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# Slavomíra Ferenčuhová, Michaela Šuleřová, Barbora Vacková (eds.): Město [The City].

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Social Studies (Sociální studia), a scholarly journal published by the Faculty of Social Science of Masaryk University in Brno, declares it is an interdisciplinary periodical covering various fields of social science, particularly sociology, social and cultural anthropology, political science, psychology, and history, with particular emphasis on the social and cultural context of the problems discussed. Each issue of the journal is monothematic and concentrates on new, as yet unmapped social trends, view and themes of social science research. One of the most recent issues of this journal covered urban problems. The editors kept the intentions of the authors open within the framework of a generally limited theme. In the editorial THE CITY: The Beginning of Urban Studies in the Czech Republic? this intention illuminates "the possibility of discovering various ways of viewing a city as an object of research in the contemporary work (mainly) of young researchers in (primarily) the Czech milieu." Thus a pléiade of miscellaneous themes are presented which are divided into three sections "Life in the City is dedicated to a specific city's way of life; the second look - (De)signing cities - reflects the character of the city as an entity deliberately and systematically featured in historically changing social conditions; the third approach - The City as Image and Sound views the city as a tangible, visual and auditive environment and concurrently recognizes the "physical" environment of the city and the fact that its users perceive it. Despite the declared multidepartmentalism in the journal, the sociological approach evidently prevails. This is confirmed both by the introductory text of the journal (appearing outside of the above-mentioned sections) - a study by Dušan Jandák, I.A. Bláha and the Beginnings of Czech Urban Sociology. Bláha's work presents the first Czech empirical research on the city as well as the first Czech urban sociological theory; his sociological functionalism is an original theoretical approach to the study of the city along with M. Weber, G. Simmel and the Chicago School.

The section Life in the City is introduced in a translation of Walter Benjamin's text Man of the Crowd, which is one of his fragmentary, unfinished sketches exploring the changing urban society of the nineteenth century. He is interested in the changes to which its inhabitants are subjected while experiencing the pressures of their environment. A commentary on the text Benjamin's Baudelairian Texts, On Walter Benjamin's "Man of the Crowd" was written by Jaroslav Střítecký. Michaela Šuleřová, in the article The Potential and Limits of City Space, presents a twofold discussion on the quality of city optics of public urban spaces; on one hand, it examines the possibilities of a city for creating societies and a public and further deals with the contemporary discussion of social structure in an urban space. The aim of Roman Vido's paper Religious City, Irreligious City is to sketch some aspects of the relationship between religion and the city and to focus on the multilayered nature and ambiguity of the influence of the urban environment on the religious life of the individual as well as society in pre-modern and modern times.

The second section, (De)signing cities, is introduced in a translation, this time of the chapter Planning Purified Cities from Richard Sennett's book The Uses of Disorder. The text deals with the example of power relations incorporated in the process of urban planning. Barbora Vacková is the author of the essay "As much Light, Air, Joy and Simplicity as Possible..." Features of Utopian Thought in the History of City Planning, in which she offers a potential approach to ideas of city planning from antiquity to the present which can be found in the philosophical, urban and scientific tradition. The end of the text deals with avant-garde urbanism of the first half of the 20th century, especially the Zlín and Ostrava region. Michal Růžička, in his article Geography of Social Exclusion, addresses the genesis of urban ghettos in Czech cities as a result of social and spatial control of the dominant cultural order by excluding 'the others'; this process could be controlled by more inclusive and sensitive urban planning and spatial management. The article by Slavomíra Ferenčuhová, 'Together and Contented'. Images of Integrated Society in Urban Planning, attempts to introduce urban planning as a particular field of interest within urban sociology and studies urban change. The example of the city of Brno and an analysis of the document "Strategy for Brno" raise questions about the role representatives of the city's inhabitants play in attempts to "integrate" urban society and the importance of the city as a structure of "identification" for its inhabitants.

The third section - The City as Image and Sound - contains two studies. Tomáš Řiháček, in his paper What Does a City Sound Like? The Urban Sonic Environment from a Soundscape Concept Perspective presents the concept of

the sonosphere, which values sound as a source of cultural wealth, and not at all a potential source of annoyance, disturbance and destructive influences. In her paper *Town and Society. Kutná Hora during the long 14th Century* Blanka Altová follows the linkage between the social and urbanistic development of Kutná Hora in pre-Hussite times.

The journal concludes with three papers which are also connected to the theme: an essay by Jan Krása, *At Home in Nature, at Home in the City*, a research report *The Age of a City or Positivist Acquiring Qualitative Knowledge* by Lucie Vidovičová and a review of the book *Antony Vidle: Warped Space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* by Michal Šimůnek.

The monothematic issue of *Social Studies* with the theme of the City thus presents a self-contained view of the concept of problematics of the City, mainly from the sociological perspective. It reasons that the City - and above all, today's city - is a stimulating and many-layered theme for social studies research and thus creates significant scope for further possible research projects in this field.

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