering why was it just she and the only other Jewish colleague at the musicology department who were given this research task by the institute. How could they have known? Nevertheless, the task triggered her reflections on her ambiguity towards her own "tribe":

> It was easy to call them "religious" (while I am secular) and "uneducated people from some backward village" (while I am an intellectual from the capital)... I tried to focus on my task and make myself believe that it was a purely scholarly undertaking: the ethnographer collects strange melodies and customs. But wearing the costume of the ethnographer among men who could have been my grandfathers, I began to feel ridiculous. It was not only the silent beauty of their religion – sounds of a life of withdrawal – that shook me, but the sudden intimacy with thoughts and attitudes so different from mine (33).

As she attended the services, recorded the singing of old men and memories of the pre-war Jewish world, which in their eyes had been lost forever, she was not only probing the issue of "participation" in her participant-observation method of research, but also gradually finding through them her own way to Jewishness, including its religious dimension:

> It is not true that witnessing the life of others makes you more experienced. When you peek through the keyhole, catching a glance that betrays a faith you do not share, all that remains is confusion of the heart. Placing your body next to theirs does not mean that you are with them. You have to open the wounds and slip inside through the torn surface of your life. You must gulp down your sorrows and your nights, until your eyes open to see them (xxv).

And it seems that this is also why, when she emigrated from Hungary by train to Paris, she carried in her suitcase, instead of personal belongings, the cassette tapes with the singing of men she would never meet again.

What can be of special interest to the Czech public regarding this story is the fact that among those cassette tapes, there

were also her unique field recordings from the Old-New Synagogue in Prague and the recorded musical memories of its cantor, Viktor Feuerlicht (1919, Mukachevo – 2003, Prague), of his occasional deputy, Miki Roth (1908, Mukachevo – 2000, Prague), and of a few others, which she made during her two short field trips in the late 1970s. As there is a dearth of sound recordings of cantors from the Czech lands, the field recordings by Judit Niran Frigyesi (which are currently published on the website of the National Library of Israel) belong to a very few published exceptions (for more, see Seidlová and Knapp 2008). As the book also contains ethnographic details from her field trips to Prague and fragments of the transcribed interviews with local cantors, the book presents a treasure for the researchers of Jewish music from this area, because it includes the very first published ethnomusicological first-hand accounts of Jewish religious music practices during communism in Czechoslovakia, especially from the harsh 1970s.

Athough it is important to emphasise the great ethnographic value of Judit Niran Frigyesi's book, the reader should be advised not to expect "only" a music-ethnography with an autobiographic value. At times, the book turns into a series of prose poems, deliberately leaving out the academic disciplinary constraints or genre expectations, such as in the case of the poem "It's a Tape," written "in the memory of those who did not come back": "ashen trails on magnetic tape / scars on the face of remembrance / a systematized, complete and collected / opus magnum..." (56).

On the one hand, this form of representation directly connects to the trauma mentioned above, which is known to bring specific vulnerablities in the lives of survivors and their descendants (see Shmotkin et al. 2011). On the other, it reflects the "crisis of representation" and related experimental ways of writing which circulate in anthropology since the late 1980s. As Niran Frigyesi explains in the preface:

> Many of us suffer from the demand of scholarship to clarify what is not possible to clarify and to systematize what is not possible to systematize. I collapsed under the weight of this demand. I began to feel that by sticking to the rules of scholarly writing, I betrayed the people who entrusted me with their music, culture, thoughts and philosophy. My scholarly writing failed to transmit what was most important to the practitioners of these rituals: the poetics in the sound of prayer (vi).

