
Foreword to the first issue of the english edition of "Urban People", a journal of anthropology of urban worlds

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The city represents a sort of sieve of history. Its temporal layers, at first glance clear in layout, architecture, interiors, indoor and outdoor sculptures and paintings, appropriation of entire spaces, etc., are a document of the continuity of development of its territory and appearance and of important historical turning points that society and its residences pass through. Inappropriate vacant lots in crowded built-up areas in a historic center or insensitively placed constructions and structural elements, however, on first glance also bear witness to the importance people attributed and attribute to the cities' past. It must willy nilly blend with the spirit of the time and that spirit often not only demanded reconstruction of old buildings and their surroundings and therefore helped maintain material for what we can call the memory of a city, but it also determined what to demolish, reconstruct, or change. Modern and postmodern times of a city were then affected by a conflict between so-called traditionalists and so-called modernists. Truly scholarly interest in monuments actually began only in modern national societies.

The original "old" town and its further temporal layers have disappeared forever. They have, therefore, often remained captured only on maps and plans of the time, in pictures, in literary works of the time, in periodicals, later in photographs and postcards and, in the 20th century, in film strips. Apart from those records of how people looked after the memories of a city and what they actually found important to capture and document, there also exists a flow of memories of inhabitants and visitors to their city, literarily codified memories, memories transmitted within the family and interest groups (national, generational, social, local), and also, of course, dreams of the city, virtual images that homesick emigrants could "build". However in any case there is no city without a memory that is the basis of every identity and therefore there is no city without an identity. Naturally in the course of historical development places developed symbolic importance through certain historical experience (possibly regional, national, social, etc. symbols), and also places with minimal historical moorings. The future of the latter, however, continually remains open; it is never possible to exclude an event that will transform a neutral place into something unique.

The identity of a city, that is, its character, its self-perception and its self-presentation as well as its perception and presentation from the exterior, expressed by the polarity of city and suburbs, city and villages, city and rival city (this polarity meanwhile can be negative or positive), is thus an unfinished work of many generations. From the viewpoint of its development, the key is the entire atmosphere in European society and from it the emerging interest of communal institutions. The urban anthropologist, however, must pose another question: what is the importance of the historical character of a city for the character and contentment of the people who live in it? How do they live in quarters with a short history (in housing estates), how do they live in zones with monuments, today crowded with tourists, and how do they live in cities and in quarters with a past that tears at the emotions (e.g., in places where, during the Second World War, there were ghettos overloaded with human suffering)? And is it at all possible to live in areas of former concentration camps without suppressing the past of those places? The first issue of this journal concerning anthropology of world cities is primarily dedicated to Prague, Warsaw and its rival Krakow, which shares with Prague a reputation as the most beautiful city in the world. The Prague anthropologist Blanka Soukupová deals with the importance of the relationships of Czech society from the turn of the 20th century to the so-called Velvet Revolution (1989) to memorials as some sort of materialization of the past. Warsaw ethnologist Andrzej Stawarz tries to show in his essay Warsaw's attempt to visualize the memory of the totalitarian regime and its victims. In this case he understandably deals with some sort of additional construction of the picture of the time distorted by the regime in the heads and hearts of the people in the town which, from the end of the Second World War, laboriously constructed and is constructing a new identity whose axis is the Warsaw Uprising. The myth of cityheroes and suffering, however, also continued in postwar times (during the years 1949-1956 and 1980-1988 and mainly during the years 1981-1983), when the capital of Poland became the symbol of resistance against totalitarianism. And in the case of Warsaw, the past should thus be of service to the new present. Krakow ethnologist Róża GodulaWęclawowicz proceeds from the theme of identification of Krakow with old Krakow, whose present space is, to a great extent, a copy of the medieval city. In the mental map of its inhabitants, such a Krakow is bound to several transparent polyfunctional places in the Old Town. This enhances its value as a space for important festivals, promenades, etc. Besides, Durkheim already drew attention to the importance of the rhythmization of activities for the creation of social time. Krakow functions in the mental map as a city connected at the same time with the personality and cult of John Paul II. GodulaWęclawowicz' text is, to a certain extent, paired with the article by Krakow art historian Tomasz Węclawowicz, who, proceeding from the main anthropological thesis that a city is created by people, writes about the beginnings of the city and the expansion of its borders in the light of the newest socialscientific research.

The development of medieval Krakow is tied to Christianization with the mentality of medieval man. However, Krakow's churches, like the main square, later lost many of their original functions and were transformed into memorials. In the closing study, Slovak ethnologist Alexandra Bitušíková deals with the thesis of memorials as an essential, but also, in the course time, a flexible component of the identity of a city. Bitušíková presents two transparent approaches to the revitalization of cities: Americanization and Europeanization. She then illustrates with the example of Banská Bystrica how European institutions can influence communal politics, which retroactively strengthen individual components of the identity of a town. Ján Griger's report on a sociological survey of how the users of Loreta Square in Prague perceive its sounds stems from the methods of Schafer's acoustic ecology research team and from the research of the Kanda Soundscape Project which was carried out in a traditional quarter of Tokyo in the 1980s. What is most important for anthropology is that he stresses the importance of sounds in the memory and identity of a city. Similar, of course, could perhaps be the case of typical smells.

Social psychologists believe that forgetting one's roots does not pay. The journal's first issue fully endorses this theory while, at the same time, it points out the possibilities of pulling out the roots, natural decomposition, and their new growth. The story of a town - at least for the present - does not end... Besides, in the outskirts of globalized (or generalized) metropolises, international commercial chains and multientertainment centers are springing up like mushrooms. Will they some day be embraced by our memory? How do the city and its people handle the present? How much group and individual history, whether or not reflected on, will be contained in the answer to the question, "Where are you from?"

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