



HUMR

Představení absolventských
prací studentů FHS UK



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„Gratulujeme k úspěšné obhajobě a přejeme hodně štěstí do navazujícího studia i dalšího života.“ Variace těchto slov běžně uzavírá obhajobu, která je obvykle první i poslední možností, kde během půl hodiny představit výsledky měsíců i roků úsilí – slz, potu i smíchu –, nově vytvářených vztahů a zkušeností, které tvorbu obhajované práce provází. Následuje pak pouze tiché uložení textu do archivu, ve kterém na něj narazí nanejvýš dobrodružná cestovatelka databázemi Univerzity Karlovy. Množství pozoruhodných výzkumů a rozmanitých příběhů s nimi spojených tak zmizí bez většího povšimnutí ze zřetele pod digitálním prachem.

Toto speciální vydání HUMRu, které vznikalo postupně od podzimních obhajob 2024, má za cíl zviditelnit závěrečné práce studentstva a zpřístupnit jejich obsah jak zbytku fakulty tak širší veřejnosti. Najdete zde texty od osmi studentů, které zachycují rozmanitost naší univerzity jak co se kladených otázek tak paradigmat a osobních motivací týče.

DEAR READERS,

“Congratulations on a successful defense, and best wishes for your future endeavors.” A variation of these words commonly marks the conclusion of a thesis defense – the first and last opportunity to distill months or even years of thinking, tears, sweat and laughter, newly created relationships and experiences into a less than 30-minutes long presentation. Yet, after this fleeting moment, the defended thesis is quietly archived, accessed only by the rare explorer of Charles University’s databases. As such, vast amounts of remarkable research, along with diverse stories associated with it, disappear from view, gathering digital dust unnoticed by anyone.

This special issue of HUMR, initiated following the autumn 2024 defenses, seeks to counteract that quiet disappearance. Our goal is to provide a platform to present final theses, making their insights accessible to the wider faculty and the public. Within these pages, you will find contributions from eight students, each sharing their work and the research journey that they undertook. Together, these works highlight the rich diversity of our faculty in terms of the questions asked, paradigms, and personal motivations.

LAUGHING AND CRYING: SOAP OPERA AS A TOOL OF RESISTANCE TO MAINSTREAM POLITICS

Ana Arakhamia

It all started when one winter morning of early twenty-tens, I, a proud 5th grader, went to school on Monday just to discover that everyone had been talking about this new TV show that aired on the weekend. A TV show I had no idea about, a TV show that seemed interesting and just scandalous enough to make my 11-year-old self completely obsessed. I ran home and begged my mother to let me watch it—alas, she stood firm on her decision, the TV show was past my bedtime. Not only that, but “it’s ‘inappropriate’ for a child”, I can hear my mother say. Back then I would have never thought that watching this mysterious, inappropriate and scandalous series would be a point of bonding and quality family time not only for me and my mother but, I won’t be exaggerating if I say, the whole Georgia.

It was some three years after it first aired that I was allowed to watch it. I devoured it. Watching tens of episodes every day just to catch up on the lost years, just to be ready to engage in gossip I so painfully was missing out on for years. The name of this TV show was *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi*, in translation My Wife’s Girlfriends, and over the years (all 13 of them) this piece of media found itself not only in the middle of school conversations, family dinners or gossip sessions but also my (and one more person as much as I’m aware) academic explorations.

After many years of being entertained by the drama and the comedy of the *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi*, I started noticing that more serious and relevant events started making their way through in the script. At one point it became apparent that the TV show had become a mirror of Georgian society and our political life. I thought long and hard—had it been a coincidence? Did I just start noticing things because I grew older and gained some sort of political understanding? Or had the TV show been the same all along?

Deep down I always knew I wanted to go back, re-watch and re-understand *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* and my wish got even more credibility when this name started appearing on the first pages of political news. One unassuming day, Georgian prime

minister Irakli Kobakhidze, during his press conference announced “LGBTQ+ propaganda (in *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi*) is going against people, it’s completely unacceptable coming from an opposition-allied television. Society, naturally, has negative reaction to this.” He even went so far to blame the series for contravening Georgian identity: “They try to normalize cursing. From this, we can see that they don’t like elements of our national identity. They specifically, by cursing, are trying to disrespect the Georgian language“. Successfully foreshadowing the recent “Anti LGBTQ+ propaganda” law and “Foreign agents” law prime minister of Georgian Dream (the ruling party of the country) has also, in a strange way, awoke my interest and led me to explore entertainment media on the crossroads with news journalism in new, fragile and changing democracy of Georgia.

It is time to zoom out of my personal experiences and get some facts straight about the local context of Georgia and its media landscape. Georgia, a small but vibrant country in the South Caucasus, has experienced dramatic shifts in its political, social, and economic spheres since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The transition from socialism to a market economy was accompanied by significant political turmoil, economic hardship, and a reconfiguration of national identity. This has created a highly polarized society where political allegiances often dictate public opinion, values, and even media consumption habits. The media landscape in Georgia is as polarized as the political sphere it reports on. This divide reflects a broader societal split, with media outlets serving as battlegrounds for ideological and political contestation.

That’s where *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* comes in. *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* is one of Georgia’s most popular TV shows, a mix of comedy, drama, and just the right amount of scandal to keep people hooked. It first aired in 2011 and revolves around three childhood friends—Nina, Kato, and Tina—navigating life, love, and all the chaos in between in Tbilisi. Nina is a stay-at-home mom, Kato is a glamorous and often unlucky-in-love event manager, and Tina is a tough feminist lawyer who fights domestic violence cases.

What starts as a light-hearted show quickly gets deeper, touching on real issues like unemployment, domestic vio-

lence, homophobia, and even political corruption. The show uses its relatable characters and dramatic plotlines to reflect Georgia's social and political landscape. Over time, it became not just a source of entertainment but also a way for Georgians to talk about the country's challenges—and maybe even rethink a few things. It did not just reflect what was happening in society; it started commenting on it, sometimes pretty directly. My main goal with this research was to systematize the patterns I naturally noticed while watching *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi*—the way it intertwined everyday drama with Georgia's deeper social and political issues. I wanted to figure out whether entertainment media, like this show, could be more than just a guilty pleasure. Could it actually do some of the heavy lifting we expect from traditional news or investigative journalism? Does it inform people, shape opinions, or even challenge the status quo? These were the questions I set out to answer.

My research questions look like this:

1. *Which specific political narratives does the TV series transmit through the narrative tool of fictionalization, and how?*

2. *How does *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* employ the tools of fictionalization (Machado-Borges, 2007), charging (Nærland, 2020), and a “soap” framework (Van Zoonen, 2004) to bridge the gap between a citizen and a sphere of politics?*

Before diving into the series, I first explored the field of entertainment media and politics. The field of entertainment media, especially in the context of socio-political commentary, is very diverse and constantly evolving. It is best understood through a non-essentialist lens, which means stepping away from rigid definitions of what counts as “serious” media versus “entertainment”. Instead of drawing strict boundaries, it is about exploring how different types of media—whether a soap opera or a news report—can shape public understanding and engage with political and social issues.

In this step I discovered works of Van Zoonen (1994, 2004) — she challenges the traditional divide between rational, “masculine” political discourse and emotional, “feminine” storytelling, like soap operas. She argues that **genres like**

soap operas, often dismissed as trivial, actually have the power to connect viewers with complex social and political themes by making them relatable on a personal level. This emotional engagement can be just as impactful as the rational analysis typically associated with journalism.

To unpack how shows like *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* work, I used three key tools: fictionalization, charging, and the “soap” framework. Fictionalization, according to Machado-Borges (2007), lets sensitive or controversial issues—like corruption or homophobia—be addressed under the cover of a fictional story. Charging, as Nærland (2019) describes it, uses character-driven drama to spark emotional engagement with social issues. Finally, the “soap” framework (Van Zoonen, 2004) highlights how serialized storytelling, with its focus on personal lives, can make politics feel closer and more accessible to viewers.

I approached the next step of my research, actually watching the TV show and coding it, with a lot of enthusiasm, excitement and just enough delusion to convince me that I could watch and analyze 1000+ episodes in the scope of a bachelor’s thesis. Upon finishing season four it became apparent that I needed to stop, the data that I had collected was saturated and interesting, and time before the final deadline was running out. So, I decided to focus on the first five seasons that take place during an important political shift in Georgia—2012 elections and subsequent change of the ruling party. My approach to studying *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* was simple but thorough: watching, watching, and watching some more. I went through all five seasons, taking detailed notes as I observed recurring themes, specific plotlines, and character development. Whenever a social or political issue popped up, I flagged it and noted how it was portrayed—was it subtle or overt? Was it tied to a specific character or situation? The goal was to capture every instance of political or social commentary, from obvious examples like corrupt politicians to smaller, everyday moments like casual sexism or jokes about unemployment.

As I worked through the episodes, patterns began to emerge. Some issues, like gender roles or homophobia, were tied closely to specific characters, making the commentary

feel deeply personal. Others, like corruption or workplace discrimination, were embedded in the broader plotlines, often portrayed with sharp irony, or biting satire. Each instance added another layer to how the show mirrored Georgian society—sometimes holding up a critical lens, other times simply reflecting the reality of daily life.

Gender roles take center stage, with characters like Nina and Tina navigating their own battles—Nina in the confines of a traditional family, and Tina as a bold feminist lawyer fighting domestic violence. Their stories are not just personal; they challenge the broader societal norms that define life in Georgia.

Then there is the show's take on homophobia. It does not preach, but it does not hold back either. Through subtle moments and character arcs, it exposes the struggles LGBTQ+ individuals face in a society that often shuts them out. Poverty and emigration are equally central, with characters wrestling with unemployment and the harsh reality of having to leave Georgia for a better life abroad. These are not just side plots—they're raw, human reflections of everyday struggles.

And of course, it would not be a Georgian soap opera without a nod to politics. Corrupt politicians and manipulative media are cleverly woven into the storylines, using satire to pull back the curtain on the country's power structures. Even workplace discrimination gets its spotlight, as characters face inequality tied to their gender or class, making these injustices impossible to ignore. *Chemi Tsolis Daqalebi* does not just tell stories—it sparks conversations. It mirrors real life while nudging viewers to question, laugh, and, maybe, see things differently.

Backstage of this research, also known as my life, unfortunately did not pause for the 5 months I was actively writing. There were classes to attend, errands to run, and houses to change (yes, I moved during the thesis writing process). It was not always easy juggling everything, but somehow, I managed. Mostly my assets were scattering my study sessions all around the city, going somewhere everyday and most importantly a lot of fresh air walks, many beer nights and coffee study sessions with friends. Looking back at it,

even the toughest moments of sitting with two of my closest people in my unfurnished apartment all night before the submission deadline, reading their works and stress-baking them a cake (out of zero ingredients) taste like a sweet memory I will forever cherish. And if I will ever want to repeat this frenzy these will be the areas I will explore: most obviously, just, other seasons of *Chemi Tsohis Daqalebi*, check if they managed to stay relevant and actual (spoiler alert: they did) or how has their approach changed to displaying certain topics (like homophobia for example). Though, we will have to see about that.

