

Geography of subcultures: punks and non-racist skinheads in Prague

MICHAELA PIXOVÁ

Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science

Abstract

This study investigates geographical aspects of subcultures in Prague, specifically two typical examples of so-called youth subcultures – punks and non-racist skinheads. It elicits some of the ways subcultural identity may influence one's spatial behaviour, perception, decision-making and choice of localities. The research was accomplished by means of qualitative research methods, such as participant observation, structured interviews and informal interviews. More than 30 localities and places within the city were assessed special importance in terms of their subcultural meaning and the extent to which either punks or skinheads are linked to them. The paper attempts to explain the formation process of such subcultural centres, describing their essential attributes and outlining their meaning for subcultural members and the subculture itself.

Key words: subcultural identity – subcultural centres – spatial behaviour – spatial perception – decision-making

1. Introduction

Recent growth of modernization and technological development has led to an intention to create a more or less uniform image of a city, where everything “old” must be replaced by the “new” and “modern”. The environmental planners, architects, city planners etc. seem to assume a miss-conception based on the idea that all inhabitants of a city have the same standard of appreciation towards their environment. Within a city we can distinguish many layers of stratification, which are not purely based on socio-economic or cultural backgrounds but reflect more age, gender, politics or personal dispositions and tastes. This heterogenous diversity of urban populations results in many varieties of specific local venues, where different groups of people with similar tastes congregate. Prague is an example of a quickly developing post-socialist city, where the environmental diversity was long time curtailed by the communist regime. Not until November 1989 was this diversity free to exist and now it is already put at a “live-threatening” risk again. Non-mainstream social groups are not just being

omitted but literally oppressed by the city developers and politicians who simply don't recognize their environmental needs. Geographers are the ones to arise and point out the progress of such social injustice within the city (Harvey 1992, Bell 1995).

1.1 Subculture as a social group

Different subcultures are examples of the diversity within the population as a whole. The term "subculture" stands for a smaller cultural unit that is characterised by an inner structure composed of the same features as general culture. Such units are more or less distinguishable groups, which exist as a part of a larger systematic complex (Petrušek 1985: 121). In the forties of the last century, Gordon was the first one to define the term "subculture". According to him (Gordon 1947: 17), "subculture is a subdivision of national culture, composed of a combination of socio-situational components, such as social status, ethnical origin, urban or rural settlement and religious identity, whose combination creates a functional unity, integratively strengthening the individuals concerned in it".

1.2 Youth and music subcultures

Ethnic minorities, religious groups, the whole spectrum of social classes etc. may present the most prevalent subcultures. Nowadays, we also commonly encounter so called "youth subcultures" and "music subcultures", which didn't exist in such extent in the first half of the last century. Sarah Thornton (Gelder, Thornton 1997: 1-5) claims that "subcultures are groups of people, who have something in common (some problem, interest or experience) that distinguishes them considerably from members of other social groups". Youth and music subcultures often fade into one another and by some means seem to be interchangeable. Their existence and identity is based on several important integrative elements, particularly music and specific stylization of appearance, both of which are a matter of a certain taste. This taste is adopted by all members of a particular subculture and is typically manifested in other aspects of such people's lives. It may also reflect a political opinion and the style of appearance often serves as means of expressing resistance towards current socio-political situation. In that respect communist regime represented a strong element drawing subculturalists together. They all hated and resisted one common enemy. Nowadays the situation is a lot more complex.

1.3 Punks and skinheads

Punks and skinheads, the two respective subcultures this paper deals with, are characterised by their distinctive features and similar origination background. Environmental factors, such as emancipation of working-class youth culture or political disillusionment, contributed to the stylistic accents in the appearance of both subcultures. The style of dress of both punks and skinheads is the way to express their selfrighteous alienation from mainstream. Their existence in the Czech Republic has a relatively long history in comparison with other similar subcultures.