Giving voice to the actors, self-reflexive writing, and the blurring of genres in ethnographic writing are some of the solutions advocated by many anthropologists as the cures addressing the crisis of representation. Niran Frigyesi's book fully embraces this idea, as it also incorporates poetic imagination and poetic prose blending in poems about her field experiences. What I appreciate the most are not only the beautiful verbal descriptions of seemingly "ugly" voices (see Frigyesi 2007) and "messy" music practices, therefore conveying in a unique way that what really matters to Frigyesi's informants – the poetics of the Eastern-Ashkenazi prayer chant, but also the passages which convey the *poetics of researching* such music, or of ethnomusicological research in general. That a research practice, which ultimately is about personal relantionships with people who at some point may cease to be

"informants" while becoming part of the researcher's life, can even enter reseacher's dreams with vivid and vibrant sounds.

The fascinating textual mosaic of the book is thoughtfully intertwined with the author's enigmatic black-and-white photographs. While focusing on the imponderabilia of everyday (Jewish) life among the decaying buildings of 1970s Budapest, the images metaphorically communicate the meanings in Niran Frigyesi's work, highliting its gentle, intimate and somewhat mystical feeling. As such, the book is a sort of a play of different types of unrivaled verbal and visual representations. I have to admit that for me, personally, it represents the single most important title on Jewish music I have ever read, and a reminder of why I actually practice ethnomusicology in the first place.

Veronika Seidlová
(Charles University)

References

Frigyesi, Judit Niran. 2001. "Orality as Religious Ideal –The Music of East-European Jewish Prayer". *Yuval – Studies in Honor of Israel Adler* (7): 113–53.

———. 2002. "The Jewish Service in Communist Hungary: A Personal Journey". *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 11 (1): 141–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/09681220208567332.

———. 2007. "The 'Ugliness' of Jewish Prayer – Voice Quality as the Expression of Identity". *Musicology (An International Journal of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts)* (7): 99–118.

Niran, Judit. 2014. *Jelek a vízen*. Budapest: Libri.

Seidlová, Veronika, and Alexander Knapp. 2008. *Zapomenutý Hlas Pražské Jeruzalémské Synagogy: Kantor Ladislav Moše Blum, Osobní Nahrávky z Let 1978–1983 / The Forgotten Voice of the Jeruzalémská Synagogue in Prague. Cantor Ladislav Moshe Blum, Personal Recordings 1978–1983*. Praha: Jewish Museum in Prague with Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Shmotkin, Dov, Amit Shrira, Shira Goldberg, and Yuval Palgi. 2011. "Resilience and Vulnerability Among Aging Holocaust Survivors and Their Families: An Intergenerational Overview". *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 9 (1): 7–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2011.544202.

Stoller, Paul. 2007. "Ethnography/Memoir/Imagination/Story." *Anthropology and Humanism* 32 (2): 178–91. https://doi.org/10.1525/ahu.2007.32.2.178.

Maria Sonevytsky
Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine

Wesleyan University Press, 2019

Maria Sonevytsky's book *Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine* is a distinguished achievement of contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship. It deals ethnographically with various Ukrainian "ethno-music" (*etno-muzyka*) phenomena that can be considered *borderline*, not only in their geographic and cultural designation (Hutsul and Crimean Tatar), but also in their conceptual and political characterization. Namely, Sonevytsky is predominantly interested in analysing the ambiguous terrain that exists in the space between concepts and orientations such as nationalism/anti-nationalism, exoticization/empowerment, femininity/feminism, apolitical/political, rural/urban, pro-Russian/pro-European, and

East/West. She therefore follows Alexei Yurchak's maxim to "refuse all reductionist diagnoses of the current situation, whichever side they come from" (72), and in this way refrains from succumbing to any simplistic binary interpretations, which too often take a leading position in both popular and academic discourses. Instead, Sonevytsky offers a nuanced and multidimensional glimpse into the complexities and contradictions of the Ukrainian cultural and political landscape of the last two decades, which she analyses through the lenses of various musical and "sounding" phenomena. The result is both ethnographically rich and theoretically compelling, and exceedingly timely and relevant in its thematic and conceptual delineation.