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JAK PSÁT O IZRAELI A PALESTINĚ, KDYŽ JE VÁM Z TOHO SMUTNO?

Martin Zelinka

Pocházím z Kyjova, ale během života jsem se toulal po různých místech včetně izraelských měst Beerševa a Tel Aviv. Přestože letos oslavím 33 let na této planetě, mám pouze mlhavou představu, čím bych chtěl v životě být. Popravdě, s přibývajícími lety je čím dál mlhavější. Hrdý jsem

například na své dobrovolnické působení v programu United Nations Volunteers a účast v Evropském solidárním projektu Roots of the Future.

Militární kultury často pracují s historickými příběhy. Není divu, máloco má tak silný mobilizační potenciál jako dávná hrdinství. V diplomové práci mě proto zajímalo, jaké historické narativy utvářely pohled českých účastníků/ic izraelského dobrovolnického programu Sar-El na dějiny.

Nejosamější hodina

Ačkoliv na první pohled je diplomová práce pouze završením studia, v praxi na ní strávíte mnoho hodin a musíte do ní napřít významnou část svých tvůrčích sil. Zpětně viděno, až psaním diplomky skutečně začíná vysokoškolské studium ve své nejindividuálnější podobě. Zatímco zkoušky a různé průběžné požadavky plníte se svými spolužáky v podobnou dobu a můžete tak využívat bonusu ve formě „peer support“ (příjemnější opak peer pressure), v závěru magisterského kombinovaného studia jsem zažil ty nejosamější hodiny. Ať už bude vaše téma jakékoliv, bude totiž pravděpodobně tak specifické, že vám s ním ostatní neporadí, ani kdyby sebevíc chtěli.

Z výše zmíněných důvodů je důležité zvolit si správného „partáka“ (vedoucí/ho), který má povinnost vám pomoci dokonce ve svém popisu práce. Se svým vedoucím, doktorem Petrem Wohlmuthem, jsem se seznámil v červnu 2021 během setkání u táboráku poblíž fakulty pořádaného naší katedrou pro nové studující. Dali jsme se do řeči o Izraeli a jeho militární kultuře a já jsem mu vyprávěl o speciálním programu Sar-El, který umožňuje i cizincům dobrovolničit v izraelské armádě (IDF). Pan doktor nadhodil, že by to bylo zajímavé diplomové téma.

Schopný vedoucí je důležitý

Střih do června 2022 – po zvažování různých možností (nejvíce tématu navazujícího na moji bakalářskou práci) jsem se zapsal u doktora Wohlmutha s tématem, které jsme rok předtím probírali u ohně. Zpětně to považuji za dobrý krok ze dvou důvodů. Zaprvé, když téma spadá do dlouhodobého vědeckého zájmu vedoucího, tak je schopen vás nasměrovat na relevantní

odbornou literaturu a poradit vám s výzkumem. Zadruhé, pan doktor se ukázal jako mimořádně svědomitý vedoucí. Práci jsem s ním mnohokrát konzultoval – osobně, přes mail i přes MS Teams. Jelikož nejsem z Prahy, právě ochota přizpůsobit se hybridnímu vedení práce pro mě byla důležitá.

Proto doporučuji vybírat si vedoucí/ho na základě tématu, kterému se chcete věnovat, a stylu, jakým jste vy i adept/ka na vedoucí/ho zvyklí pracovat. Pokud si vybíráte vedoucí/ho v rámci katedry, zkuste si vzpomenout, u koho se vám například dobře psala seminární práce. Dovedu si totiž představit, že někdo jiný naopak ocení, když mu vedoucí do práce „kecá“ co nejméně a za celou dobu psaní mu pošle dva maily. Takový člověk by při spolupráci s mým vedoucím trpěl.

Má to smysl? Izrael, Palestina a limity jazyka

Samozřejmě, i když si vyberete správné téma, ideálního vedoucího a termostat v místnosti nastavíte na správnou teplotu, někdy do vašeho procesu psaní diplomové práce zasáhnou vnější okolnosti. Tou mojí „vyšší silou“ byl nepochybně palestinský útok ze 7. října, následující izraelské odvetné akce a roztáčející se spirála násilí. Psát diplomku v listopadu 2023 mi vzhledem k tématu zrovna dvakrát nešlo. Přepadaly mě myšlenky, jestli se dá smysluplně přispět k vědeckému poznání v oblasti, která se, byť nepřímě, týká izraelsko-palestinského konfliktu. I teď, když píšu tyto řádky, váhám, jaká slova použít, abych se nedotkl toho, kdo sympatizuje převážně s Izraelci nebo s Palestinci. Narážím na limity jazyka, který nás tlačí do polárních vyjádření. Jako by si snad člověk musel vybrat stranu a nemohl litovat lidí trpících v důsledku konfliktu obecně – oběti vraždění, sexuálního násilí a únosů, bombardování, hladovění, stresu a nesnesitelných životních podmínek – ať už se hlásí k jakékoliv národnosti nebo víře.

Citlivé téma

Jak jsem s tím nakonec vypořádal? Obhajobu jsem ještě o jeden semestr odložil, abych ji odevzdal s čistým svědomím s pocitem, že jsem tomu dal maximum (roli ale sehrálo i to, že jsem prostě nestíhal). Ačkoliv je mi jasné, že moje diplomová práce nemůže desítky let trvajícím konflikt vyřešit, chtěl jsem odevzdat text, v němž budu poctivě reflektovat svoje životní zkušenosti

a postoje. Ty byly ovlivněné tím, že jsem většinu času ze svého pobytu v regionu Izraele a Palestiny strávil v Izraeli a většina mých tamních přátel jsou Izraelci. Jestli se mi to povedlo, nechám na posouzení jiných, ale sám mám pocit, že ano a ve stejném smyslu se vyjadřovaly také posudky vedoucího i oponenta práce. Každopádně, pokud ještě někdy budu psát nějakou akademickou práci, hodně si rozmyslím, jestli se v ní budu věnovat podobně „třaskavému“ tématu, protože mě jako citlivého člověka stálo hodně duševních sil práci za výše zmíněných okolností dokončit.

Sloužit a chránit (svůj pohled na historii)

Otázka, kterou si jako student humanitního oboru vyslechnete mnohokrát, zní: „A k čemu to je?“ V souvislosti se závěrečnou prací by upravená verze této otázky mohla znít, jestli jste vybádali něco užitečného. Ve své práci jsem se soustředil na dva pilíře – na popis samotné služby v programu Sar-El a na historické narativy, se kterými narátoři a narátorky ve svých vyprávěních pracují. Pokud výsledky zjednoduším na maximální možnou míru, zjistil jsem následující. Dobrovolníci v programu Sar-El se nadšeněji zapojovali do činností, které jim v rámci služby umožňovaly kontakt s vojenskou technikou a výzbrojí, než například do kuchyňských či úklidových prací, takže u nich proběhla úspěšná integrace do militární kultury IDF. Zároveň byla pro tuto integraci důležitá interakce mezi nimi a vojáky IDF, která se nejčastěji projevovala vyjádřením respektu ze strany Izraelců.

Co se týká historických narativů, dvěma nejsilnějšími byly individuální rodinné příběhy (často týkající se židovského původu a osudů rodiny během holokaustu) a příběh československé zbrojní pomoci Izraeli. Druhý zmíněný byl silně ovlivněn kolektivní pamětí a převládající „národní“ optikou, kterou dnes v Česku nahlížíme na soudobé dějiny. Ta silně potlačila dobový kontext vznikajícího bipolárního uspořádání světa a důležitost podpory prodeje zbraní Izraeli a výcviku židovských vojáků ze strany KSČ. Potvrdil jsem tím tezi, že v oboru orální historie je pramen (rozhovor) vždy komparativní (srovnává minulost a současnost) a narátoři nahlíží na minulost skrze své současné postoje a přesvědčení.

Závěr

Jelikož máte jistě kromě školy i celou řadu dalších povinností a zájmů, diplomový projekt vám nevyhnutelně bude ukrajovat z času, který byste radši věnovali něčemu jinému. Právě ve chvílích vyčerpání budete rádi za to, že jste si psaní své práce „procesně“ správně nastavili. Pokud mám zobecnit svou zkušenost, bylo pro mě důležité, abych se dokázal identifikovat s tématem, aby téma vycházelo z mojí životní zkušenosti a aby spadalo do oboru působení mého vedoucího. Zároveň z toho plynula osobní zaangażovanost, která mi psaní komplikovala ve chvíli vyhrocení izraelsko-palestinského konfliktu. Proto jsem rád, že se mi práci po dvou letech povedlo dokončit a mohu se za ní ohlednout s hrdostí.

Obhájeno 29.5.2024 pod názvem „*Všichni kolem nich jsou nepřátelé*“ – Češi a Češky v izraelském dobrovolnickém programu Sar-El. Společnost pro výzkum dějin vojenství ocenila v lednu 2025 práci Terezínskou medailí.



TO SQUAT OR NOT TO SQUAT: REFLECTIONS ON SPACE AND SUBVERSION

Anna Bezhanova

The seminal work of my studies—the thesis—was born from my interaction with my immediate surroundings. Most readers are likely familiar with the quaint environment of the Faculty of Humanities. Located in the northern part of Prague, at the intersection of nature and man-made infrastructure, stands an anachronistic, glass-sheltered building. It is surrounded by towering socialist-era student dormitories, a castle-like hotel, and another structure dismissed for its abandoned, unwelcoming exterior. Its decaying walls bear tattoo-like radical inscriptions—a remnant of its history.

During my first year at university, I heard a fellow student refer to this building as a former squat that hosted poetry readings and free concerts. I found that incredible, though at the time, I didn't quite know what the word *squat* meant. So, I looked it up. That's when I learned about Villa Milada—a name I hadn't bothered to inquire about before, neglecting my neighborly duties as a dorm dweller living at Milada's doorstep.

The story of Milada was fascinating. It had been occupied due to its bureaucratic “non-existence” in the city's cadastral registry of buildings. It made me think about space and our claims to it, especially as I was crammed into an age-old, rather gruesome dormitory that still managed to break the bank every month. It also made me yearn for places that existed not to generate profit but to serve people's needs—a couch, a meal, a gig, a chat, or perhaps a home. All these essentials, so thoroughly commodified today, made the concept of using an unused space feel like a breath of fresh air in an era of perpetually rising rents.

Frustrated and angry at the lack of dignified housing and the bleak prospects of ever securing stable accommodation in the Czech Republic, I stumbled upon an exhibition at the Schwules Museum in Berlin. It explored the history of queer squatting in Berlin and the sense of community it

fostered. I credit this exhibition with laying the foundation for my exploration of the historical and social significance of squatting as a catalyst for community building and reclaiming space for queers—space so often denied to us.