As regards skinheads, only the non-racist sub-groups were investigated. Mainstream society does not know much about these sub-groups and on the whole considers all skinheads to be racists and right wing extremists. In the Czech Republic this is more pronounced due to its specific history as the non-racist sub-groups evolved later and in a smaller scale than the racist ones (Mareš 2003: 413). The first wave of the skinhead movement spread into the country from neighbouring Germany around the year 1985. In Germany the racist movement was well-developed. Also the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and a high number of gypsy inhabitants constituted perfect breeding ground for racist skinheads movement. But the democracy gained in 1989 introduced new opportunities for all inhabitants, skinheads included. Current trends within the right-wing skinheads have become incredibly complex. Many members have left their subcultural identity and entered various far-right associations, political or militaristic organizations. The dress code is no more as simple as it used to be either. Only the rural individuals now wear the once famed bomber jackets, camouflaged trousers and revealed combat boots. Casual street wear of particular neo-Nazi or sports brands is the most popular. There have also been attempts to copy typical anarchist "black-blog" clothes, consisting in wearing only black garments, etc. The subcultural identity of right-wing skinheads is desolving into a mix of ultra-right extremist organizations. This is one of the main reasons why the right-wing skinheads were not included in the study.

On the other hand, the non-racist sub-groups base their identity on the original idea of the skinhead movement, which are the challenges, life style and specific fashion (chequered shirts, braces, Levi's denim trousers, short hair, sideburns, specific brands such as Ben Sherman, Fred Perry, Lonsdale etc., often influenced by the fashion of punks) of the UK working class youth in the late nineteen sixties and seventies. Division based on attitudes towards racism and politics came to the fore front a few years after. Yet, the non-racist skinheads meet the basic features of a subcultural group much better than their racist antagonists.

British economic depression in the second half of seventies gave rise to the punk movement. The young punks manifested their dissatisfaction with the social situation by provocative dress-style (dirty ragged clothes full of pins and nails, dishevelled or spiky hair full of colours, chains and hobnailed belts, tennis shoes or boots, piercing, tattoos etc.) and behavior. They stood out against the injustice of the regime and identify with anarchist ideas. Politics-wise the early movement in the Czech Republic was strongly based on anti-communism (but not in the sense of organized political activism) and became left-wing and anarchist orientated after the year 1989.

With a few exceptions (e.g., in the early "confused" months of the skinheads' existence in the Czech territory) punks and racist skinheads have always been irreconcilable enemies. Czech skinheads and punks came together only after non-racist skinhead groups had arisen. Nowadays the motto "punks & skins united" works in practise and to a large extent the two subcultures commonly mix together.

1.4 Subcultural space

Some of the main points this paper investigates are: the way personal taste may influence one's choice of localities, and also the way localities may affect personal

taste. It attempts to outline the interplay between subcultural identity and spatial perception, behavior and choice of localities, by considering a wide range of aspects of belonging to a particular group.

The pivotal task of the research itself is to investigate the subcultural space of punks and skinheads in Prague in a quickly developing post-socialist city of Prague. Most of these so-called "subcultural centres" are clubs, pubs, bars, music halls, specialised shops, rehearsal rooms and football stadiums. Around thirty different places punks or skinheads frequently visit and spend their time in, were explored, aiming to explain two main issues:

What is the process of subcultural centre formation and in what way does the subcultural spirit get rooted within a particular locality?

What do the places mean for their users, in what way are they utilized, how do their visitors choose them and eventually feel inside them?

Most of the data collection was accomplished through means of qualitative research.

2. Methods

2.1 Qualitative research

Since the research concentrates on psychological and sociological aspect of one's spatial behaviour, methods of qualitative research seemed the best applicable and profitable. One of the salient features of qualitative analysis is the means through which the explanation or clarification of a phenomenon is achieved. Existence of a phenomenon has to be discovered in a way similar to solving a riddle (Alasuutari 1995: 7). Moreover, the flexibility of the method enabled the research to be started without strictly given objectives or a hypothesis to be verified. The objective was of rather general nature: to find out the way subcultural identity may influence spatial perception and spatial behaviour of the bearers of such identity. During the course of qualitative research new objectives and questions may surface as well as new hypotheses or new decisions about the research plan modification, data collection and data analysis (Hendl 2005: 50). Hendl in this context compares the qualitative research to a detective activity.