Maria Sonevytsky, a Ukrainian-American scholar with a PhD in ethnomusicology from Columbia University, and now an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, scrutinizes in her book a variety of musical examples from Ukraine that are in one way or another related to West Ukrainian Hutsul, rural Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar people, identities, and sounds: music performances at protests (Orange Revolution, Maidan Revolution), songs and performances from the Eurovision Song Contest, festival performances (ArtPole, Dreamland), radio soundings (Radio Meydan from Crimea), the Voice of the Nation (Holos kraïny) singing competition, the Ukrainian *avtentyka* movement, and singers and artists such as Ruslana, Dakh Daughters, DakhaBrakha, Oleksij Zajets, Suzanna Karpenko, Jamala, and DJ Bebek. Sonevytsky's main goal in bringing all these disparate examples into one book is to discuss the interrelatedness of two concepts crucial for understanding the current Ukrainian political situation, which are also two common denominators of all the given examples listed above: Wildness discourse and the notion of political sovereignty.

With Wildness, Sonevytsky refers to practices of exoticization and stereotyping in music and performance that represent Ukraine or its constituent people (Hutsuls, Crimean Tatars, rural Ukrainians, or Ukrainians in general) as exotic, wild, uncivilized. However, these same exoticizing and self-exoticizing tropes are often also used by various Ukrainian musicians as tools for self-empowerment (i.e., Wildness refashioned as local epistemology), but in a way, as Sonevytsky argues, that does not neatly or inherently resolve the problematic aspects of such approaches. The author of the book in this way ties the notion of Wildness to the concept of political sovereignty, as it is often through practices of musical and artistic (self-) exoticization that many Ukrainian musicians construct and imagine new cultural and political alliances, and new political possibilities that could potentially liberate Ukraine from its problems and failures. Sonevytsky herself articulates these goals in the following way:

> My aim in this book has been to center various local Ukrainian epistemologies through various iterations of "wild music", to witness how Ukrainian musicians and audiences strategically remediate tropes of exoticism in order to imagine the future of sovereignty in Ukraine. Wildness rebels against the constraints – both musical and political – imposed on it, but is nonetheless articulated within these constraints,

> at times at the risk of reinscribing forms of essentialism, exoticism, or nationalism. Unable to break its frame, Wildness nonetheless consistently operates as a technology of escape, as a future-orientated promise that might finally release an imperilled state such as Ukraine from the "colonial matrix of power" that situates it on the perpetual limen of either the authoritarian East or the liberal democratic West (177).

In the main chapters of the book, Sonevytsky analyses multiple manifestations and uses of "wild music", as she attempts to interpret them through various overlapping and sometimes conflicting – mainly local and occasionally non-local – perspectives gathered through ethnographic research. In this way, she is able to unearth multiple layers of signification behind each specific instance of "wild music" – a method reminiscent of Geertz's thick description (1973), but which she actually calls "interpretive moves" (borrowed from Steven Feld, 1984), an approach particularly suited to analysing musical texts and performances. In this way, she compares and juxtaposes statements by musicians, managers, festival organizers, radio owners, journalists, music audiences, Western commentators, Ukrainian ethnomusicology students, villagers, urban cosmopolitans, and intellectual elites, all of them coming from various regions, classes, ethnicities, genders, and religions. In addition, Sonevytsky skilfully interweaves most of the chapters with rich and telling ethnographic vignettes that bestow the whole book with a sense of grounded and experiential immediacy, and in this way they successfully tie theory with practice.