A few classes in urban anthropology propelled me toward studying the construction and navigation of public and private spaces, and how squatting defies the norms of private ownership. As I delved deeper into the concept of space, I began to understand the distinct social perspectives and relationships to public and private spaces in post-socialist countries compared to those that had not experienced privatization or the shrinking of municipal housing stock.

The post-1989 neoliberal transition in the former Soviet bloc marked a dramatic shift from state socialism to a market-driven neoliberal order, profoundly reshaping urban and social landscapes. Rapid privatization of state assets and housing, combined with the decentralization of government power, led to the commodification of urban spaces and increased socio-economic stratification. Public spaces were marginalized, with market logic and private interests dominating.

These transitions were heralded by a cultural shift coined “cultural privatism” by Sonia Hirt, where the private sphere—once a refuge from intrusive state socialism—became the central focus of individual and family life, overshadowing collective values and public engagement.

This ethos further legitimized neoliberal policies, eroding civil society and curtailing the development of collective alternatives. In response, grassroots movements, including squatting, emerged to challenge these dynamics, reclaim space, and resist the commodification of urban life.

This reflection on the spatial dynamics and lived experiences of marginalized communities in post-socialist urban environments became the central focus of my thesis research. In this way, my focus extended from my neighborhood to all of post-socialist space and conceptually to a broader framework exploring how marginalized groups

navigate and transform the built environment in cities shaped by the legacies of state socialism.

Having found my loose framework of squatting and its relation to public space on pragmatic and cultural levels, I was quickly confounded by the lack of data for a literature review encompassing the entirety of post-socialist space stretching from the Baltics to the Balkans. As a result, I retraced my steps geographically and limited the scope to the four Visegrád countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Given their relatively similar historical trajectories, I believed I could generate meaningful comparative insights.

The methodology for my thesis was shaped by my interest in understanding how politically motivated squatting challenges the norms of public and private spaces, particularly in post-socialist countries. To explore this, I focused on two key questions: How does squatting offer an alternative to institutionalized public spaces and resist the culture of individualism and privatization? And how do squatters redefine the boundaries of public and private to create communal practices?

Given the scope of the topic, I relied on qualitative research, analyzing one prominent case study of squatting in each country. These cases were chosen because they offered well-documented examples of political squatting in regions shaped by rapid neoliberal transitions. The case studies examined prominent squats in the Visegrád countries, focusing on Klinika in the Czech Republic, Rozbrat in Poland, Zelený Dvor in Slovakia, and Centrum in Hungary.

The research unfolded in two phases. First, I conducted thematic analysis, looking for recurring ideas related to urban commons, community building, resistance, and the transformation of urban spaces. Second, I used comparative analysis to identify patterns and differences across the case studies, linking them back to the specific historical conditions of each country.

While relying on secondary sources meant I couldn't collect original data, it also highlighted gaps in existing research—especially for underexplored contexts like Slovakia, where I

was unable to conduct a full analysis due to the limited data available in English. One key insight from my research was the need for more comparative, in-depth studies on the intersections of squatting, public space, and post-socialist urbanization across Eastern Europe.

The analysis revealed a tension between the politics of autonomy and post-autonomy in squatting movements. Autonomy focused on self-governance, mutual aid, and creating independent, non-hierarchical spaces free from market-driven logic, as seen in Klinika's horizontal organizing and cultural programming.

Post-autonomy, however, recognized the need for strategic engagement with external systems, like state institutions and public opinion, to sustain these spaces. Rozbrat demonstrated this by allying with tenants' movements and reframing its activism to address broader housing issues.

This shift from pure independence to pragmatic navigation highlighted how squatting movements balance resistance with negotiation, adapting to challenges like evictions and public perception while continuing to challenge neoliberal urban policies.

One critical challenge was situating the notion of "urban commons" within the specific context of post-socialist cities. Unlike Western Europe, where the concept is more entrenched, the socio-political fabric of Central Europe demands a reconceptualization of what constitutes commons and public space. Squats are not inherently public; on the contrary, they can be intensely private due to security concerns or the squatters' preferences. Yet, in this context, public refers to the broader social process of claiming space without commercial interest or legal entitlement, creating an urban commons—a sort of public-private hybrid accessible to its members.

The thesis ultimately argued that squatting in post-socialist cities represents a grassroots attempt to reclaim urban spaces and create alternatives to dominant models of privatization and individualism. In contrast to the culture of 'cultural privatism' that emerged from the post-1989 transition,

squatters sought to redefine the boundaries of public and private, establishing communal practices and resisting the commodification of urban life, reclaiming their cities from the greedy hands of developers.

Reflecting on my work, I see many angles I missed and would like to explore further, considering the limited resources I had at the time. If I were to return to this topic, I would either scale my attempts more locally, using an ethnographic scope to generate data, or undertake a theoretical observation on the state of squatting in post-socialist cities. The former seems unlikely, as active squats in the Czech Republic are nearly nonexistent, and opportunities to squat diminish each year with the consolidation of the current urban order.

To conclude, squatting in post-socialist cities remains criminally under-researched, especially in ethnographic studies, which could provide significant insights into alternative ways to navigate and inhabit space, negating a world defined by capital and proving that a different way of living is possible, here and now.

Defended on 6.9.2024 under the name *Political Squatting as Alternative Commons: The Case of Post-Socialist Cities*

BEAT THE BEAUTY OUT OF ME

Antonie Hradilková

Autorka dokončila bakalářský program na FHS a pokračuje lehkou výhybkou v magisterském studiu na katedře autorské tvorby a pedagogiky na DAMU. K rozhodnutí ji vedla potřeba komunikovat pro ni důležitá témata kreativní formou.

When I started to ponder on what topic should be worth discussing, the mystery of the Czechoslovakian easter tradition kept coming back to my head.

There is a pagan custom of whipping girls from behind, traditionally with a stick that is braided with young willow branches. This event happens on Easter Monday and is the main part of a whole fertility ritual.

Boy knocks on the door, a girl opens, dutifully prepared with a basket full of eggs and possibly a tray of alcohol, awaiting as he starts to strike her. This is often accompanied by them running, him reciting some jolly carol and her screaming. The chase should end once the egg is given to the caroller. I am of course only describing a model of the situation, which varies depending on many factors, such as region, mutual social relations and hierarchies or the amount of alcohol consumed during the occasion.

It might be obvious that the custom in question is very much gender based and as a modest representative of the gender being whipped, I felt the urge to understand the persistence of something that I have always been a part of, even though I did not want to be.

The path of my research was rocky mainly because the subject has not been given much attention in academia, so at times it felt like I do not have many blocks to build on. The existing literature that was somehow related to my topic rarely stood on a sociological framework which was necessary for answering my main research question — I asked:

Which are the ways of legitimizing the physical violence committed on women through the easter whipping ritual?

I had to broaden my search by leaving the case that is so specific to our regions and turn my focus on the sole principle which I had established to be gender-based violence that is

exercised in cultural and societal rituals. To find something of resemblance to this issue was challenging though as the nature of the violence occurring was hard to point out.

I could not tell you when exactly the enlightenment came, but at last I caught on to a foothold that carried my thesis to the very end. It is a concept that offers an understanding of a specific kind of violence that is pervasive in society, because it is deeply embedded in its members by socialization, which then makes it elusive and hard to grasp.

Bourdieu calls it symbolic violence¹. Its workings are not just secured through physical harm as that is explicit and therefore easily reprehensible. The main weapon lies in symbols that carry socially valorised meanings. These meanings stem from conventional truths that are often taken as if they are natural to the order of things.

I finally concluded it might be some useful fun to conduct qualitative research about the topic. At first, I thought of composing three methods together, namely an analysis of documents, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Later, as Easter was mercilessly approaching, I realized I was too ambitious in terms of time and my own competence. As I already had some experience with doing an interview, I decided to stick to it. Moreover, I went into it with the anticipation that this method would help me the most to understand the inscribed value of meanings which concern the custom and the motivations of the people celebrating it.

I managed to meet up with six women and here are the meanings that stood out in correspondence with the theory I chose²:

1. Rejuvenation/withering

The official meaning of whipping is to keep the female part of the family or a neighbourhood young. Young connects with beauty and most importantly fertility. Hence the young willow branches freshly cut in the spring, the wake-up time for nature, when new life is awaited and celebrated. Such interpretation simply frames the act as something that is beneficial to women.

In Bourdieu's terms, the acceptance, or further the naturalization of the desired meaning by the subordinate group is the

1 Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity Press

2 Hradilková, A. (2024). *Velikonoční pomlázka jako případ ritualizovaného násilí*.

effect of symbolic violence. It is exercised through subtle imposing which can happen in a variety of ways. The most striking attack comes from using certain words. Some examples of such commentaries arose from the interviews I made, most of them which I recognized from my own experience.

The old classics include phrases like “so you don’t dry out” or “it is for your own good”.

The outcome of being told this your whole life is that you start using it in first person and it becomes an argument defending the situation, or worse, it becomes true.

The meaning which is now accepted by both sides of the gender binary serves to consolidate the social structures of the patriarchal order, in terms of the theory used – masculine domination.

2. Erotic subtext

Another meaning, though related to the previous one, concerns the interactional layer of the custom. The ritual situation is seen as an erotic play with two actors, each of them having different, but complementary roles. One being dominant and the other being dominated.

There is a clear hetero-sex metaphor that frames this play, yet it is never explicit, as it would be quite awkward to admit. One of my informants pointed it out saying that the interaction usually happens between relatives with all sorts of bonds. It can happen between kids and elderly or even between total strangers. It is a tacit layer that takes the perversion of the ritual to another level.

However, such interpretation can also be a source of excitement for the ritual. Even though she condemned violence in general, one informant stated that in this specific interaction and in sex she feels the desire to be overpowered.

It was super interesting to relate such an experience to Bourdieu’s thoughts about how the sex metaphor is created through the principle of active masculinity and passive femininity. Such division organizes the desire inside the gender binary, where on one side it is directed towards eroticized domination and on the other toward eroticized subordination. In the context of sexual labour, this distribution serves to maintain gender inequalities.

3. Expression of interest

Another form of desire that can influence both the behaviour during the ritual and the overall relationship to it is the desire

for attention, which is again not very far from the previous one. It is tied to the socialization function that the ritual carries, particularly to the act of wooing someone. The fulfilment of this desire comes with the expression of interest. As I found out, this can also be a source of strong motivation for taking part in the ritual. This is another form of recognition that is needed for a gender role to be successfully performed.

4. Intimacy factor

The situation cannot really escape the question of intimacy. This was a great topic in the interviews, and it opened a discussion about the difficulty of defining violence in a domestic, intimate space.

Two interviewees spoke about their partner using too much force during the ritual, but at the same time they defended this behaviour by stating that it is only on this specific occasion where they “blow off some steam” ..., minimizing and legitimizing something that would in other contexts be unjustifiable.

...

This is just a glimpse of what I have written about, in my thesis I go further into the details about different strategies of legitimization. I discuss alcohol as an influencing factor, how the preparation of the ritual is gendered, and I also touch up on the possibilities of transgressing the ritual.

