

Towns in the middle ages and in early modern periods as research topic in the last twenty years

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On the 11th and 12th of October 2011 the annual conference of Prague City Archives took place, organized this year in cooperation with the Institute of History of Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem and the Institute of International Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague. The aim of the thirtieth anniversary conference, was to evaluate the last twenty years of historical, archaeological and cultural research into medieval and early modern towns. Due to broad international participation, the issue was discussed not only in Czech, but also in Moravian, Silesian, Polish, Slovak, Hungarian, Austrian, German, Estonian and Swiss contexts.

The opening lecture was delivered by Jiří PEŠEK (Prague) who discussed the results of Czech historical research as presented in the bibliography „Czech and Czechoslovak History, 1918-2004“, prepared for Twentieth International Congress of Historical Science that took place in 2005 in Sydney. From the total number of titles published between 2000 and 2004 which dealt with Czech medieval and early modern history, only six percent concentrated on urban research and the majority of those focused solely on Prague. This rather unsatisfactory statistic was used by Pešek to outline the main problems of Czech urban research and to point out the topics that have been, despite their importance, continuously overlooked by Czech urban historians. The first important issue concerned the disproportion of completed research for different historic periods. Whereas in last twenty years

sufficient attention was paid to towns in Middle Ages and in the first centuries of early modern period (up to 1547), the 17th and 18th centuries have attracted a lesser number of scholars. Further, most of the existing publications are case studies related to the history of single towns and there is a lack of comparative and synthetic works. Although Pešek acknowledged the accomplished in-depth heuristic research, he also noted the want of conceptual approaches that would increase the general understanding of urban life. Another problem of Czech historiography has been the traditional definition of towns based solely on their legal status. As demonstrated in the recent studies by Susan Reynolds and Ferdinand Oppl, the legal aspect can be effectively substituted by definitions considering the special economic, administrative and social functions the towns possessed. In conclusion, Pešek remarked on the institutional problems of Czech urban research, in particular the lack of designated institutions and periodicals, and on the need for more research into Czech towns within the broader European context.

IVAN HLAVÁČEK (Prague) concentrated on accessible sources for the research of Czech medieval and early modern towns. Above all he emphasised the importance of new edition of public books in the project „*Libri civitatis*“, the publication of new volumes of the „*Historical Atlas of Towns in the Czech Republic*“, published by Historical Institute of Czech Academy of Science, and the encyclopaedia „*Towns and Villages in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia*“ by Karel Kuča. Hlaváček stressed the crucial importance of embedding the town history in the broader context of Czech regional cultural development.

Like Jiří Pešek, JOSEF HRDLIČKA (České Budějovice) pointed out various problems of Czech urban historiography, such as absence of specialised research institutions, scholars' concentration on the pre-White Mountain period and a high number of case studies at the expense of synthetic surveys. On the other hand, Hrdlička noted the start of the adoption by Czech scholars of international theoretical approaches (especially from Germany) that has shifted the focus of urban historians onto problems faced by minorities and their spatial

segregation, the position of women, confessional identities and the symbolic meanings of civic feasts and processions.

Similar issues, in different „national“ settings, were discussed in the following three sections. The principal question concerned the impact of political changes in 1989 on the institutional conditions of urban research in different countries and on the re-conceptualisation of methodological and theoretical frameworks.

In this respect LUDMILA SULITKOVÁ (Ústí nad Labem) and HANA JORDÁNKOVÁ (Brno) discussed important progress in Moravian urban research in the last twenty years, notably in the areas of gender, migration, elites and the history of everyday life. IRENA KORBELÁŘOVÁ (Opava) stated that history of Silesian towns has been traditionally overshadowed by other research topics and that there is a considerable need for more cooperation among Czech, German and Polish historians. However, important work has been done in terms of national and confessional differences and the beginnings of industrialization. German historiography was represented by PETER JOHANEK (Münster), who commented on the thematic changes in German urban research in the 1990s that have been influenced by the redefinition of political and cultural history, spatial turn and „places of memory“ concepts. In spite of these positive methodological and theoretical developments, Johaneck referred to the present institutional problems caused by decreased funding for medieval and early modern research in favour of „politically more interesting“ modern topics. From an Austrian perspective, FERDINAND OPLL (Vienna) outlined a similarly difficult institutional situation. However, he reiterated the richness of Austrian urban historiography, emphasising in particular the research of everyday life in towns and their environs, and the inauguration of two awards for outstanding work in urban research.