Sonevytsky's principal chapters, where she elaborates most succinctly and compellingly on the issues of Wildness and sovereignty, are Chapters One through Four. In Chapter One, the author examines Ukrainian ethno-pop star Ruslana, and her diverse uses of Hutsul sounds and images in music videos at different points in her career. Sonevytsky in this way demonstrates the singer's move away from her early ethno-nationalist leanings ("Znaiu Ya," or "I Know"), through her auto-exoticism phase ("Wild Dances"), and finally to her eco-activist stage of "pragmatic patriotism" ("Wild Energy"). Sonevytsky argues in this way about Ruslana's potentially empowering and supposedly non-binary (pro-EU/pro-Russian) expressive strategies (although the non-binary part is not among the strongest arguments in the book), while she simultaneously critiques Ruslana's (self-)exoticizing and self-eroticizing gestures. Particularly valuable in this chapter are the author's interviews with Hutsul villagers, who comment on Ruslana's representations of them as "wild" people, many feeling "shame" in this regard, but some also "pride" (44–48).

Sonevytsky proceeds in Chapter Two to a discussion of Ukrainian "freak cabaret" group Dakh Daughters, and their uses of Hutsul sounds and narratives in their 2013 Maidan performance in Kyiv. The author's rich textual and ethnographic analysis in this chapter deftly demonstrates that the group's incorporation of Hutsul elements as sounds and images of Wildness and sovereignty cannot be pinned down to simplistic and binary interpretations of Dakh Daughters's music and performance. For example, some of their members stated they imagine Ukraine's future

not in binary terms, as either Western or Russian, but as something else (60). Furthermore, the chapter also offers an important and multi-layered examination of the status and role of political art in a post-socialist and revolutionary context, as it shows how Dakh Daughter's videos and performances from before until after the Maidan Revolution advanced from "a privileged stance of political ambivalence to a position of ambivalence *as* political conviction" (82).

Chapter Three then moves away from the examination of Hutsul sounds (in Chapters One and Two) as sounds of Wildness and sovereignty to a deliberation in this regard of Ukrainian rural vocal timbres, as presented in the Voice of the Nation (Holos kraïny) competition / TV reality show (for example, by singers Oleksij Zajets and Suzanna Karpenko). These "wild" timbres, often described by their practitioners as sounds of "bloating goats", and "on the border of yelling", and nourished through the Ukrainian *avtentyka* movement, are usually rejected from the competition, and therefore from being the "voice of the nation", but their failure, as Sonevytsky argues, is a productive one. With their performances of rural sovereignty, singers like Zajets and Karpenko establish a critique of a restricted model of the "nation" as advocated through these kinds of competitions and TV shows, and call for a more heterogeneous and inclusive one that would give space to disenfranchised rural voices. It would be relevant in this regard, if the author would also show how much space these kinds of rural voices and constituencies are allocated in a broader Ukrainian media space (national and private), and therefore how well incorporated or marginalized they are in general (because the Voice of the Nation competition is mainly dedicated to pop, and not to *etno-muzyka* or *avtentyka* performers, who might instead find more welcoming space in some other Ukrainian TV or radio shows).

Chapter Four switches to yet another marginalized and minority group, Crimean Tatars, and to their sounds of Wildness and sovereignty. This chapter also brings a nuanced and multidimensional discussion of layers of meaning behind the concept of "Eastern" sounds, which Crimean Tatar musicians and radio personnel often use in their self-designation, and are often simultaneously read as either "validating" or "intrusive" by different actors in the Crimean public space. Moreover, the "Eastern" designation can similarly often connote (self-)exoticizing or threatening "wildness". By analysing different "Eastern" sounds and public soundings coming from the Crimean Tatar Radio Meydan (which existed until 2015), or through the music of singer Jamala or DJ Bebek, the author astutely shows how the trope of "Eastern" can signify a multiplicity of intersecting meanings: exotic otherness, counterpublicness, indigenous sovereignty, sonorous capitalism, and/or aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Sonevytsky extends the analysis of the Crimean Tatar sound sovereignties and Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian music solidarities also to most of the other chapters in the book (Introduction, Chapter Two, Chapter Five, and Conclusion). This also corroborates her main arguments about the future of Ukrainian sovereignty, which should be based on heterogeneous civic publics (a point to which I will return at the end of the review). Chapter Five,

about the Ukrainian "ethno-chaos" group DakhaBrakha, is the least engaging chapter, as it offers very thin and monologic textual and cultural interpretations, without giving much attention to the ethnographic multiplicity of local meanings that are otherwise so well elucidated in previous chapters.