I took the thesis as an attempt to define a social situation that is already seen as problematic, is hurtful to many, yet it is still being protected by governing discourses that omit a variety of personal experiences.

My final cry is that I want an end to all the suffering that stems from patriarchy. From separating people according to their assigned gender and creating roles according to which they should act to be accepted. Who is with me?

Defended on 24.9.2024 under the name *Velikonoční pomlázka jako případ ritualizovaného násilí*.

REFORMING FOR ABOLITION: NEW ANIMAL WELFARE ACTIVISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Maria Baranichenko

Dedicated four and a half years of my life (out of total 25) to studying for my bachelor's at FHS. So much of how I see the world is shaped by those years. Now, I'm enjoying life outside academia but still learning all the time on my own. Once a student, always a student!

True human goodness, in all its purity and freedom, can come to the fore only when its recipient has no power. Mankind's true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it.

- Milan Kundera

Claiming that animals are being subjected to mistreatment and exploitation in Western capitalist societies is not a radical statement to make, especially from the perspective of critical theory that does not estrange itself from posing value judgements. Be it the death conveyor of industrialised slaughter for meat, the sacrifice of “inferior” animal lives in the name of science and progress or subjecting animals to enclosure and labour for human entertainment, it is safe to say that many people do not perceive non-human animals as fully autonomous sentient beings. Rather, animal bodies are often commodified and treated as objects for human consumption.

Thinking about this and feeling a deep sense of injustice about our societal disregard for animals has sparked my desire to research this topic for my thesis. Not knowing where to start, I decided to follow the framework of commodification and find some literature on it. My mind was also set on conducting a field research so I knew I had to incorporate that into my topic. A possible route that I was considering then was using discourse analysis to see how different animal rights organisations in the Czech Republic tackle the issue of animal commodification and if there is any potential in their rhetoric that would help decommodify animals. Boy, did I not know back then how different the end result of my

research would turn out to be! Jumping a few steps ahead, I will say that none of my initial preparation and literature research ended up being useful; having entered the field, I have changed pretty much everything about my research – starting with problems and conceptual framework and finishing with methodology. Maybe it is due to my research skills and being completely unfamiliar with the topic, but perhaps that's just sociology for you!

Having entered the field and letting it guide me, I found a new topic that seemed more relevant to the field itself: exploring the dynamics and relationships between different branches of animal activism. That is because almost immediately after starting my fieldwork, I realised that the animal movement is not a monolith and that various organisations with different goals, practices and methods exist, which naturally causes tensions within the movement. Described very simply, the animal liberation movement can be presented as a spectrum. On one side there is “animal welfare” – the least confrontational approach that does not challenge societal norms related to animals and only wants to reduce the “unnecessary suffering” of animals. On the other side is the “animal rights” approach which is very critical of the society's current state and advocates for strict veganism using various tactics, some of which can be perceived as radical and disruptive by the general society. In between them is the “new welfare” or “broader animal protectionism” that generally seeks the same goals as animal rights, but tends to choose a more cooperative approach with societal institutions, including legislation efforts and working with actors directly involved with animal exploitation. This description is of course very generalised and unnuanced, but sufficient for the goals of this article. The organisation that I chose for my research belonged to the “new welfare” branch, so my new research questions were stated with their perspective in mind:

- How do new welfare activists construct the vision of meaningful activism while facing criticism from other organisations?
- How do the animal activists in the researched organisation perceive and construct the status of animals in contemporary Czech society?
- How do they perceive desirable interspecies relation-

ships? How and when are boundaries between human and nonhuman animals constructed?

My main intention throughout the research was to provide emic perspectives of the activists – a huge turn from the critically distant discourse analysis. But considering that there is no lack of research that compares the efficiency of different activism approaches and engages with them critically, it made more sense and seemed to be a more interesting framework to show the emic perspectives of the members of the animal movement and how they construct meaningful activism for themselves. After all, these are people striving to bring about change in the world (and a good one, if I may add this assessment) so giving them space to speak for themselves in my research felt right.

Methodologically, the hardest part was the initial choice of field. Turns out, you cannot just google “animal liberation organisations Czech Republic” and get a list of all the options. This I had to compile myself. Having done that, I have contacted several organisations that fit my criteria, of which only one reached back and agreed to research. The choice of the field was hence occasional but nevertheless constituted an interesting and rich research environment. Moreover, the research topic was specifically crafted to reflect the problems relevant to this field, so there was no issue of misalignment between the research questions and the object of research.

In terms of research strategy, I have implemented the good old qualitative techniques, combining participant observation with semi-structured interviews. I spent nine months in the field engaging in different events held by the researched organisation like meetings, street campaigns, protests, festivals, and informal gatherings striving for maximum participation. After that, five interviews were conducted with select members of the organisation – I chose the ones who were the most active while also seeking to include a diverse range of identities (mainly in terms of age and gender).

The process of writing the thesis and conducting research was... an emotional rollercoaster to say the least. From having to navigate my own expectations which were often unrealistic (spoiler alert: it is unfortunately highly unlikely that your

bachelor's thesis will be a scientific breakthrough) to overcoming the language barrier while trying to seem chill and gain trust of the research participants (another fun challenge for us, non-native speakers of Czech) to dealing with social anxiety while being in the field (to all my socially anxious people, I see you! Field research is super hard, but totally possible, just gotta push on through and have enough relaxing tea at the end of the day).

Another challenge I have faced while writing was choosing the theoretical framework for my research. I have settled on describing the history of ideas, traditions and practices that have influenced the shape of contemporary human-animal relationships. Things like anthropocentrism, speciesism, and capitalism that all present human life as superior and non-human life as instrumental and exploitable. The thing about these concepts is that they are incredibly big, and there are scholars who have dedicated huge monographies if not their whole lives to studying different aspects of them. That is to say, summarising them concisely in just a few pages of a bachelor's thesis will always be redundant. And I guess it's okay? One of the goals of writing a thesis is to demonstrate the general understanding of certain concepts and the ability to apply them to reality, not to dissect every possible facet of them (unless you are writing a theoretical paper, in which case good luck!).

But at the end it was absolutely worth it. Being in the field, as scary and anxiety enducing as it was, gave me an opportunity to be among people with whom otherwise I would have never interacted. And these were great people to interact with! All incredibly motivated and passionate and generous with dedicating their time and effort to a good cause. Being among these people who not only believe that the better world is possible, but who are actively fighting for this world every day was extremely inspirational. This of course poses an ethical dilemma for a researcher: how do you preserve a critical distance necessary for the analysis while being so emotionally involved with the cause?

To this I answer that amongst the many paradigms of sociology there are some which do not estrange themselves from critical engagement with society and from endeavours to bring

about social change and emancipation (to name critical feminist and postcolonial studies as an example). Secondly, since the goal of my research was to provide emic perspectives of the actors of social reality and how they create meanings for themselves, I find the concept of criticising this meaning-making of other people somewhat out of place and ethically questionable. As a scientist in the field my first responsibility is towards the actors and the trust that they give me to be among them and write about them. Being a part of the power dynamic of the researcher and the researched involves a lot of decision making related to the need to not harm or negatively affect the researched reality of which I become a temporary member. That is not to say that any sort of critical analysis or engagement with the researched field is completely out of place. A well intended constructive criticism if done correctly can help the activists' cause, but that has to be carried out with great care and perhaps in a more equal setting rather than a publicly available publication (i.e. a discussion circle in which the actors and the researcher go through the findings together and try to collectively understand what they mean for the actors and the movement in general). Apart from that I don't think my engagement with the cause and the activists stood in my way of analysing the data and connecting it to theory.

In terms of my findings, no scientific breakthrough has indeed been made. To no one's surprise, animal liberation activists do perceive the position of animals in contemporary (Czech) society as deserving improvement, to say the least. They take issue with the instrumental perception of animal lives, especially in the realm of industrial consumerism, acknowledging the practices of deliberate concealment of abuse and exploitation by the companies profiting from it. They perceive sentience of nonhuman animals and our close connection to each other as beings capable of feelings and pain. When envisioning the future and what their activism is aiming at, some have the ambitious goal of turning society (predominantly) vegan, while others choose to focus on improving the immediate situation of animals perceiving it as so disastrous that thinking about the bigger picture of the future seems unrealistic to them.

Talking about different approaches within the movement and tensions between them, the new welfare activists within

the researched organisation find meaning in their activism by focusing on achievable goals. Activists largely perceive the dominant society as not being ready to abolish animal exploitation due to various factors such as internalised prejudices or carnistic propaganda employed by the agricultural industry. For these reasons, in their campaigns they try to focus on strategies which they deem more likely to succeed – some of them focusing on abolishing certain exploitative practices, while others targeting the improvement of animal welfare within those practices. The activists largely recognise the potential advantages of combining diverse approaches within the movement, acknowledging that different methods will persuade and work for different people. Ultimately they express remorse over the rivalry in movement and perceive it as harming the overall cause.

The topic of animal rights activism, especially in the Czech Republic, is heavily underresearched. It's a shame because the field is rich and presents a lot of curious research opportunities. An obvious step in this would be to continue the exploration of the advocacy spectrum focusing this time on (vegan) animal rights organisations or traditional welfare ones (if these still exist today). Personally, exploring the emic perspectives of the activists seems to be the most meaningful route to me. Theoretical debates on which type of activism is the most effective and if it's better to pursue revolutionary approach or a slower reformist one absolutely have their place and they present important issues to discuss in the world that still needs a lot of improvement. However, I also find it crucially important to show that behind each movement striving for change there are real humans with their own motives, meanings and emotions who make these movements possible. Understanding the ways in which these people perceive and explain their own actions can be an important tool not only to humanise the discourse (which often seems to be largely critical of any activist endeavours), but also to start a dialogue and see in which ways the activism can be improved.

Last thing I would like to say before finishing this article is that many scholars note the close connection between the exploitation of both human and non-human animals. The boundary between humans and non-humans can often be less

strict than we think. Perceiving pets as family members and elevating them to a human level, while using dehumanising language in the news and politics to diminish our opponents are all results of this dualistic anthropocentric thinking that selectively attributes value to humans. So in today's colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal world, it is always important to ask the question of who is considered human and who is considered less than that. Recognising these overlapping forms of exploitation reminds us that the fight for justice – whether for humans or other animals – can only succeed when it is a fight for everyone.

Defended on 14. 2. 2024 under the name *Reforming for Abolition: Insights into New Welfare Activism*.

VYBRANÉ KAPITOLY ZE ŽIVOTA EDUARDA PAZOURKA. PŘÍNOS A NÁSTRAHY ZAPOJENÍ RODINNÉHO PŘÍSLUŠNÍKA DO ORÁLNĚ-HISTORICKÉHO VÝZKUMU.

