

KOLÁŘOVÁ, M. (ed.)

**Revolta stylem. Hudební subkultury mládeže
v České republice**
**[Revolt as style: Music subcultures of youth
in the Czech Republic]**Praha: Slon, 2011, 272 pages
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The book by Kolářová and a team of four other authors, published by the Slon Publishing House and launched to bookshops in 2012 is a sociological probe of life of four music subcultures in the Czech cultural environment and, at the same time, an effort to anchor conceptually the subcultures in the post-socialist cultural space where the music subcultures developed differently from those of Western Europe. The use of the word "subculture" is not limited to academic context; additionally to the publication by Kolářová et al., two publicistic works on subcultures have come out recently: "Kmeny" ("Tribes")¹, describing the current Czech subcultures, and "Kmeny 0" ("Tribes 0")², describing the subcultures in the Czech Republic before 1989. Both books provoked extraordinary readerly response. While many analytical sociological concepts constitute arbitrary concepts³, in relation to subcultures we can identify "subcultural awareness", i.e. common awareness of subcultural identity and specific self-articulation of the subculture. This was obvious in the above mentioned publicistic books on subcultures (the authors of the individual chapters were people with close relation to the subculture described by them); but this topic can be seen also in connection with the book under review. The case studies of the individual subcultures are researched by 'insiders'; they constitute the insight of researchers who have participated in the life of the described subculture in some way. That fact reduces a number of practical problems of qualitative research, providing the researcher with access to everyday knowledge of the subculture members; but on the other hand, it exposes the researcher to the risk of uncritical acceptance. The work on the history of subcultures by Gelder⁴ (2007) shows that the above stated problem is often contained in academical writing about subcultures. Gelder⁵ (2007, p. 64) uses the metaphor of romantic and anti-romantic ("realistic") approach to writing on subcultures. The question of how the researchers were able to cope with the problem of their own participation in the subculture described is of key importance for professional assessment of the book.

1 Vladimír 518 - Karel VESELÝ - Tomáš SOUČEK et al., Kmeny, Praha 2011.

2 Vladimír 518 – Ivan ADAMOVIČ et al., Kmeny 0, Praha 2014.

3 Compare Bourdieu's reflection on the arbitrary / realistic character of the concept of "class" (see: Pierre BOURDIEU, Teorie jednání, Praha 1998, 17–21).

4 Ken GELDER, Subcultures, cultures histories and social practice, London 2007.

5 GELDER, 64.

The backbone of the book consists in four case studies that can be understood as relatively autonomous, but at the same time allowing integration of the research findings into a meaningful whole. The first case study is called "Czech punk behind the curtain and before the curtain". Michaela Pixová, its author, focuses, additionally to information on the history of punk in our country and in the world and to professional literature on punk, on the topic of authenticity of punk subculture (the topic of subculture "for sale"), she deals with the link of subculture membership to identity and with the issue of blending of subcultures. The part of the chapter dealing with the punkers' plans for the future and the overall summary describing "today's punk" are interesting. Less well done is the stylistic aspect of the chapter (some formulations show little detachment from thought stereotypes of the subculture described).

The following chapter, "Czech free techno – mobile spaces of autonomy?" by Ondřej Slačálek constitutes, in my opinion, the best case study, from sociological point of view. Although he states not to claim non-ideological status, he shows manifestly his position (perspective) from which he describes the subculture and, in a relatively creative manner, applies sociological concepts (particularly Thornton's theory of subcultural capital, including Bourdieu's influence on which Thornton's had based her theory). At the same time, the strength of the chapter consists in the ability to link the findings to a more general context, particularly to value orientation of the "main stream" of the society.

Anna Oravcová's chapter describes the "Underground of Czech hip hop". She pays attention to the standards and life style in that scene, including the problem of authenticity and relation to mainstream hip hop. She devotes relatively great space to gender aspects in that, rather masculine, subculture. Some formulations in the chapter, similarly to those of Michaela Pixová's chapter, shows little detachment of the author from subcultural view of world. That pitfall was, in my opinion, successfully overcome by Petra Stejskalová in the chapter called "Subculture of skinheads – where heavy boots walked up". The chapter describes the current life style and values of the subculture of apolitical skinheads (speaking for example about their relation to music, politics or violence). Unfortunately, the chapter does not link the description of subculture with more general sociological concepts and topics (frequent secondary quotations are another thing that could be reproached).

The four case studies demonstrate, in my opinion, that 'insider research' can bring a valuable sociological insight of the issue of subcultures. Subculture membership is only a partial social role for the researcher, similarly as the role of an academic researcher and the detachment from it is not only an issue of the researcher's research but also of common everyday practice. But it is up to the individual researcher to view the own thought stereotypes with roots in the relevant sub culture. Additionally to Ondřej Slačálek's chapter, I see the best part of the book in the final chapter by Marta Kolářová, summarizing the research findings and anchoring them conceptually (Marta Kolářová is also the author of the introductory chapter presenting the basic concepts, points of departure and research method). She sees the source theory for conceptual grasp of subcultures in post-socialist society primarily in the post-subculture theory (references to Thornton and Muggleton are frequent). The music subcultures in the Czech Republic are described in connection with leisure time and hedonistic orientation (we also could say orientation on the present). According to the author, they constitute an alternative to common society by their attitude to drug abuse

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(that also has collective significances and, at the same time, contains a specific regulation, e.g. rejecting some drugs or some way of their application) and by creation of communities (the desire to affiliate with a community is driven by musical taste). According to Kolářová, the core of subculture keeps fulfilling rather the traditional features of subcultures and not the ephemeral essence of post-subcultures (as conceptualized by post-subcultural theory). The summary is related to the context of the Czech cultural space, and it would be interesting to make comparison with other post-socialist societies. In this regard, the subcultures constitute local interpretation of a global phenomenon. Kolářová's interpretation that subcultures disdain conformity with majority values (standards) but, on the other hand, are characterized by an intragroup conformity, can probably be considered their general feature. And in this regard, we must remember Simmel's⁶ formulation, more than hundred years old, of the substance of fashion that integrates two opposing streams, combining the desire for differentiation (originality and authenticity, in today's language) as well as the desire for imitation, for generality (i.e. also the desire to belong somewhere).

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⁶ Georg SIMMEL, *Peníze v moderní kultuře a jiné eseje*, Praha 1997, 100–131.