

Foreword

The Central European Conference of Historical Geographers was organised by the Historical Geography Research Centre under the auspices of the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Science at Charles University, and the Czech Geographical Society. The special issue that is now in your hands is a set of six selected papers from this conference. This special issue is thus the last, but not least, follow-up to the conference, which its organisers firmly believe could start regular meetings of historical geographers between the International Conference of Historical Geographers.

The Historical Geography Research Centre, the guarantor of this special issue, was founded in 2012. It responds to the recent demands in academia on interdisciplinarity and growing cooperation between humanities, social and natural sciences. In particular, it establishes a joint institutional platform for historical geography research and education and it brings together team members from the Institute of History CAS and the Faculty of Science at Charles University, along with many international and domestic external experts. Within the research, emphasis is placed on: 1. theoretical and methodological issues of historical geography and environmental history; 2. the process of spatial polarisation and border changes; 3. urbanisation processes and their reconstructions; 4. transformation of landscape's function; 5. regions, identities and heritage.

Thanks to its thematic openness, the conference attracted over 100 delegates from 18 countries. The main objective of the event was to reflect on the current challenges and developments in historical geography research in the Central European area in all its diversity. The rich academic programme incorporated the traditional themes of historical geography as well as newer ones and it reflected the trend of divergence from traditional historical geography towards the historicisation of current, primarily human-oriented, geographical research agendas.

The quality of the overall conference programme was ensured not only by the diversity of the papers presented, but also by the gener-

ous time made available for their discussion, whether as part of or outside special sessions, a phenomenon less and less common in today's accelerating academic world. And during these discussions, the enthusiasm and the need to conclude the conference have crystallised through this special issue. Obviously, in such a thematically rich programme, it was not easy to select just one comprehensive theme. The decision eventually fell on the theme that twisted like a red line through many sessions and contributions during the whole conference: heritage. Heritage can be considered from many different perspectives. It is currently being discussed mainly from the perspective of two important functions: *a)* heritage as a medium for preservation of collective memory, history, and a tool for the narration of the past; *b)* heritage as both tangible and intangible cultural values. As such, heritage is a subject to power relations not only in the negotiation of its nature, values and functions. This is an entrance gate for the general topic of this issue which we have called 'The politics and ideology behind cultural heritage'.

The first paper by Jenni MEROVUO (University of Eastern Finland) tackles the very up-to-date theme of border re-institutionalisation in the historical perspective. Building upon the peace treaty signed in Åbo in 1743, the paper investigates the impact of the Russo-Swedish war of 1741–1743 on life in the affected region. The peace treaty imposed top-down the border delimitation without any backbone in neither the religious nor linguistic division in the middle of the present-day eastern Finnish countryside. The paper applies the theory of the institutionalisation of regions to investigate the official reestablishment of the new regional order and the local renegotiation of the everyday practices that challenged the imposed borderline and the shape of border region.

The second contribution uses also written heritage as the primary source of information. In their text, Jaroslav DAVID and Jana DAVIDOVÁ GLOGAROVÁ (University of Ostrava) analyse Czech travelogues about Soviet Russia (and later the Soviet Union) dating from the period 1917–1968. The paper presents an approach to address ideological literature as a relevant

source of information. The source, which is a blind-coloured testimony of the authors, ranges from the initial desire to uncover the secrets of the world's first socialist state, to the uncritical admiration of the USSR in line with official propaganda. The text comprises several key issues and their evolution in time, including the theme of linguistic landscape. Here the authors describe the perception (and explanation) of the process of the ideologisation of space through the revolutionary symbology; a theme that resonates in contemporary world literature.

In the third paper, Michal SEMIAN (Charles University, Prague) and Aleš NOVÁČEK (South Bohemian University, České Budějovice), deal with the idea how history and cultural heritage is reinterpreted for the purpose of the reproduction of present-day regions. The paper builds upon the idea that there are many histories based on different ways of reinterpretation in order to validate former, present, as well as future actions of actors. The authors reveal three different ways of reinterpretation of history – regional patriotic, critical, and conciliatory. Further, they identify various strategies of the reinterpretation of history engaged in the process of regional identity formation. These strategies can be of common nature as well as specific to the particular region; however, in general they bounce between the traditionalisation and commercialisation of cultural heritage.

The fourth paper represents a case study dealing with the specific kind of heritage – mining heritage. The authors of the paper, Jakub JELEN and Zdeněk KUČERA (Charles University) discuss the definition of mining heritage and they study its origin, recognition, protection, management, and interpretation in the case of the Jáchymovsko area. Using examples from the management and interpretation of Jáchymovsko heritage, the paper attempts to grasp the ambiguous process of heritage management, the quest for a balance between protection and touristification, together with the follow-up question of what heritage should one preserve and interpret to the general public.

The last two articles introduce case studies of cities that have historically been characterised with cultural and ethnic diversity,

reflected in their rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Justyna LIRO *et al.* (Jagiellonian University, Kraków) offers an overview of the ethnic-religious processes that created today's multicultural cityscape in Białystok, north-eastern Poland. Their article reveals the process of how the Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim cultural heritage of the city, once intended to be forgotten, has recently become identified as an asset by local heritage management policy.

From some aspects, a similar process has seemed to evolve in the city of Oradea, Romania, presented by Ágnes ERŐSS (Geographical Institute RCAES, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest). Her paper illustrates the conflict over street names, a topic that is embedded into ethnicised political contestations. Following decades of reoccurring skirmishes, the city council accomplished an agreement that enhance the commemoration of personalities with local importance, thus contributing to the reinvention of local heritage.

This issue represents an output of CECHG 2016 and brings together young and upcoming scholars; a set of papers with several common denominators. All papers are tight together with the theme of politicisation and ideologisation of heritage. Although, they are plural in the nature of their disciplinary background, together they constitute an interdisciplinary set, the true keystone of historical geography. They follow recent trends in contemporary science and mirror the cultural-turn in historical geography. We would like to thank to all authors, peer-reviewers, editors, and others that made this issue happen. Further we would like to thank the CECHG 2016 organisers for bringing us together and the Czech Science Foundation for support under the project "Historical Geography Research Centre" (no. P410/12/G113). We hope you enjoy reading this issue and we look forward to meeting you and discussing the ideas raised with you during some of the forthcoming events.

MICHAL SEMIAN and ÁGNES ERŐSS