Eduard Pazourek

Narodil se v roce 1995 v Pardubicích. Nejprve absolvoval bakalářský obor Spisová a archivní služba, poté navazující magisterský obor Kulturní dějiny se zaměřením na soudobé dějiny na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Pardubice. Po úspěšném dokončení studia se stal příslušníkem Celní správy. Bezpečnostní sbor však nedlouho po nástupu opustil, aby se mohl vrátit ke studiu. Momentálně studuje navazující magisterský obor Orální historie – soudobé dějiny na fakultě humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy a souběžně také pracuje na Ministerstvu pro místní rozvoj na pozici metodika národních dotací.

Výběr tématu a cíle výzkumu

Předložený příspěvek pojednává o vznikající diplomové práci zaměřené na osobu Eduarda Pazourka, mého dědečka. Jedná se o jednoho z mnoha členů rodiny, která není

považována za veřejně známou, a proto o její historii nebo dokonce o životech jednotlivých členů nepojednává žádný ucelený odborný text.

V průběhu mé badatelské činnosti jsem se mnohokrát dostal do situace, kdy jsem měl takřka na dosah jedinečný pramen, který pojednává o rodinné minulosti. V nespočetně případech se bohužel jednalo pouze o záznam dokládající jeho dřívější existenci. Spousty historických předmětů, jež by měly být uchovány v paměťových institucích, dnes již neexistují. Mimo degradačního procesu působícího na jakýkoliv materiál tuto ztrátu zapříčinila záměrná a zcela vědomá fyzická likvidace. V některých případech se jednalo o nešťastné přehodnocení důležitosti archivního materiálu, v jiných zase o výsledek počinání dvou totalitních režimů. Na základě těchto nepříjemných zkušeností jsem dospěl k závěru, že by materiály vypovídající o rodinné minulosti bylo vhodné nejen shromažďovat, ale rovněž získané informace shrnout do odborného textu. Ve své diplomové práci jsem se proto rozhodl zaměřit na život svého dědečka Eduarda Pazourka.

Přestože cílem celého výzkumu je přinést ucelený pohled na Eduardův život, závěrečná práce nebude pojednávat o jeho životě v celé jeho komplexnosti. Důvodem je především časová náročnost shrnutí celého života dnes již 84letého člověka do kvalifikační práce, jejíž výzkum je časově omezen. Text se zaměřuje na jednotlivé životní etapy člověka s přihlédnutím k Eduardu Pazourkovi a jeho subjektivnímu pohledu na jejich důležitost.

Pramenná základna

Celý výzkum stojí na třech pilířích, a to na práci s archivními prameny, práci s osobními předměty a na rozhovorech s ústřední postavou biografie. Ke všem těmto zdrojům informací je potřeba přistupovat zvlášť.

Výhodou archivních pramenů je především skutečnost, že se jedná o písemnosti, na jejichž vzniku se Eduard nijak nepodílel, a tím pádem informace v nich obsažené nijak neovlivnil. Naproti tomu nevýhodou archivních pramenů soudobých dějin je skutečnost, že je doposud nikdo nezpraco-

val a jsou badatelsky nepřístupné. Archiválie osobní povahy jsou navíc podmíněny získáním souhlasu dané osoby. Protože se ale Eduard do výzkumu sám zapojil a po celou dobu byl velmi vstřícný, u žádného z popisovaných zdrojů informací nebyl problém s jeho součinností. Poslední nevýhodou archivních pramenů je se o takovémto prameni vůbec dozvědět. Nedílnou součástí pátrání v archivech je čas strávený v badatelně, který nemusí vést k nalezení žádné informace.

Druhým, stejně hodnotným pilířem výzkumu se staly Eduardovy osobní předměty, které můžeme rozdělit do dvou kategorií. Tou první jsou věci, které Eduard v průběhu let záměrně schovával, a tudíž prošly jakousi subjektivní selekcí. Do druhé kategorie můžeme naopak zařadit vše, co se v rodině dochovalo, ale uchování těchto věcí nebylo nikdy zamýšlené. Jednoduše řečeno se jedná o ty předměty, na které se postupem času zapomnělo a v dnešní době došlo k jejich opětovnému nalezení.

Třetím a posledním pilířem se staly nahrávané rozhovory. Doposud v rámci výzkumu vzniklo 27 rozhovorů o délce zhruba 30 až 60 minut, přičemž každý z nich se vztahuje k samostatnému tématu. Obrovskou výhodou tohoto pramene je získání nenahraditelných informací, které nás také mohou nasměrovat během pátrání v paměťových institucích. Další výhodou je získání materiálu, který zachycuje aktuální vnímání vlastní minulosti. Za největší nevýhodu se naopak považuje fungování lidské paměti a nevědomé zkreslování vzpomínek. Kombinací všech těchto pramenů je možné prostudovat více aspektů Eduardova života, získat detailnější informace a docílit vyšší míry objektivity.

Rizika orálně-historické metody

Podstatou orální historie je analýza a následná interpretace rozhovoru mezi historikem a pamětníkem. Způsob vedení rozhovoru, stejně tak i vztah mezi oběma aktéry, má na výsledný výstup veliký vliv. Příbuzenský poměr mezi oběma účastníky se tak může ve větší či menší míře projevit a ovlivnit nejen samotné rozhovory, ale i celý výzkum.

Vyučující mě na tuto skutečnost během studia několikrát upozorňovali. Při přednáškách na nás apelovali, abychom

si na postupně se vyvíjející vztahy s našimi narátory dávali během výzkumu pozor. Pro některé z nich bylo zároveň nepříjemné, abychom do výzkumu zapojovali své příbuzné. Jak jsem již zmínil výše, svou závěrečnou práci jsem pojal jako biografii svého dědečka. Někteří vyučující nevnímali mé rozhodnutí pozitivně a nabádali mě, abych téma změnil. Já si za ním však stál a touto cestou bych se rád podělil o své zkušenosti se všemi, kteří během svého studia budou přemýšlet, že si pro svou závěrečnou práci zvolí podobné téma.

Jeden z mých vyučujících, který mě od tohoto tématu odrazoval, nejčastěji argumentoval obavou ze zhoršení vztahu mezi mnou a mým dědečkem. Je pravdou, že pokud autor do orálně-historického výzkumu zapojí člena rodiny, a to s cílem napsat jeho biografii, lze předpokládat, že oba aktéři spolu mají dobrý vztah. Hned na počátku je proto třeba si uvědomit, že postupné odkrývání rodinné minulosti může tento vztah narušit. Zde je nutné mít na paměti, že negativní historie je také historií, ať už se nám hodí, nebo ne. Pokud bychom nebyli schopni takto k problematice přistupovat, nejedná se o vědecký historický výzkum.

Samozřejmě celou situaci lze takto vnímat pouze z jedné strany, a proto už v samotném přístupu k výzkumu můžeme vidět, že každý projekt je jedinečný a odvíjí se od postoje jednotlivých účastníků. Poté, co jsem dědečka oslovil, jsem se mu snažil detailně popsat okolnosti celého výzkumu a případné možnosti jeho účasti. Velmi rychle mě přerušil s tím, že se jedná o mou práci a já jsem jejím autorem. Vznikající text tak nevnímá jako nedotknutelný odraz reality, ale pouze jako subjektivní interpretaci historických pramenů. Na tomto konkrétním příkladě tak můžeme vidět, že příbuzenská a citová vazba nemusí být překážkou pro zapojení daného člověka do výzkumu, ani hrozbou pro narušení dobrých mezilidských vztahů. Domnívám se, že samotná setkání a rozhovory mohou naopak vést k jejich zlepšení.

Podíváme-li se na to čistě z praktického hlediska, student nemusí při plnění povinností trávit čas s cizími lidmi, ale se svými blízkými. Zatímco vztahy navázané kvůli výzkumu se s jeho koncem přeruší, vztah s dědečkem se bude vyvíjet nadále.

Jelikož je můj dědeček v pokročilém věku, spousta jeho vrstevníků již zemřela. Pro takového člověka může být obtížné vést rozhovory o své minulosti. Nejednou se stalo, že dědeček vzpomínal na události ze svého dětství, které prožíval se svými dnes již zemřelými kamarády. Na základě přípravy v podobě návštěvy archivu jsem se tak mnohokrát dostal do situace, ve které jsem nemusel pouze naslouchat a pokládat zvědavé dotazy, ale mohl jsem s dědečkem o konkrétních událostech přímo hovořit. Tato naše setkání jednoznačně napomohla k prohloubení našeho vztahu. Pokud bych do svého výzkumu zapojil cizího člověka, vztah mezi námi by se s největší pravděpodobností nadále nevyvíjel. Tuto skutečnost proto považuji za jednu z výhod zapojení blízkého člověka do orálně-historického výzkumu.

Dalším velmi důležitým aspektem závěrečných prací je jejich zveřejňování. Až na nepatrné výjimky se všechny práce zveřejňují prakticky ihned po úspěšné obhajobě. Tímto krokem může dojít k šíření citlivých informací, které by naše blízké mohly poškodit. Pokud je narátor, stejně jako můj dědeček ochotný přijmout skutečnost, že se jedná o subjektivní výstup vědeckého výzkumu, pak ve zveřejnění textu vidím obrovský přínos.

Dochování historických pramenů v podobě osobních předmětů je velmi problematické. Pokud se nejedná o veřejně známou nebo významnou osobu, její pozůstalost není pro paměťové instituce nijak zajímavá. Tyto předměty velmi často končí v rukou příbuzných, kteří mohou mít k historii velmi chladný postoj. Následující generace, které danou osobu již nezažily, mnohdy nemusí ani tušit, že se v rámci rodinné historie jedná o předměty s obrovskou vypovídací hodnotou. V neposlední řadě je velmi běžné, aby se pozůstalost rozdělila mezi jednotlivé potomky. Například ze sbírky fotografií zachycující celý život se může stát pouhá vzpomínka v podobě jedné jediné fotografie. Opomenout nelze ani neodborné zacházení a přirozené opotřebení. Tyto a další faktory poté vedou ke zničení předmětů zachycujících cenné informace. Zveřejněný text zabraňuje jejich úplné ztrátě. Ať už se bude jednat o výsledek badatelské činnosti, edici pramenů nebo alespoň o publikaci fotografií, pravděpodobnost úplné ztráty tímto krokem výrazně snižujeme.

Jedním z dalších důvodů, proč se někteří vyučující dívají na podobná témata závěrečných prací přezíravě, je možné odvolání narátorova souhlasu s použitím poskytnutých rozhovorů. K tomu samozřejmě může dojít i v případě, že se nebude jednat o našeho blízkého. Citová vazba nebo příbuzenský poměr by však mohly toto riziko potenciálně zvýšit. Zde jsem přesvědčen, že v případě takto předčasně ukončeného výzkumu nemusíme veškerý čas považovat za ztracený. Zatímco na ostatní nedokončené projekty nebudeme s největší pravděpodobností vzpomínat rádi, vzpomínky na čas strávený s dědečkem a především nahrané rozhovory nám zůstanou. Audiozáznamy nebo alespoň jejich přepisy se stanou materiálem, který nám zůstane po celý život a v pozdějších letech budeme mít možnost se k němu kdykoliv vrátit.