Nevertheless, the book as a whole makes an important contribution to the contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship, and it does so in many senses: ethnographically, theoretically, topically. Moreover, it provides a compelling examination of the current Ukrainian cultural and political situation, as well as the related questions of nationalism, patriotism, imperialism, and the role of minority and marginalized groups in the shaping of the future Ukrainian sovereignty. The only issue that could further solidify Sonevytsky's main arguments in the book would be a discussion of other important Ukrainian minorities and their music and cultural expressions (e.g., Russian ethnic and language groups, Roma people), which would – together with Hutsul, rural, and Crimean Tatar constituencies – probably be pivotal for any deliberation of a viable Ukrainian civic state.

David Verbuč
(Charles University)

References

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Feld, Steven. 1984. "Communication, Music, and Speech About Music". *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 16: 1–18.

Susanna Trnka
Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic

Cornell University Press, 2020

Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic is the title of the recently published book written by an anthropologist Susanna Trnka (of Czech origin, currently based in New Zealand). This impressive monograph provides the reader with fresh, and for many, also unexpected, perspectives to contemporary Czech society as well as to Czech history, with a focus on the construction of national identity. *Traversing* is based on thirty years of anthropological/ethnographic research in the Czech Republic (and the former Czechoslovakia). Moreover, Trnka's overall theoretical approach in the book is interdisciplinary. She masterfully combines anthropological knowledge with philosophy. This makes her work genuinely exceptional, and her book is a significant contribution to both disciplines.

As the title suggests, the key concept that Trnka's book introduces is "traversing" – "ways of seeing, experiencing, and moving through the world and the kinds of persons we become through them" (3). Trnka coins the term "traversing" to expand on the philosophical thought of Martin Heidegger and Jan Patočka, and to thus emphasise and examine embodiment as crucial to our understanding of being-in-the-world. In particular, Trnka pays attention to three movements that we make as embodied actors in the world: (1) how we move through time and space, (2) how we move toward and away from one another, and, finally, (3) how we move

toward ourselves and the earth we live on (3). In her own words:

> Traversing foregrounds human independence and interdependence, agency and creativity. It posits culture, history, and technology in terms of how they shape us in terms of how we traverse through life, and in turn examines how our movements act to create culture, recast history, and engage with, or disavow, technology. Asserting the dynamism of any given society and any given life, it highlights how we move through life, just as life moves through and around us, necessitating that we never stay in exactly the same place and time but must continually navigate our "thrownness" or situatedness in a specific historical moment (4).

The concept of traversing, which is to a large extent formed by phenomenological philosophy, is nevertheless explored through admiringly copious ethnographic data and through an analysis of "key moments" that occur across many Czech lives spanning various generations. This in-depth intertwining of anthropology and phenomenological philosophy enables Trnka to discuss topics such as "truth" and the "meaning of life", which somewhat extend beyond the possibilities of anthropological interpretation. Moreover, the theoretical and methodological framework that Trnka utilises does not lead to cultural generalisation; on the contrary, it acknowledges the very individual and particular agencies of distinct social actors in contemporary Czech society. As part of her critical and reflexive anthropological approach, Trnka does not forget to frequently reflect on her own position (of a semi-native anthropologist) in the field. Her in-depth cultural knowledge of the most intimate Czech lifeworlds, based on thirty years of anthropological fieldwork in various parts of the Czech Republic, is hugely impressive.

