

Historical Sociology as a Study Program at Charles University in Prague

In 2009, the *Department of Historical Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University in Prague* began teaching a master's degree study program in historical sociology in the Czech language. This program aims to provide training for specialists with a focus on long-term social processes and trends in relevant research activities. Thematically, it deals with modernization and social change, religious and cultural pluralism, the forming of states and nations, globalization trends and effects, and integrating and disintegrating processes. The study program lasts two years and applications are accepted from those with bachelor degrees, subsequent to a written entrance examination. In the academic year 2012/2013 the teaching of this program in English commenced, and at the same time a doctoral studies program opened in Czech and English.

The study program has been conceived to reflect the contemporary state of the field, to react to ongoing academic controversies and monitor current research trends. The program is based on the assumption that historical sociology includes both classical authors (Marx, Weber, Elias etc.) and significant current personalities (Eisenstadt, Tilly, Skocpol, Mann, Wallerstein). It has its own professional journals (*The Journal of Historical Sociology*, originated in 1988, the Czech journal *Historická Sociologie*, from 2009), expert forums, and representation within the *International Sociological Association ISA (Working group 02 Historical and Comparative Sociology)*. It also boasts an extensive scientific literature, a range of textbooks (Abrams 1982; Skocpol 1985; Smith 1991; Szakolczai 2000; Bühl 2003; Schützeichel 2004; Romanovsky 2009; Lachmann 2013), and works of an encyclopedic nature (Delanty – Isin 2003). In the Czech Republic there have been several recent notable publications about historical sociology (Šubrt 2007; Arnason 2009; Havelka 2010; Šubrt – Arnason 2010; Arnason 2010) and it is also represented in the *Czech Sociological Association (Section of Historical Sociology)*.

The conception of teaching in the program underlines the fact that historical sociology cannot be understood as a hybrid of history and sociology. It is a discipline based on the assumption that the general subject of sociology is historical, spatio-temporally determined, social reality. The adoption of this ontological assumption has implications for both social theory and the strategies of sociological research, because both should be oriented not only to analyzing the present, but the past. In accordance with this premise, therefore, historical sociology cannot be defined as a special sociological discipline, but as a specific theoretical and methodological perspective relevant for general sociology and special sociological studies. It is a specialization strongly focused on long-term social processes, as well as analysis of the distinctives and commonalities of different historical periods.

The courses taught at the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University can be divided into three basic blocks. The first, theoretical-historical block, offers courses dedicated to general theoretical conceptions of historical sociology, and civilizing analysis, as well as the perspectives offered by historical sociology on the issues of knowledge, culture, religions, nations, nationalism, economics, politics, law, democracy and everyday life. The second, methodological-research block, familiarizes students with the basic approaches and problems of sociological, and to an extent historical, methodology. The explanation of research methods and techniques is focused on archival research and the application of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in areas such as oral history, grounded theory, discourse analysis, case studies, and secondary data analysis. The third block is characterised by selection and specialization. Its core consists of three optional subject areas: (1) the theory of social change and modernization processes, (2) the historical sociology of culture and the quotidian and (3) the historical sociology of politics and international relations. To these optional subjects students can supplement others offered by the Faculty of Humanities.

The above-described education in historical sociology is envisaged to prepare students, both

in terms of knowledge and essential practical skills, for the future exercise of their professions, whether in the academic or general sphere (offices, agencies, educational institutions, consulting firms, editors, etc.). The study program is designed so that students acquire a relatively broad set of professional bases which can be used in various types of employment with information of a socio-historical nature. Graduates should be skilled in seeking out information and accessing it, able to treat, evaluate, compare and analyse it using quantitative and qualitative approaches. They should also have an expansive intellectual outlook and be able to put the issues they deal with and the dilemmas they encounter into a broader, especially socio-historical, context.

The teaching of historical sociology at the Faculty of Humanities offers a subject of study that is not only diverse and internally differentiated, but that seeks to develop a general theory, and that contains a number of special theories, covers a range of specialized directions, and conducts research on the empirical level. Its study is neither narrowly professionally oriented nor based on any one theory or method. In the theoretical part emphasis is placed on the multi-paradigmatic nature of the field, while the research area emphasises the pluralism of methodological approaches. Interdisciplinary overlaps into other fields are also a feature, primarily in history, but also in anthropology, political science and economics.

Jiří Šubrt

Unique Collection of Interviews with Armenian Genocide Witnesses and Survivors is Available at the Charles University in Prague

Malach Center for Visual History at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at the Charles University in Prague was founded in 2009 as a licensed access point to USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. This audio-visual archival resource allows researchers to watch more than 53,000 oral history interviews with

genocide survivors and witnesses, mostly people who have survived the Holocaust (Shoah). From 1994 to 2000, the former Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation collected interviews with Jews, Roma and Sinti, but also political prisoners or homosexuals who were persecuted by the Nazi regime during the World War II. The videotaped interviews were later digitized and catalogued. In 2006, the first version of "Visual History Archive" (VHA) website was launched, to be made available at licensed access points across the world at universities, memorials, museums etc. The website provides users with useful search tools, necessary for a collection of such scale and extension, including people names database of nearly 1.8 million names, biographical information search, places search, and also detailed thesaurus of more than 65,000 keywords (such as "liberation-related aid giving", "war crimes trials history" or "ghetto time awareness"). Recorded interviews are stored in VHA in their original uncut form, average length of an interview being 135 minutes. Majority of the interviews (around 50%) are in English language, however, more than 35 other languages are also represented in the VHA (with no subtitles or transcripts available, with the exception of Kinyarwanda and Chinese languages). Apart from the speech and motion picture, historical documents and photographs have been captured on tape with the interviewee's commentary.

Even though the oral history collection started as an effort to capture the life stories of Holocaust survivors and witnesses, the scope widened after the year 2000 to include another similar historical events, like the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Nanjing massacre in 1937/1938, or the Cambodian genocide of 1960s. In 2013, the first collection of interviews not related to European Holocaust had been published in the Visual History Archive, consisting of 65 interviews with the Rwandan genocide survivors and witnesses (out of estimated total number of 500 individual testimonies). The testimonies, recorded in cooperation with Kigali Genocide Memorial after 2008, follow the same methodology as the initial interviews with Holocaust survivors. Another important addition came in