2.2 Field of research

The field of research is represented by the venues mentioned later in the paper, thus venues in the subcultural space. It is a naturally occurring social action space which isn't artificially arranged for particular purposes (Wolff 2004: 195). On the basis of the information obtained from respondents, a number of localities spread all over the city of Prague are noted as "subcultural centres" and are noted for concentration of the members of punk and skinhead subcultures. The field research consisted of visiting them, spending certain amount of time within them and interviewing local staff or

owners. When observing, special attention was paid to the interior, close surroundings, location within the city and accessibility. The exploration also focused on the typical visitors, customers and users including staff and owners with special attention paid to their relationships and activities, especially the ones taking place within particular venues. Interviews were conducted with various people engaged in running particular enterprises, sometimes even from regular visitors, who didn't necessarily have to be members of punk or skinhead subculture. Such interviews are so called "interviews according to an instruction", where a list of questions or topics relevant to the research objectives is prepared in advance, but the interviewer decides freely on the way he/she gets the information needed and the respondents are enabled to employ their own perspectives and experience (Hendl 2005: 174). A lot of information was also obtained from informal interviews. For this purpose the method of "participant observation" was usually employed. "Informal interviews consist of spontaneously generated questions during natural interaction, where the informant doesn't have to be aware of the fact that the information he provides might be used for the research specific issues (Hendl 2005: 175, author's translation)". The method of participant observation requires the researcher to participate on everyday lives of the studied people and to a certain extent identify with the environment under study. In the case of this research the role of "participant as an observer" (Disman 2000: 305) was employed the most often. Disman defines the researcher in this role as someone fully participating in the group's life but not hiding the fact he's doing a research. High level of self-identification is very important for penetrating the area of research, but it should not later affect objective analysis. Finally, the role of "full participant", where the researcher must visually blend in the environment, was employed.

2.3 Participants of the study

The aim was to conduct "structured interviews with open questions", with at least 10 punks and 10 skinheads. Utilising a pre-determined structure simplified the comparative analysis as it offers quite convenient and fast comparison of responses (Hendl 2005: 173). In order to give the respondents certain amount of freedom in expressing their own ideas, these interviews were often combined with informal interviews. In this way individual nuances and circumstances could be taken into account. Each interview took around 1.5–2 hours. Finally 12 punks and 12 skinheads were interviewed. In the punk group male respondents dominated over female in ratio 1:2, in the skinhead group in ratio 1:3. This discrepancy is caused by fact that these subcultures have always been a predominantly masculine domain. The average age of the informants was around 21–22 years, the oldest respondent was 32 and the youngest one was 16. During the follow up research also three older (above 40 years of age) representatives of punk and hardcore subculture were interviewed in order to find out more about the pre-revolutionary situation of subcultures in Prague. The main source of respondents were acquaintances, people approached within the research field and people contacted via the internet. Soon it was possible to employ a method known as "the snowball sample", where the researcher gets to know new relevant individuals thanks to previous contacts gained during ongoing research (Hendl 2005: 390).

The interviews were conducted in clubs, bars, beer gardens, at the informants' homes or via the internet. Most responses were recorded by hand-writing. The only difficulty was to convince the respondents that it's possible to question things they take for granted, which is a common problem (Wolff 2004: 201).

The topics discussed with the respondents involved following points: subjective relationship to personal action space (esp. home, workplace etc.), relationship to particular subcultural venues, habits and routines associated with these venues, venue-related companionship, feelings associated with the venues and local community, politics consolidating and segregating different communities, symbology of the venue and feeling of rootedness, negatives of the venue, overall evaluation of the space and the interior, activities practised within the venue, the role of music, accessibility, drinks and prices, place of purchasing clothes and accessories, relation to football and the stadium of the supported team, other activities associated with football.

The final analysis of the responses results in a summarization of the meaning of subcultural centres' existence for their users and of the way these places come into existence. Factors featured in suitable localisation of subcultural centres and factors influencing the users' choice of centres are also explained. The overall analysis also takes into account factors such as age, sex, political opinions, respondent's personal life and lifestyle, etc.

3. Creation of subcultural centre (Focus n. 1)

Big cities, such as Prague, seem to be the best breeding-ground for a variety of all sorts of subcultures. For minorities big cities represent a space, where the chances of being in touch with like-minded people are much higher than elsewhere. Higher concentrations of people among a particular group enable the continuity of the subculture's existence and is a pre-requisite for the overall evolution and development of a given subculture. Naturally Prague is a city where most activities connected to different subcultures take place. In the area of Prague we can now find a wide range of specific localities where such activities take place and where social interactions of subcultural members happen.