The following discussion opened the question of divisions between the medieval and early modern periods. Considering the similarities and apparent overlap of both eras, the division could seem as mere academic construction. Yet, as was reminded by Ferdi-

nand Opll, there was in Europe around 1500 an important change in the position of towns and in their political activities that separated both periods. Moreover the medieval and early modern sources differ in their character and provoke different sets of questions. Thus though interconnected, both periods should be regarded separately.

THOMAS MANETSCH (Zurich) concentrated on new developments in Swiss urban research and highlighted four main areas of current research that are „town in discourse and discourses in town“, urban space, visual representation of towns and towns as objects of symbolic communication. URSZULA SOWINA (Warsaw) and ZDISŁAW NOGA (Krakow) returned to the question of the year 1989 as an important turning point in urban research, and observed that Polish historiography had before 1989 focused on comparatively modern topics and the political changes of 1989 did not appear to make a great deal of difference to the direction of research. On the contrary, Estonian urban historiography, as described by RAIMO PULLAT and TÖNIS LIIBEK (Tallinn), was properly established only after 1989, with special attention to the history of Tallinn. KATALIN SCENDE (Budapest) and ISTVÁN NÉMETH (Budapest) concentrated on Hungarian historiography and emphasised the role of archaeological research especially for early medieval urban research. Both of them noted the gradual retreat of economic and social issues that is characteristic not only for Hungarian but also for broader European urban studies. MARTIN ŠTEFÁNIK and JÁN LUKAČKA (Bratislava) introduced the encyclopaedic project „Lexicon of medieval towns in Slovakia“, and in the last contribution EVA KOWALSKÁ (Bratislava) outlined the problem of insufficient employment of conceptual and methodological approaches that is characteristic not only for Slovak historiography. However she also pointed out recent progress that is demonstrated by studies using the microhistorical and anthropological methods.

The morning section of the following day was divided into two parallel sessions. The first part of Section A focused on editions of different types of sources related to towns. CHRISTIAN SPEER (Halle-Wittenberg) intro-

duced the new internet application „Inventar der Stadtbücher“ and IVANA EBELOVÁ (Prague) drew attention to the edited collection of the oldest public books from northern and north-western Bohemia. MAREK ĎURČANSKÝ (Prague) concentrated on possibilities of comparative research of town administrative elites, and MARIE TOŠNEROVÁ (Prague) focused on editions of town histories and chronicles. The central issues of the second part of Section A were urban space and urban architecture. EVA SEMOTANOVÁ (Prague) highlighted several internet portals which enable work with historical maps; VLADISLAV RAZÍM (Prague) sketched the difficult institutional position of researchers in architectural history and the lack of an organised approach to the conservation of historic buildings; MARTIN MUSÍLEK (Prague) outlined the possible applications of the method of social topography that can be used especially in researching the structure and segmentation of urban space; VÍT VLNAS (Prague) concentrated on outcomes of cultural-historical research and stressed the rising number of monographs on Prague baroque architecture, and KLARA KACZMAREK-LÖW (Wrocław) focused on the architecture of important public buildings, including their symbolism.

The first part of Section B concentrated on religious history and its position within the context of medieval and early modern history. JIŘÍ MIKULEC (Prague) introduced different issues that are presently researched in Czech historiography, such as confessional identities in towns, history of church institutions, and religious activities of town elites. LESZEK ZYGNER (Toruń) pointed out the extensive publication of primary sources dealing with the ecclesiastical history of Poland. PAVEL KOCHAN (Brno) and MARIE BUŇÁTOVÁ (Prague) concentrated on the history of Jewish settlement in Moravia and in Prague. The necessity to incorporate the topic of Jewish urban settlement into the broader study of urban elites was highlighted in discussion which followed the paper.