V posledních měsících je pro mě velice těžké najít rovnováhu mezi profesním, osobním a studijním životem. Mé priority se změnily, kvůli čemuž jsem si studium prodloužil. Přestože mi zbývá pouze složit státní závěrečnou zkoušku a obhájit závěrečnou práci, zakončení studia jsem musel prozatím odložit. Pokud by se ale stalo, že bych ho nakonec úspěšně nedokončil, i tak pro mě měl provedený výzkum smysl.

Obrovskou nevýhodou orálně-historického výzkumu je ubývající počet možných narátorů. Ať už se badatel ve svém výzkumu zaměří na jakoukoliv problematiku, přibývajícím věkem a zhoršující se zdravím pamětníků postupně vede ke ztrátě možnosti jejich zapojení do projektu. Postupné stárnutí mého dědečka mě dovedlo k myšlence uskutečnit s ním několik nahrávaných rozhovorů. Kvůli povinnostem jsem však realizaci tohoto plánu dlouho odkládal. Abych si jednoho dne nevyčítal promeškanou příležitost, opustil jsem vysněnou práci u bezpečnostního sboru a znovu se přihlásil ke studiu. Krátký návrat do školy mi přinesl nejen více volného času, ale především také možnost věnovat se tomuto výzkumu. Kdybych ovšem poslechl své vyučující a pro závěrečnou práci si zvolil jiné téma, k rozhovorům s dědečkem by nemuselo nikdy dojít. Má diplomová práce je krásným příkladem toho, že negativní zkušenosti z jiných výzkumů se nemusejí automaticky projevit v každém podobném projektu.

Na závěr bych chtěl dát všem studentům využívajícím orálně-historickou metodu malé doporučení. Až vám někdo řekne, abyste do výzkumu nezapojovali své příbuzné, zeptejte se proč. Pokud vám na tuto jednoduchou otázku nebude schopný dostatečně odpovědět, ignorujte ho.

Připravováno k obhajobě pod názvem *Vybrané kapitoly ze života Eduarda Pazourka*



Eduard Pazourek (* 1940) se svým vnukem Eduardem Pazourkem (* 1995)

WHY ENVIRONMENTALISM DESERVES BETTER PHILOSOPHERS

Tomáš Pospíchal

The name's Tomáš Pospíchal, I've been here on Earth since 1999. My spirit is mostly on the way between the university library and the marvellous rock terrains of the world. If not that, then it's music, beer and meditation.

I have a joined BA in Philosophy and Environmental studies from Masaryk University. Currently I'm enrolled in the philosophical anthropology master's program at the Faculty of Humanities and the theoretical biology master's program at the Faculty of Science (Charles University).

What happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social? Seriously unthinkable: not available to think with.¹

– Donna J. Haraway

What?

In this text I'll try to explain a few of the basic ideas of my bachelor thesis called *Searching for an "ecological" self in Arne Naess and Dogen Zenji*. I don't find much sense in writing what I've already written, so I won't – I'll explain the ideas as I'm thinking them now, 6 months past. My interest even led me to Norway to study with one of Naess' students and co-workers, Per Ingvar Haukeland, who'd always been willing to be bothered by my questions.

The text has roughly two chapters, one more introductory, the other more fun.

Rortyan motto

A philosophical amateur attacks another philosophical system from a fundamentally differing standpoint; so, to say, from the out-side. A professional shows that a system is de-

1 Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble*. Duke University Press, p. 30.

factive using its proponent's own terms and rules, beating it at its own game so to speak, or, more often, using its terms and rules in such a way as to point out their inadequacy, and thus framing them as matters of history, rather than a pressing actuality. Rephrased in Kuhn's terms, an amateur solely speaks against another paradigm from within their own paradigm. A professional demonstrates another paradigm's failures from within that paradigm, knowing of the incommensurability of the two.²

1. About why environmentalism deserves better philosophers (concerning – what I later found anthropologists called – more-than-human thinking).³

Arne Naess, one of the fathers of the environmental movement, and a rather peculiar being (in the most positive sense), was a thinker with many faces. I decided it was a good idea to try to understand his thinking if one wanted to begin to understand contemporary environmentalism. I began, as always, with a Nietzschean suspicion, although I usually prefer scalpels to hammers. I was most interested in whatever most *fundamental*⁴ notion Naess had come up with, and, secondly, its relation to practise. That led me to Naess' ontological system which he'd usually referred to as *Self-realization*. I read Naess primarily as a thinker of *radical unity*⁵. That is, as someone who asks some version of the question *how and in what sense are we all one?* Naess' explicit motivation behind this question is that if we identified not only with our narrow self, our *persona*⁶, body, or mind, but with a broader set of beings, ranging from social circles to ecosystems to the universe as a whole along with its history, we would also deeply care for these beings, just as we care for our narrow selves, and we would consider "their" interests as our own. This expanding community of beings to identify with is what

2 Rorty, R. (2017). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton University Press, p. 395-422.

3 Pospíchal, T. (2024). *Hledání "ekologického" já u Arne Naesse a Dógena Zendžiho*. Masarykova univerzita [Bachelor thesis].

4 By "fundamental" I don't mean "the most important", but rather "residing in the deepest levels" of Naess' system or systems.

5 Encompassing not only people, or sentient beings, but truly everything.

6 The latin word *persona* literally refers to the mask that theatre actors wear. Komárek, S. (2008). *Příroda a kultura*. Academia.

Naess calls the Self. Probably the main argument that he offers for this position is this one: if I want to realize my aim, or myself, I can never do this alone – there need to be other beings. I couldn't possibly live without those that I eat, those that maintain the ecosystem which I'm part of etc. Therefore, we can say, my aims are in part also their aims and vice versa, we are co-dependant. This is our situation according to Naess. And the more we realize this, Naess says, the more our Self expands, the more mature we are. So, we see that Naess' ontology has a direction, partly ethical.

I often find that thinking works best in a dialogue. Hence, I invited another partner into the talk – the Japanese zen master Dogen Zenji. Arriving at Dogen in this context is no random stumble; far from it. He's another thinker of radical unity, who, however, managed to do without a trace of essentialist metaphysics – that's why I thought it could be interesting to try to read Naess through Dogen.

1.2. Methodological note

This kind of east-west dialogue often faces seemingly dire charges from various positions, so I'll briefly address at least one of those here – I will exaggerate the position a little, so as to make it clear. This charge, coming from what I'd hyperbolically call the purist camp, says that the east-west dialogue or exchange is near impossible due to the (often subtle) cultural, historical and linguistic differences. The thing is, say the purists, that we may not just be looking at incommensurable cultural concepts; it may also be that we have no reliable way to tell if they are in fact incommensurable. This is again due to the untrivial ties between language and other parts of culture that seem to be specific to each culture, making inter-cultural communication muddled and difficult to navigate. I'm exaggerating a little, but the basic idea is there: don't attempt to “transplant” ideas from a different culture, because they are tied to and grow out of a specific environment – rather look inside your own culture. We find some version of this

view in L. White⁷, F. Mathews⁸, A. Naess⁹ or E. Bondy¹⁰ to name a few.

This charge is based on a problematic premise, namely that “eastern” and “western” cultures developed in isolation from each other (I’d like to call this the “essentialist” approach to culture). Today it’s not so difficult to show that this is obviously untrue, but it’s not always been this easy. At least during modernity, many European intellectuals assumed that there was something especially *western* about western culture. There’s nothing necessarily wrong about this. What is wrong, I’d say, is the way in which western culture bolstered this claim, thus construing an illusory image of its culture as an immaculate monolith, which, in its impeccable greatness, couldn’t possibly have been influenced, let alone determined, by non-western forces. The whole thing was supposed to have suddenly sprung out of the minds of a few gentlemen such as Galileo, Locke or Descartes. Two Davids, Graeber and Wengrow, show¹¹ otherwise. How is it, they ask, that the political ideas appearing in Europe in the 18th century (e.g. Rousseau) had been practised in China centuries earlier? Is it a coincidence, or a result of an inter-cultural dialogue? Graeber and Wengrow say that the tight Christian environment of modern Europe did not allow people to admit the influence of non-christian environments, save for, for example, Leibniz, who claimed to have been influenced by Chinese thought in his political ideas. If they had admitted it, say Graeber and Wengrow, they’d have faced uncomfort-

7 White, L. (2005). *The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. In: Callicott, J. B., Palmer, C. (eds.), *Environmental Philosophy: Critical Concepts V*. Routledge, s. 17.

8 I forgot where Freya Mathews talks about this.

9 Naess isn’t too sceptical about this; he simply thinks that western traditions suffice – that we don’t need to “implant” something from elsewhere. Naess, A. (2008). *The World of Concrete Contents*. In: Drengson, A., Devall, B. (eds.), *Ecology of Wisdom*. Penguin Books, p. 72.

10 Developed in the documentary series *Fišer alias Bondy I.-III*. YouTube, uploaded by Jakub Smršín, <https://youtu.be/AefJr-6b8wE>. Bondy was enthusiastic about integrating Buddhist or Taoist ideas into western culture, but I think he underestimated the influence of “eastern” thought on “western” thought that had already been there before.

11 Graeber, D., Wengrow, D. (2021). *The Dawn of Everything*. Penguin Books. p. 42-43.

able backlash from their time's authorities. With this understanding, the question of whether it's possible for a culture to integrate elements from another culture becomes obsolete.

One thing to wrestle with is Naess' reception in the Czech academia. A popular interpretation is the one by the philosopher B. Binka¹². His idea was to tightly couple Naess with Gandhi, and then to proclaim both as fundamentalists. First, he demonstrated such traits on Gandhi, claiming that he had only really cared about the *atman*, some "world behind this world", not the "real", palpable world. There might be something to that, but I'm no expert on Gandhi. What bothered me was the claim that Naess' *Self* is virtually the same thing as *atman*, and that Naess thus cared for the "real" world about as little as Gandhi did. The argument could hardly have been worse, which I tried to demonstrate. I believe I managed to untangle Naess from Gandhi, thus saving him from the charges (Binka later agreed with me).

2. What it's all about (post-metaphysics and essences)

One of my questions was: did Naess provide a reliable ontology for environmentalism or at least point the way towards one? I found his Self-realization problematic to say the least. On the one hand he claims all reality is of processual character, on the other that each being has an intrinsic nature or essence: "*People and other beings are always on the way – without a change of [their] essence.*"¹³ He says he takes it mainly from Spinoza, in whose system it *kind of* makes sense. Naess' take on personal identity is also indebted to Husserl. However, Naess never explains how a being is supposed to maintain its "essence" in a processual world. He'd clearly read Whitehead¹⁴, who could perhaps be of use here, but, as far as I know, Naess never went this way. His occasional

12 Binka, B. (2002). *Analýza hlubinné ekologie*. Masarykova univerzita.

13 Naess, A. (2008). Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement, In: Drengson, A., Devall, B. (eds.), *Ecology of Wisdom*. Penguin Books, p. 248.