In the Czech Republic, life of the members of the studied subcultures became a lot easier and changed a lot after the year 1989, and thanks to a "looser" social atmosphere the subculture adherents were more tolerated and their activities less repressed. They could start organizing concerts without red-tape and censorship of lyrics. As a result, music previously despised by the Establishment, started to be played in public places, ranging from small clubs to big concert-halls and festivals. The new capitalist society learned to profit from the existence of dissimilar groups with specific requirements. Also clothes typical for these subcultures, so provocative and damnable in the past, are now sold by numerous subcultural shops and are often copied by serious fashion designers. As a consequence of the natural evolution of the decriminalized subcultures, many enterprises have evolved into traditional venues of social interactions among

both punks and skinheads. A lot of members of these subcultures subsequently decided to carry out their own business and run enterprises targeted at a specific group.

However, this newly gained freedom of all sorts of people often seems to run against boundless power of city developers and supranational investors. These treat the "corruptible" post-socialist city of Prague like a paradise of unlimited possibilities, where many haven't yet stopped desiring for endless approximation to what they perceive as "western" or "modern". No wonder the existence of most "subcultural centres" is highly uncertain and in many cases significantly endangered.

3.1 The process of a subculture's rooting in a particular locality

Subcultural meaning may be embodied within specific places. This embodiment evolves either deliberately or coincidentally. However the formation of a specific community within the place is a crucial condition in both cases.

The creation of conditions for subcultural rooting

In some cases it is a premeditated intention to set up convenient conditions for a subculture to take its' root. Therefore the space is intentionally adjusted in the most convenient way for the subcultural members. Since members represent the vectors of particular ideas and style, their presence within the space is crucial for the rooting and further momentum of the subcultural spirit. This is the case especially when an enterprise is run directly by the subcultural members, who themselves may feature as the main attraction for specific visitors. These people might be popular simply for their relaxed company or for their activities within the subculture. This research records examples of entrepreneurs and staff known for their activity in the areas such as antifascism, anarchism, punk music and other types of subcultural music, squatting or activities linked to football. In this part it is important to note that during the communist era this phenomenon existed only in secrecy and could never gain ground in the public spaces commonly used by mainstream society. Boiler-rooms, drains, garages and huts used to be the common sites of subcultural spirit embodiment.

Coincidental rooting of a subculture

For subcultures it is more common to get rooted in a previously neutral enterprise or locality. This happens through the presence of an original group of people who may influence the image and meaning of the place and consequently set up new directions for the development of the place. Gradual selection of individuals participating on social activities is also part of the process. Following this selection, the visual style and interior design may also gradually change.

Whether the subculture does or doesn't get rooted and start evolving depends on many circumstances and attitudes of all people engaged within the particular enterprise. For various reasons subcultural members have always been occasionally visiting neutral places and if one of such places meets all the requirements of a specific purpose, then the place becomes regularly utilized. In totalitarian Prague these neutral places were the only enterprises to serve beer and in addition there weren't many of them. Especially punk visitors were not welcome and had no chance to settle down in

any of them, at least not for very long. This was mostly due to disorderly behavior and provocation associated with their presence in inhospitable pubs full of ordinary, closed minded people. Not until early democratic years could members of subcultures transform any pub or tavern according to their needs. Nowadays it is usually just a question of time whether the place visited by a particular group does or doesn't absorb the subcultural spirit. The watershed between the presence or absence of subcultural spirit is very thin and fragile. The spirit of the place is a result of the stable presence of specific groups of people, their relationships and activities within the venue.

3.2 Attributes of a subcultural locality

Subcultural localities are characterised by specific markers, interior design, often subcultural staff and entrepreneurs and a certain number of regulars creating a specific, often exclusive community. Visual elements unifying the community, such as decoration, dress style, distinctive appearance etc., are important. Music is definitely intrinsic.