Section B was concluded by contributions by OLGA FEJTOVÁ (Prague) and MICHAELA HRUBÁ (Ustí nad Labem) who introduced two important concepts used in

present-day Czech historiography – the concepts of elites and gender. BRONISLAV CHOCHOLÁČ (Brno) focused on outcomes of research on noble-owned towns in Moravia; VÁCLAV CHMELÍŘ (Prague) summarized the sources available for research on town-based aristocracies. GERD SCHWERHOFF (Dresden) introduced a popular topic in German historiography – criminality in medieval and early modern towns – often researched as a part of the history of mentalities.

The afternoon session was opened by VÁCLAV LEDVINKA (Prague), who sketched the history of Prague City Archives. As several participants pointed out, the Archives have fulfilled the function of unofficial research centre for Czech urban history. JAN KLÁPŠTĚ (Prague) emphasised once more the eminent importance of archaeology for research on the material culture of medieval towns; ANDRZEJ KLONDER (Warsaw) pointed out the value of wills and inheritance inventories for research into material possessions and urban everyday life. RALPH ANDRASCHEK-HOLZER (St. Pölten) focused on research on cityscape paintings, which are an important source for charting changes in urban landscapes. OLIVER AUGE (Kiel) concentrated on recent research on Hanse towns that has become increasingly interesting to the German public as well as the academic community. Auge pointed out the role of social networks established among the elites of different towns that shaped the actual economic and political connections among individual towns.

JAROSLAV MILLER (Olomouc) delivered the concluding lecture. Unlike previous scholars, not only did he evaluate the existing results of urban research, but also offered several prospects for its future. In summarizing the latest tendencies in present urban studies he stressed the increasing interdisciplinarity, internationalization and digitalization of sources. As he observed, Czech urban historiography has recently made progress in all of these fields. Concurrently towns in the Czech Republic have attracted an increasing interest from international scholars, and the development and history of Czech towns have been more intensively incorporated into the broader context of European urban space.

Unlike Jiří Pešek, whose opening evaluation of Czech urban historiography appeared rather sceptical, Miller expressed more positive prospects in regard to its future development. This conference supported both opinions; it clearly outlined the important results as well as important problems and limitations of present urban research. It made a strong case for the possibility of comparing different national academic, institutional and thematic backgrounds, and the opening of international discussion, which could lead to deeper understanding of differences and similarities in urban development on a transnational level.

Konferenzübersicht:

Václav Ledvinka, Svatava Raková, Michaela Hrubá: Eröffnung der Tagung

Moderation: Jiří Pešek

Jiří Pešek (Praha): Einführungsreferat

Ivan Hlaváček (Praha): Mittelalterliche Städte in den böhmischen Ländern als Forschungsthema in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Josef Hrdlička (České Budějovice): Frühneuzeitliche Städte in böhmischen Ländern als Forschungsthema in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Moderation: Václav Ledvinka

Ludmila Sulitková – Hana Jordánková (Ústí nad Labem – Brno): Die Geschichtswissenschaft zu den mährischen königlichen Städten in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit und die Edition städtischer Dokumente

Irena Korbelařová (Opava): Schlesische Städte in der Frühen Neuzeit als Forschungsthema in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Peter Johanek (Münster): Die deutsche Forschung über die Städte im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit in den letzten zwanzig Jahren

Ferdinand Oppl (Wien): Österreichische Städte im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit als Forschungsthema der letzten zwanzig Jahre

Moderation: Peter Johanek

Thomas Manetsch (Zürich): Die mittelalter-

liche und frühneuzeitliche Stadtgeschichtsforschung in der Schweiz (1990-2010)

Urszula Sowina (Warszawa): Medieval cities as a subject of the Polish historical researches after 1989

Zdzisław Noga (Kraków): Frühneuzeitliche Städte als Forschungsthema in der polnischen Historiographie in den letzten zwanzig Jahren

Raimo Pullat – Tõnis Liibek (Tallinn): Vergleichender Überblick über die mittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Stadtgeschichtsforschung in Estland

Moderation: Ferdinand Oppl

Katalin Szende (Budapest): Die Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Städte Ungarns in den letzten zwanzig Jahren

István Németh (Budapest): Neue Wege in der frühneuzeitlichen ungarischen Stadtgeschichtsschreibung an der Wende des 20./21. Jahrhunderts