The book is structured into an introduction, conclusion and five main chapters. In Chapter One, titled "Footsteps Through the City: Social Justice in its Multiplicity", Trnka contextualises the idea of being and feeling Czech as well as the construction of Czech national identity in relation to history and space. She takes the reader on a tour to the capital city of Prague with a focus on the celebrations of 28 September (St Wenceslas Day), but she also detours to Ostrava (a town known for its metallurgical industry and environmental pollution) and to the south Bohemian town of Český Krumlov (which she does not represent through the usual lens of tourism, but in terms of the "unspoken" histories of the local German, Jewish, and Roma inhabitants).

Chapter Two, "Digital Dwelling: The Everyday Freedoms of Technology Use", discusses the notion of space and a sense of belonging in the 21st century in relation to technological developments and its impact on the social lives of individual actors. Trnka not only highlights the limitations and dangers of the uses of technology (emphasised also in Heidegger's late philosophy), but also shows how new technologies, namely the internet, can serve as a site of personal freedom and as an expression of one's agency. Last but not least, the second chapter offers important theoretical contributions to the understanding of the idea of how the notion of "space" (in the temporal, geographical, and social sense) is shaped and expanded by the employment of 21st century digital technologies.

In Chapter Three, "Ballroom Dance and Other Technologies of Sexuality and Desire", Trnka explores the embodiment of the ballroom dance as an important social ritual for acquiring gender-normative relations amongst Czech teenagers while also focusing on heteronormativity, and the embodied and symbolic masculine dominance in such acts. Nevertheless, Trnka shows that the "worlds" of both men and women are closely intertwined, and that the gender divisions in the Czech lifeworlds are constantly negotiated in the economic realities and labour demands of the post-socialist period. Next, Chapter Four, "New Europeans: Twenty-First-Century Families as Sites for Self-Realisation", depicts the shifting partnership arrangements under the new socio-economic realities and expectations. In this part of the book, Trnka also skillfully explores the idea of family life as a site of self-realisation, particularly through the case of Czech women and their relation to motherhood, as she places the whole discussion within the context of Patočka's emphasis on interrelationality and the mother-child relationship as a primary form of interaction with the world. "Making Moods: Food and Drink as Collective Acts of Sustenance, Pleasure, and Dissolution" is the title of Chapter Five. This section offers interesting insight into the Czech foodways and drinking habits, including alcohol consumption. Trnka shows how food and drink are used as powerful social mediators for producing and managing specific moods, namely those of pleasure and extraordinary temporality (in Patočka's terms, they are grounded in the mundane activities of the first and second movement, but simultaneously also enable the third movement towards "truth"/self-transcendence). However, both food and drink (especially alcohol) is a "double-edged sword" and, thus, in this chapter, Trnka reveals how she was encouraged to overeat until feeling sick or how the line grows thin between the joys of alcohol consumption and alcoholism. In Trnka's argument, the employment of food and drink as technologies of pleasure enable the production of a space for the enjoyment of the mundane and for the simultaneous momentary transcendence of it, and to "traverse across its boundaries to acknowledge our place in something much greater" (169).

In the last chapter, "Reconnection: Between the Power Lines and the Stars", which constitutes the conclusion of the book, Trnka seriously takes up the suggestions by the three philosophers Heidegger, Patočka, and Kohák that we need to rethink the use of new technologies in our daily lives, to be aware of both its dangers and possibilities, as well as their insistence for us to reconnect with nature, from which the new technologies are dividing us. Nature, according the aforementioned philosophers, as well as to Trnka's ethnographic observations, plays a crucial role in our being-in-the-world, and we as humans need to both actively experience it and thoughtfully rethink our place within it. In practice, this can take a form of vacations at weekend cottages (so-called *chatas*), going to summer camps, or "tramping" within Czech lifeworlds. As Trnka says in her own words at the very end of her book:

> Traversing is our way both of navigating our thrownness and of trying to surpass it, however fleetingly. Embracing nature – however historically, culturally, and technologically mediated that "nature" is

> – is one possible route toward reconnection and toward grasping a glimpse of what lies both beyond and within the quotidian tasks and worries that often largely structure our everyday existence. So too, potentially, is embracing a lover, caring for a child, or converting a garden party into an Event that reconstitutes our sense of space and time. Each of these acts holds within it the possibility of enabling us to transcend the ordinary, just long enough to see where it is that we are actually (momentarily) standing. What we come back with enables us to live as thoughtfully as we can, amid both the power lines and the stars (188–189).