3.2.1 Interior

Places favored by punks and skinheads may not be characterized by a particular style. The only things these places have in common are certain subcultural aspects they have to match. Above all, such enterprises shouldn't be expensive and should in no way differ from the deep-rooted imagination of underground and alternative atmosphere. Therefore its interior should be dissimilar to what is favored by today's mainstream society. Messily arranged interiors encourage the feeling of freedom and enable unfettered behavior, by contrast undue artificial and modern stylish perfection provokes anxious feelings calling for respect for conventions. Underground ambience is invoked by the absence of sumptuousness and costly interiors. It is not subject to current fashion trends. On the contrary, it is proud of its fustiness, uncleanness and decay. Scabrous walls, shattered furniture, old dishes of all sorts, gloominess and dustiness are exemplary for the most peculiar of punks' habitats. Club "Trosca" used to be a good example of such place; "archways, mildew, dust, spiders, pissed seats, a dirty booze joint full of fragmenting furniture" the punker Wana enthuses about the club. Skinheads prefer to dwell in places reminiscent of old traditional Czech pubs, especially the low-cost ones. But also punks are fond of such taverns as they can be easily found in most places of the Czech Republic. Such pubs are characterized by big wooden tables, simple, often folk decoration and quick supply of beer in big beer pots. The "U Libuše" restaurant is an example of an ordinary pub, where a group of skinhead football fans has become domesticated in one of its rooms and were allowed to use "their" room as a "clubroom" and decorate it with football artifacts. However, this doesn't apply to many pubs and only few traditional pubs succumb to subcultural transformations.

Once a place is meant to be made into a subcultural centre, regardless as to whether it will or won't happen purposely, its users and entrepreneurs gradually transform it

according to their own conception. "This cultivation, transformation or reconstruction is often pursued in an unconventional and sometimes illegal way, thereby creating significant forums evoking subcultural identity (Gelder 1997: 315)". Stickers are an example of a current trend in this transformation. Stickers are designed and made by music bands, football fans and individuals trying to employ their artistic talent or to express their opinion. Such stickers can be found anywhere, but their amount conspicuously increases in subcultural localities. Posters, thematic paintings or football artefacts are other examples of subcultural interior decoration.

3.2.2 Attitude of the staff and other guests

If the enterprise hasn't been subcultural from its start, then its future development as a subcultural locality depends to a great extent on the attitude of the staff, its owners and other regulars. Presence of the subcultural spirit including all its attributes has to be broadly tolerated. If the enterprise is to be a new subcultural centre, the subculturalists need to take a liking to the time spent in the enterprise given and subsequently, the subculture they inhabit has to be accepted within the particular space. This is not an easily attainable state of conditions, especially for a group as controversial as punks, who often deliberately strive to provoke the public. By the majority of the population they are frequently perceived with considerable skepticism and prejudice. That's why in most subcultural centres the non-punk regulars are used to, or are friends with the punk locals. The subculturalists need "their place" to protect them from the outer world and at the same time to strengthen their resistance against the society. Their centre has to be like home to them, a place where they can be themselves and where nobody tells them the way they are is wrong.

In the case of skinheads, this issue appears somewhat different. For the uninformed public the appearance of skinheads isn't as threatening as of punks, yet the skinheads may give rise to fear for those at least partly acquainted to the subcultural world. These people might recognize despite of rather ordinary clothes worn by skinheads, that there is a possibility of violence or disturbance. Most non-racist skinheads often experience incomprehension and are automatically associated with the extreme right and with neo-nazism, which is quite understandable with respect to the evolution of skinhead subculture in the Czech Republic. Most people aren't able to distinguish the skinhead sub-groups and aren't even aware of any kind of subdivision. It has to be said that this distinction isn't easy to discern. In this sense, the traditional victims of neo-nazi attacks are the most circumspect. These are mainly punks, anarchists, anti-fascist skinheads, hippie look a-likes, swarthy or Asian immigrants, tourists, gypsy and Jewish minorities. In general, as compared with punks the presence of skinheads in public places doesn't irritate anyone so long as their behavior is acceptable.

3.2.3 The community creation

Once a locality matches the requirements described above the basic conditions for a community creation are met. Later on punks and skinheads might become predominant regulars and together with other locals develop mutual relationships,

which might in some cases give rise to clannishness and alliance among the locals. Eventually such coherent groups become an independent community, often quite reserved. According to information from entrepreneurs of some of the most popular subcultural centres, the existence of such a community is one of the main deciding factors when choosing a venue. The extent to which an individual is bound to a particular venue is directly proportional to his/her adherence to the community within it. The interpersonal relations within the community might lead to the feeling of belonging or rootedness to the place where such social linkages happen. "The participants concerned in the community's co-existence typically lay an exclusive claim to the venue they inhabit, whereby their subcultural identity becomes strengthened (Gelder 1997: 315)".