Martin Štefánik – Ján Lukačka (Bratislava): Die Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Städte in der Slowakei in den letzten zwanzig Jahren

Eva Kowalská (Bratislava): Die Städte in der Frühen Neuzeit als Forschungsthema der slowakischen Historiographie in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Moderation: Michael Diefenbacher

Christian Speer (Halle-Wittenberg): Perspektiven der Stadtbuchforschung

Ivana Ebelová (Praha): Die Erschließung der Quellen zur Problematik der böhmischen frühneuzeitlichen Städte in der tschechischen Historiographie in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Marek Ďurčanský (Praha): Der komparative Zugang zur Erforschung der Verwaltungsgeschichte der böhmischen Städte – Aufforderung oder Utopie?

Marie Tošnerová (Praha): Die städtische Geschichtsschreibung in den böhmischen Ländern in der Frühen Neuzeit als Forschungsthema in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Moderation: Martin Svatoš

Jiří Mikulec (Praha): Die Erforschung der Kirche und des religiösen Lebens in den frühneuzeitlichen Städten

Leszek Zygmunt (Toruń): Stadt und Kirche. Die Kirchengeschichte in der Forschung zur mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Stadtgeschichte in Polen (ein Forschungsüberblick)

Pavel Kocman (Brno): Juden in mährischen Städten und Städtchen im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit

Marie Buňatová (Praha): Jüdische und christliche wirtschaftliche Eliten in Prag in der Zeit vor der Schlacht am Weißen Berg (1577-1618)

Moderation: Václav Ledvinka

Eva Chodějovská - Eva Semotanová (Praha): Stadtgeschichte, kartographische Quellen, kartographische Methoden, Darstellungen und Fazite

Vladislav Razím (Praha): Bauhistorische Städteforschung in der Tschechischen Republik in den vergangenen zwei Jahrzehnten – Stand, Bedarf, Aussichten

Martin Musílek (Praha): Anwendungsmöglichkeiten von Sozialtopographie bei der Erforschung der böhmischen und mährischen mittelalterlichen Städte

Vít Vlnas (Praha): Die kunsthistorische Erforschung der böhmischen frühneuzeitlichen Städte in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Klara Kaczmarek-Löw (Wrocław): Die öffentliche Profanarchitektur in den Städten der Krone Böhmen um 1500 als Ausdruck der Repräsentation. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung

Moderation: Eva Kowalská

Olga Fejtová (Praha): Bürgerliche Eliten als Forschungsthema der tschechischen Historiographie im Kontext der europäischen Forschung in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Michaela Hrubá (Ústí nad Labem): Genderforschung im Kontext der tschechischen frühneuzeitlichen Städteforschung in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Bronislav Chocholáč (Brno): Untertanenstädte in Mähren in der Frühen Neuzeit im Licht der Forschung der letzten zwei Jahrzehnten

Václav Chmelíř (Praha): Der frühneuzeitliche Adel in den Städten und die tschechische Historiographie in den letzten zwanzig Jahren. Quellen und Perspektiven

Gerd Schwerhoff (Dresden): Kriminalität und Stadt in Spätmittelalter und Frühen Neuzeit

Moderation: Zdzisław Noga

Václav Ledvinka (Praha): Zwanzig Jahre Forschung zur Geschichte Prags

Jan Klápště (Praha): Archäologie der Städte in böhmischen Ländern: ein Bilanzversuch der zwei Jahrzehnte

Ralph Andraschek-Holzer (St. Pölten): Zwischen „Ikonographie“ und Kulturgeschichte: Stadtansichten in der neueren Forschung

Andrzej Klonder (Warszawa): Mittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Städte im Kontext der Forschung der materiellen Kultur in der polnischen Historiographie in den letzten zwanzig Jahren

Oliver Auge (Kiel): Vom Städtebund zur kaufmännischen Interessensgemeinschaft: Der Beitrag der Hansehistoriker zur Stadtgeschichtsforschung der letzten 20 Jahre

Moderation: Jiří Pešek

Jaroslav Miller (Olomouc): Výzkum českých měst mezi minulostí a budoucností/ Die Erforschung der tschechischen Städte zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft

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