14 See how Naess explains the vagueness of his concepts and compare with f. e. "*But the accurate expression of the final generalities is the goal of discussion and not its origin.*" from Whitehead, A. N. (1978). *Process and Reality*. The Free Press, p. 8.

flirting with Buddhism¹⁵, which is based on impermanence, also doesn't help. If there's something really alien to Buddhism, it's unchanging essences. It's as if Naess was alternating between a Spinozist/Gandhian mood with permanent, unchanging absolutes such as Atman on the one hand, and a Buddhist/Heideggerian mood with impermanence, emptiness and no-self on the other. For this second mood he developed the name Gestalt ontology, and it's unclear to me which he really preferred. What I'm sure of is I can't see how they can be consistent.

One interesting element of Gestalt ontology, which I'd compare to Kratochvíl's Philosophy of Living Nature¹⁶, is that each thing is a depth, bottomless abyss, inexhaustible by any grasp or any number of descriptions; there's always a surplus, always another "face" that a thing can reveal. And the number of such descriptions or views is probably infinite. Naess even invented his own (dual) terms for this – an *abstract structure* and a *concrete content*.¹⁷ This is one of Naess' "phenomenological" moments. The abstract structure, Naess says, exists only as *ens rationis*. It is that which constitutes the appearance that things *hang together*, that they *come out* of one world. Patočka would simply call this "the world"^{18 19}. How a thing appears to an observer is what Naess calls a concrete content (it probably appears differently to each observer). All this might look like overly theoretical, abstract talk, without much impact on or importance for the "real world", but it's not. Naess invented this to counter Galileo's division of primary and secondary qualities. This division impedes the kind of environmentalism that Naess would like, because it diminishes the importance of the secondary or subjective qualities of things. For Naess, how things appear is

15 Naess, A. (2008). Gestalt Thinking and Buddhism. In: Drengson, A., Devall, B. (eds.), *Ecology of Wisdom*. Penguin Books, p. 195-203.

16 Kratochvíl, Z. (2016). *The Philosophy of Living Nature*. Karolinum Press, p. 18.

17 Naess, A. (2008). The World of Concrete Contents. In: Drengson, A., Devall, B. (eds.), *Ecology of Wisdom*. Counterpoint, p. 104 (electronic version).

18 Patočka, J. (1970). *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém*. Československý spisovatel, p. 76.

19 It is interesting that Naess usually doesn't mention phenomenological authors in the texts dealing with Gestalt ontology.

just as real and important as their “objective” qualities, such as mass. This means that when somebody wants to protect a forest because of its aesthetic qualities for example, there can be some merit to it, because the “subjective” qualities that the person refers to are, for Naess, just as real as others. Although, there’s a surplus to every thing’s appearance, and no grasp “gets” the whole thing. To express this position, I coined the term “realtivism” – a mesh of *realism* and *relativism*. It’s important to have both of these together, because we want to proclaim the appearances of things as *real* (and I don’t know what else than appearances we’ve got access to – hence I’m not talking about “things themselves”, because there’s no reason to here), and at the same time every appearance is partly constituted by *what it appears to* (hence relativism), it is a relation in a fundamental sense. Fundamental because both of the old terms *object* (*what supposedly appears*), and *subject* (*to which it supposedly appears*) only seem to make any sense *in a relation*, and this relation, this “and” between them might be more fundamental because of this “fact”. *Realtivism* is a position that seems to put Naess, Dogen and Kratochvíl together.

Here it starts to get interesting. Naess clearly realizes that an appearance is always a *relation* (it’s not two independent things – subject and object – but something in between). But at the same time he talks about things, and about things having essences. Moreover, here and there he references both early and late Heidegger (in this text I won’t go deep into Heidegger, I just want to touch on it a little). This is peculiar, because, I’m tempted to say that Heidegger would consider (at least parts of) Naess’ language metaphysical. Heidegger too postulates a bottomless depth, but not on the side of things – for him, it’s on the side of the *strife* (*Streit*) between the immediate *presence* or *presenting* of a thing, and the background which it *comes out of* (which includes me as that *to which a thing appears*). This strife is what for Heidegger constitutes an *event* (*Ereignis*)²⁰. I wonder why Naess didn’t make a step of this kind, because perhaps he could’ve thus avoided many conceptual problems, such as the inconsistency between his take on personal identity and the nature of the Self. Let me illustrate this a bit more. For Naess, part of what

20 Backman, J. (2015). *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Postmetaphysical Unity of Being*. State University of New York Press.

constitutes one's identity is one's environment – he quotes²¹ one Sami person who, after one river had been dammed, said that the river was a part of himself. But in what sense can we say that it was? Through the years, the river had changed, and so had the person. Does a river have an unchanging essence? How can that be? What is the same about it after the years? What is the basis for protecting it, or rather keeping it in a certain state, other than a romantic's longing for a childhood long lost?²² Mathews expressed this concern from a similar standpoint: *"If we lose a species or two, a forest, a dune field, even Gaia itself, there is no reason for grief, for we are at one with the inexhaustible source of such forms of-being, and are therefore not diminished. Indeed we might even point out that those who struggle to preserve the particulars are acting precisely from an un-Self-realized point of view, for they are seeing the objects of destruction as discrete entities, logically un-connected with the whole and for this reason irreplaceable. Conservationists are, from the point of view of this objection, acting from atomist premises."*²³ She also tried to rescue Self-realization from this objection. I see nothing convincing in her arguments. I'll just mention one point to demonstrate. Selves, she says, exhibit an anti-entropic tendency, a will-to-exist. Then she makes a strange jump, trying to prove it's self-defeating to suppose that the whole universe is not a self, and couples it with the claim that we should identify with it by following its "law of being", which is, supposedly, preservation and enrichment, rather than destruction, of our environment.²⁴ I'll just say that locally, it simply isn't true that selves are anti-entropic

21 Naess, A. (2008). Self-realization. An ecological approach to being in the world, In: Drengson, A., Devall, B. (eds.), *Ecology of Wisdom*. Penguin Books, p. 87.

22 A passage from Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* may be instructive: *"Nothing on Earth and the empty sky can be saved by us defending it. The 'Yes, but' against the critical argument, which rejects that something be torn from itself, already has the form of relentless persistence on what is, an adherence, which is incompatible with the idea of saving, in which the spasm of a prolonged self-persisting may be released. Nothing can be saved, unless it changes, unless it passes through the gate of its death. If saving is the innermost impulse of all spirit, then there's no hope other than the hope of absolute surrender: of that which is to be saved, and the spirit that hopes."* Petříček, M. (2018). *Filosofie en noir*. Karolinum, p. 140.

23 Mathews, F. (2006). *The Ecological Self*. Routledge [electronic version], p. 107-108.

24 Ibid

pic. It's more like everything on the planet constantly breaks down everything else to build itself up. Or, what about ancient planetary events, such as bacteria consuming most of the biosphere? Mathews talks of ecology, but, as I see it, not much in there supports her claims except for the things she's put there herself.

These issues are the reason I chose to invite Dogen into the talk. Dogen came up with four different views of the self. View one is identification with the mind, or the "mental" image that each person has of themselves. View two is identification with the body. Dogen expectedly drops both of these as simple "clings to illusions". The third view is when the self is completely absorbed in activity; so completely, that it's without self-reflection. The fourth view is the self being absorbed in activity, with some degree of "awareness", however, here we stand at the border of what western philosophy knows how to express.²⁵ What could serve as an example here is when one hits their toe and experiences pain; there's absorption in the moment, together with the experience "this *me* that's hurting".²⁶

For Dogen, all reality is a unity. One unifying-like concept in Buddhism is the concept of *dependant origination*. I believe Naess got about halfway into it in his Self-realization. For Dogen, though, what constitutes unity is the present moment. That is the ultimate source of all. Dogen calls this *bussho*, thought of as the "capacity to attain enlightenment". In the Buddhist tradition before him, it was said that all beings contained *bussho*. Dogen strictly prohibits this. For him, all beings *are* *bussho*, and *bussho is* all beings. For Dogen, all reality is disappearance-origination. He's also careful with language. In a way he says that *bussho* is nameless, unnamable or ungraspable. But that would suppose that *bussho* is a "something" – another thing that he prohibits. For him,

25 Zen Buddhism didn't originate as an academic theory, although I believe we can say it's had its "academic" moments. Zen is first and foremost a practise. Part of that is what we could perhaps call "theory", but producing an academic theory is really not the aim of zen. What is expressed in language is usually combined and mutually reinforced with practise such as meditation.

26 Luetchford, M. (2004). *Buddhism and the Theory of No-Self*. Available from: <http://londonzen.org/articles-and-downloads/> [quoted 30. 4. 2024].

bussho is *the* nameless and *the* unnamable, not nameless and unnameable.²⁷ M. Luetchford explains it as: bussho is the actual *state* or *situation* of beings in the present moment.

3. Closing

Naess and Dogen clearly came up with very different conceptions. My idea was that comparing them might shed some light on why Naess got himself in such a conceptual mess with his Self-realization; notice that Dogen's view of selves is not at issue with his view of unity. It's as if Naess simply couldn't bridge the gap between a thing and a self, or between a self and another self; not for a lack of trying though. As if he took the narrow self out of its box, created the big Self, and put it into that very same box, instead of focusing his attention on the box as *that* which should be critiqued. As if he remained too deep in and indebted to certain tendencies of western philosophy.

Following someone like Dogen, we can open ourselves up to critiquing the box itself – that leads us to focus on the way we identify, instead of just what we identify *with*. Thus, we can re-think *identifying* itself.

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²⁷ Dógen. (2010). *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Shambhala.

TRANSFORMING DIALOGUE INTO ACTIVISM

Simon Selnekovič

I defended my thesis on September 6, 2024. The official title of my thesis is "Transforming Dialogue into Activism: The Evolution of a Feminist Organisation in Prague." After earning my Bachelor's degree, I continued my Master's studies at the Faculty of Humanities in the Anthropological Studies programme (Antropologická studia).

Introduction

This article examines the evolution and impact of a feminist NGO, referred to here as Fusion, which emerged in Prague as a response to perceived gaps in critical education and inclusive community spaces.