A common feature of a subcultural community is its inaccessibility and therefore places occupied by a coherent community aren't easily approachable, not only for the non-subcultural individuals but also for the subcultural novices, who are often regarded with skepticism and disdain. The subculture members typically protect their centre and tend to avoid its disturbance by other people of different styles, values, interests, behavior etc. Practically all respondents agree on the fact that they don't like to see dissimilar strangers in their popular venues. They claim that they spoil its atmosphere. Nonetheless if the newcomers don't act in a provocative way, they're usually just ignored. In order to avoid higher concentration of such newcomers, some respondents suggest remote and difficult to find localities as more convenient for this purpose. All respondents also strictly refuse to share their space with neo-nazists. That's why enterprises with safety solutions such as locks are highly appreciated.

Again, the whole issue was somewhat different in the context of communist regime. Whereas today a community creation is often associated with a particular public site, before November 1989 subcultural communities usually came into existence independently of any kind of subcultural centre. Especially punks were very few and sought to meet other fellows. Their unconventional appearance was a good recognizing signal. They used to make friends anywhere they met. Soon they all new each other, they all faced the same problems, they all suffered from lack of possibilities to do "their things". Therefore the then community in Prague was a lot more uniform and interconnected in comparison with the present situation.

3.2.4 Clothes and music

Music and clothes are other elements inherent to subcultural atmosphere and strengthen the common identity of a community. The communication among people present in the enterprise is thereby accomplished in a non-verbal way by means of standardized stylization of appearance, thanks to which their sense of closeness is signified. The development of a commonly held style becomes an integral part of the enterprise and to a large extent determines the place's atmosphere. Respondents also consider music to be another integrating component of subcultural atmosphere. Music is a matter of major concern for most punks and that's why they enjoy the places where "their music", such as punk and hardcore, is played. Skinheads often favor the same music as punks, however styles such as oi!, ska, streetpunk etc. are even more popular

with skinheads. Both skinheads and punks place emphasis on the importance of music played, especially in their most popular centres. Music is often a decisive factor when choosing a place to go and contrariwise also something that might discourage one from staying. Good music improves the atmosphere of the place, bad music ruins it or even makes one leave. Punks and skinheads consider many kinds of music unbearable and rigidly avoid the places where such music is played. However during the past regime it wasn't possible to play any kind of alternative music, neither recorded nor live, in a public place such as a pub or a bar. In addition, there were very few concerts focused on subcultural music. Punks and skinheads had no choice but to put up with the mainstream music in most public places.

4. Meaning of spatial anchorage of a subculture (Focus n. 2)

Uniquely adjusted interior and social relationships existing within particular localities are important for subcultural identity reinforcement. However the mere subconscious awareness of the existence of localities teeming with significant implications subjectively perceived by the subcultural members, is also essential. Not only clubs and pubs fall into such localities, but also rehearsal rooms, favorite places in nature, a ruin of a building or any other "place of care" where socializing takes place. The everyday life of the people belonging to a subculture takes place within action space used by mainstream society, whose cultural values and aspirations dominate the surrounding space. That's why many subcultural members might feel the need of their own spatial embodiment within wider area of their life and daily activities. Subcultural members perceive their centres of subculture as points within their action space which they feel mentally linked to. The awareness of these points strengthen and sustain the continuity of their inward belief in their own subcultural identity. Thus subcultural members possess certain mental conceptions of the space they move within and subcultural centres are fixed points in this imaginary space. Nevertheless the mere awareness of the existence of these localities, which form the subculture into a legitimate spatially expressed group, are not sufficient for an individual to sustain his/her sense of belonging to a particular subculture. In order to sustain such a sense of group identity, subcultural members seek these localities, visit them and spend considerable amount of time in them. In most cases, the degree of their need to visit such localities is directly proportional to their need of socializing with other subcultural members and at the same time is inversely proportional to the frequency of their social intercourses and activities not subculture-related. This paper records one respondent who considers himself a skinhead, but hardly ever socializes with other skinheads and doesn't often go to the subcultural localities. He spends a lot of time doing sports and studying. His identity is based on his inmost conviction. Music remains his only contact with the subculture. Yet this is an unusual case and most respondents seek the company of their subcultural fellows. Prague is a big city which offers a wide range of enterprises for socializing. Out of Prague people often have to improvise when seeking a place for a similar purpose, the same way as all Czechoslovak subculturalists used to do under totalitarian regime. This way even