To conclude, Trnka's book is not only theoretically innovative and inspiring, but also pleasurable to read. The writing is well-organised, explanations are clear, and the theory is properly backed by numerous ethnographic vignettes that further illustrate the particularities of the phenomena being discussed in relation to the everyday lives of various social actors. In the book, Trnka "harvests the fruit" of her long-term research, which I believe will become a crucial postmodern anthropological and philosophical work of great importance, helping us to better understand the particularities of Czech lifeworlds. However, the theoretical remarks expanding on phenomenology and on embodiment can be easily applied or tested also in other cultures and countries of the world. Thus, the book can be heartily recommended not only to all Czech anthropologists and philosophers, but also to anyone with a deep interest in a human's way of being-in-the-world.

Markéta Slavková
(Czech Academy of Sciences)

BIOGRAF

Journal for qualitative research

For online version and further information about the journal, authors, themes and subscriptions see: **http://www.biograf.org**

In the content of the last issue 69–70/2019 you will find:

TEXTS

Tanya Luhrmann

A hyperreal God and modern belief: Toward an anthropological theory of mind

Barbora Spalová, Marek Liška, Tereza Picková

Monastering: Moral economy of the monasteries of Benedictine tradition in Czech Republic

Tereza Sedláčková

Becoming authentic: Sartrian sadomasochism of fieldwork

REVIEWS

Hana Porkertová

Focus on the Edges: Geography of Everydayness as a Space for Rethinking Scientific Knowledge

Biograf is published only in Czech and Slovak languages.

Biograf z.s., Krompach 26, 47157; redakce@biograf.org

CARGO – Journal for Cultural and Social Anthropology

ISSN 1212-4923 (print)
ISSN 2336-1956 (online)

Open-Access Journal

Published by the Czech Association for Social Anthropology

Peer-reviewed journal, indexed in ERIH+

Accepting texts in English, Czech, and Slovak

Publishes studies, as well as reports and reviews

For more information, visit:
http://cargojournal.org/index.php/cargo/index

2017/1–2 Medical Anthropology

2018/1–2 Social Life and Applied Anthropology

2019/1–2 articles by Chris Hann, Alexandra Schwell, Tereza Štěpánková and Vít Horák, Lenka Hadarová and others

CZECH ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA) is a civic association of professional academics in social anthropology, graduates, and students of social anthropology and supporters from related disciplines. It is part of the academic community of the Czech Republic. CASA has been a member of the Council of Scientific Societies of the Czech Republic since 2010, and a member of the World Council of Anthropological Associations since 2012.

The aims of CASA are

- to support the development of scientific research and education in social anthropology;
- to represent Czech social anthropology in relation to the government, public and non-governmental organizations, and on international anthropological forums;
- to popularise the achievements of social anthropology among the general public;
- to create and cultivate relations among social anthropologists and specialists of related disciplines in the Czech Republic and internationally;
- to maintain contacts and establish cooperation with similar professional organizations in the Czech Republic and abroad.

To attain its aims, the association organizes specialized conferences, lectures, and seminars, and prepares and produces publications. It elaborates and presents suggestions concerning the improvement of education and research in social anthropology, and offers the findings produced in social anthropology for practical implementation while respecting scholarly standards and ethics. The association assists its members in research and other scholarly activities, actively cooperates with similar organizations abroad, and participates in the global development of social anthropology.

CASA welcomes the applications of new potential members, including, but not limited to, students and graduates in social anthropology and related disciplines who would like to participate in the development of the discipline.

For more information, visit **www.casaonline.cz** or contact CASA representatives at **info@casaonline.cz.**