Examining the evolution and organisation of Fusion presented a unique and compelling area of research for several reasons. First, since Fusion is a growing organisation in Prague dedicated to intersectional feminist and queer advocacy, its research could provide a fresh perspective on how such organisations emerge and develop, specifically in the Czech Republic. Understanding its journey from a small university movement to an officially registered NGO offered insights into the challenges faced and successes achieved by new feminist initiatives 20 years after the country entered the European Union. Second, the organisation's focus on education, community building, and advocacy within an English-speaking audience added another layer of complexity as it seeks to navigate cultural diversity. Observing Fusion's activities, such as educational sessions, workshops, and political events in practice also allowed for uncovering some of the ways in which grassroots organisations attempt to foster inclusive spaces and promote feminist and queer values. This study also revealed potential inconsistencies and areas for improvement within the organisation, for example, by comparing the participants' experiences and perceptions with the organisers' intentions. Third, analysing how Fusion's values and practices align with broader feminist discourse contributed to a deeper understanding of contemporary feminist movements and their impact on local communities, particularly in a region with limited qualitative research on feminist

organisations. Drawing from extensive ethnographic research, including participant observation and interviews, the following research questions were formed:

1. How has the feminist organisation evolved and organised itself over time, and what are the critical factors contributing to its success or potential failure?
2. How do the views and experiences of participants in the organisation's activities compare with the stated intentions and perspectives of the organisers, and what tensions and opportunities arise from these differences?
3. How do the organisation's values and practices align with the contemporary feminist discourse and values, and what are its contributions to the creation of a feminist and queer community in Prague?

Methodology

This study employed a multi-method qualitative approach, integrating ethnography, netnography, and semi-structured interviews to investigate the evolution and impact of Fusion, a feminist and queer NGO in Prague. Ethnography, involving participant observation, allowed for engagement directly with the organisation's activities, such as education sessions, protests, and community-building events. These observations provided rich, real-time insights into the organisation's operations and dynamics. Complementing this, netnography enabled the analysis of Fusion's digital presence, including its Discord community, Instagram interactions, and WhatsApp groups. These online platforms proved essential for understanding how the NGO mobilises, communicates its values, and fosters engagement within a broader audience. Finally, semi-structured interviews with key organisers and participants offered personal narratives that enriched the dataset with nuanced perspectives on the NGO's goals, challenges, and contributions to feminist and queer discourse. Together, these methods provided a comprehensive lens to examine the interplay of activism, education, and community-building within Fusion.

Research Challenges

As it tends to be with qualitative research, conducting this research posed several methodological challenges. Balancing

objectivity while being immersed in the community required careful reflexivity, which was done in the fieldnotes. The positionality as a male outsider in a feminist and queer-focused organisation added complexity to interactions, potentially influencing participant responses and organisational dynamics. On the other hand, this positionality also offered unique perspectives on inclusivity and representation within the NGO's operations. Furthermore, it was necessary to always bear in mind certain ethical considerations such as preserving anonymity and gaining informed consent while doing fieldwork.

The literature review presented a significant challenge, largely due to the limited availability of academic resources on contemporary feminist organisations in the Czech Republic. This gap in literature led me to broaden the research scope to include feminist movements and NGOs in post-socialist contexts. Aligning this broader discourse with the study's research questions required careful selection and meticulous attention to detail while analysing the data.

The process of writing and revisiting fieldnotes after each participant observation was similarly demanding. Over five months, these notes accumulated to more than 50 pages, documenting the events, interactions, and reflections gathered from attending Fusion's educational sessions, protests, and internal meetings. Although fieldnotes provided invaluable data for later analysis, revisiting and coding them was a challenging task. It required significant effort to uncover patterns, themes, and critical insights from such a large volume of qualitative data.

Finally, the immersive nature of fieldwork brought its own set of challenges. Engaging deeply with participants required adaptability, strong communication skills, and emotional resilience. As a male researcher in a feminist and queer-focused NGO, building trust and rapport often involved navigating complex dynamics around identity and inclusivity. Despite these challenges, the fieldwork provided a unique perspective on Fusion's values and practices, offering a comprehensive understanding of how the organisation integrates activism, education, and community-building within the Czech context.

Peak of the Work: Highlights

The peak of this research was marked by the opportunity to engage deeply with Fusion during its most dynamic and transformative period. A particularly significant highlight was observing the organisation's formal registration as an NGO, which symbolised its evolution from a grassroots collective to a structured entity. This milestone was accompanied by significant organisational shifts, including the adoption of a more hierarchical structure and the introduction of a membership system to secure sustainable funding, which directly correlates with O'Hagan & Purdy (1993) and Vaceková (2016). Witnessing this transition first-hand provided invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by emerging feminist organisations in navigating formalisation while striving to maintain their grassroots values. Furthermore, the 6-month long fieldwork rendered several fruitful results, which will be delineated in the following paragraphs.

One significant event was a fundraiser organised by Fusion to support refugees from the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. Several volunteers who helped out at the event felt like they were not compensated for their efforts, which became a point of frustration among some participants. This highlights a recurring challenge for grassroots NGOs balancing limited resources with high expectations, which correlates with Vaceková's (2016) work on the professionalisation of NGOs. Furthermore, this event underscored the broader tension between the organization's reliance on volunteer labour and the sustainability of its operations. Although Fusion was already registered as an NGO, these findings mirror the grassroots movement's reliance on community efforts and volunteerism (Smith et al., 2014), which points out the non-linear and not universal nature of the NGO formalisation process.

Another pivotal moment in the fieldwork was an educational session focused on "Homocolonialism," which explored how Western LGBTQ+ movements can unintentionally impose their ideologies on non-Western cultures. This event exemplified Fusion's commitment to critical education and its intersectional approach to activism. The session drew a diverse audience, including students, activists, and

community members, fostering a lively discussion that extended beyond the formal presentation. The choice of topic and the depth of engagement revealed the organization's success in creating a space for nuanced debates on global feminist and queer issues. However, logistical barriers, such as the venue's inaccessibility for disabled attendees, raised questions about the inclusivity of these events, despite Fusion's intentions to build an equitable community.

The Women's Rights Protest, co-organized by Fusion, was another defining event that provided insight into the organization's role in Prague's activist landscape. The protest called for improved policies on reproductive rights and protections for survivors of gender-based violence. Fusion's members took on multiple roles, from organizing logistics to crafting powerful slogans for placards. Notably, this march offered a vivid illustration of Fusion's capacity to mobilise and inspire its community. It not only highlighted Fusion's advocacy for gender equality and queer rights but also underscored the emotional and collective power of activism in Prague's feminist landscape. Moments like these, rich in energy and solidarity, showcased the transformative impact of grassroots movements on both individual participants and the broader community. According to Jagiełło-Rusiłowski (2022), collaborative efforts among NGOs, particularly those sharing common visions for change, increase their impact and promote the adoption of beneficial policies for societal well-being, making NGOs more eager to succeed.

Outcome of the Research

Fusion's transformation from a grassroots university movement into a registered NGO highlights key factors shaping its growth. Its role as an English-speaking organisation addressing intersectional feminist and queer issues set it apart in Prague's activist landscape. Formalisation brought significant changes, such as introducing membership fees, securing grants, and adopting hierarchical structures. These trends are also reflected in the literature by Cox (2020), Fagan (2005), and Lorenz-Meyer (2013) on the professionalisation and formalisation of feminist movements in the Czech Republic. While these shifts im-

proved efficiency and sustainability, they also posed challenges to Fusion's grassroots ethos and original mission of inclusivity.

As for the second research question "How do the views and experiences of participants in the organisation's activities compare with the stated intentions and perspectives of the organisers, and what tensions and opportunities arise from these differences?" Participants described Fusion as a welcoming and inclusive community, though tensions arose when it came to distinctions between the levels of involvement among members, with a "smaller community" of core participants who are more actively engaged in the organisation's activities. While Fusion's mission emphasises introspection, inclusion, and action, participants noted inconsistencies in how these values were implemented. For instance, the introduction of membership fees, though necessary for financial sustainability, raised questions about inclusivity and accessibility for all community members. Additionally, the shift towards more formal hierarchical structures sometimes conflicted with the grassroots, participatory ethos that initially attracted members. These issues highlighted a delicate balance that Fusion must maintain between professionalising its operations and staying true to its foundational principles of inclusivity and community engagement. Such challenges are reflective of broader struggles within feminist NGOs to reconcile growth and formalisation with their core activist values. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the overall perceptions of the organisation were mostly positive, and participants stated that they valued Fusion's efforts in providing a platform for marginalised voices and promoting feminist and queer values.

Lastly, the third research question, "How do the organisation's values and practices align with the contemporary feminist discourse and values, and what are its contributions to the creation of a feminist and queer community in Prague?" Fusion's activities, including education sessions, workshops, protests, and community events, align closely with its stated values of "introspection, inclusion, and action." These activities foster a sense of community among participants and promote awareness and advocacy on feminist and queer issues. The organisation's focus on intersectionality and in-

clusivity reflects the principles of fourth-wave feminism, emphasising technology, media representation, and grassroots organising (Malinowska, 2020; Munro, 2013). Fusion's use of digital platforms like Instagram and Discord for advocacy and community building mirrors the broader feminist movement's reliance on these tools to mobilise and engage members.

Overall, the research demonstrated that while grassroots feminist initiatives like Fusion face significant obstacles, their resilience and capacity for transformation underscore their vital role in fostering societal change and challenging traditional gender norms. This study not only documented Fusion's journey but also provided a lens through which to analyse the dynamics of feminist and queer activism in Central Europe.

Future Work with the Topic

This research has opened avenues for further exploration into feminist and queer activism within the specific cultural and historical contexts of post-socialist Central Europe. While this study focused on a single organisation, Fusion, there is significant potential to expand the scope of inquiry to include comparative analyses of other feminist and queer NGOs in the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries. Such research could reveal broader regional trends, shared challenges, and innovative strategies for community-building and advocacy. Moreover, investigating the long-term impact of these organisations on local policies, cultural narratives, and community cohesion would provide a deeper understanding of their transformative potential.

As for my future work, I am inclined to build on this research while exploring adjacent topics. The intersectionality of activism, education, and community-building within non-profit contexts remains an area of great interest. However, I am also considering diversifying the focus by examining different forms of activism, such as environmental or social, to uncover parallels and contrasts in their strategies and outcomes. Additionally, given the methodological and positionality challenges encountered during this study, I am interested in refining my approach to better address the

complexities of insider–outsider dynamics in future research. Whether I pursue a similar or distinct line of inquiry, this experience has underscored the value of ethnographic methods in capturing the lived realities and nuances of activist movements, which I plan to integrate into my future academic and professional endeavours.

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HUMR: Představení absolventských prací studentstva FHS UK

Šéfredaktorka: Lucie Kalabisová (lucie.kalabisova@seznam.cz)

Korektura: J, Miranda Martínez Elton

Přebal: Sofia Christianova

Sazba a grafická úprava: J

Texty: Daniel Trlifaj, Anna Arakhamia, Antonie Hradílková, Eduard Pazourek, Anna Bezhanová, Mariana Baranichenko, Martin Zelinka, Tomáš Pospíchal, Simon Selnekovič
2025

Logo časopisu: Bety Curhová

Propagace: Štěpánka Navrátilová

IT podpora: Karolína Havlová, J

Kontakt: humr.fhs@gmail.com; www.humr-space.cz

Vydavatel: Studenti FHS UK, z.s., adresa: Pátkova 2137/5, Praha 182 00

Časopis Humr vznikl za podpory spolku Studentský Majáles a Fakulty humanitních studií UK.

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