places such as "someone's home", "home-made rehearsal room", "a recreation facility", "public vestibules", "a garbage dump" or "a spot in nature" might acquire a status of "a field of care". The importance of such places consists in their indispensability for socializing of subculturalists and thus for the survival of the subcultural idea.

This paper also records a few respondents who make large emotional investments in certain places and in this way promote these places to the position of "a centre" within their own action space. Everyone's action space has a central point, which is usually represented by their home. All other places are then assessed in relation to the locality of their home. Subcultural members strongly attached to their community often treat their favorite subcultural venue in a similar way other people treat their homes. Some of them tend to evaluate their homes, workplaces etc., in relation to their subcultural centre. Some of them are willing to change their residence in order to be closer to it or by contrast are unwilling to move out in order not to be too far from it. This is true especially for single people without any family attachments when a subcultural centre may substitute for home. The social relationships within the centre may be a substitute for the family or partnership relationships. Obviously this usually changes along with rising age and changing priorities. Gradually placing emphasis on partnership or family life or employment often induce a reduction of visiting frequency, which afterward results in a distancing from the subculture. In consequence of this other subculturalists have to deal with gradual leaving of their fellows and the fact that they're original community is falling apart. They themselves might come to the point where they don't get any satisfaction from the time spent in their favorite venue. They either stop visiting it or create a new community.

As for their emotional connection to a particular enterprise, its strength is influenced by the number of enterprises the individual frequents. Those who frequent only one or two enterprises are usually attached to them very tightly. They become an integral part and are influenced by staying within them. The integration with the community within the enterprise might result in social exclusivity and isolation from the external groups. This way many similar yet often incompatible communities arise. Each community is associated with a particular enterprise. According to Sorre, "All groups tend to have their own unique social space reflecting the group's specific values, priorities and aspirations (Sorre 1980: 135)". That's why every such place becomes infused with rumours and gains certain reputation. On the basis of the centre's reputation, whether it is political or apolitical, left-wing or right-wing, anarchist or anti-fascist, tolerant or unapproachable etc., other people decide their preference. Some places are known as "drug addict holes", "hooligans' meeting points" etc. Some communities communicate and perceive each other as neutral, others wage wars or don't approve of each other. The individuals visiting multiple venues aren't usually orthodox followers of any particular characteristic for a specific community. If they communicate with several incompatible communities, they risk being criticized by each of them. Some subculturalists prefer to stay neutral and refuse any kind of extreme. It's a paradox that for this attitude they usually become subject to critique from both ends of the spectrum. Every extreme group believes that their conviction is the core of the subculture in itself.

As it was already mentioned before, in this regard the whole "community issue" was a lot more simple during the less stratified times before 1989. Nowadays it is obvious that subcultural groups are interlaced by a complicated network of social links and relationships. This to a great extent determines the spatial behavior of subcultural members.

5. Choice of location by the entrepreneurs of subcultural enterprises

Until the end of totality in November 1989 there were hardly any solely subcultural enterprises in Czechoslovakia. Also to buy clothes and accessories typically worn by subcultural members, or to acquire subcultural music records wasn't simple at all. Activities concerning purchasing indispensable subcultural gear were set in totally different places and proceeded under circumstances uncomparable to the present ones. For example "western" records were sold on the black market, often out of the sight of public, clothes usually had to be home made etc.

It is interesting that Poland and Hungary, at that time also socialist countries, were more tolerant to subcultural activities. It was a big desire of the Czechoslovak punks to visit some of the concerts or musical festivals taking place in the two neighbouring countries. Hungary was famed for its Budapest punk shop *Hanki Panki*, probably the only shop of its kind in socialist Europe. Travelling to Hungary was usually complicated by its high prices, travelling to Poland by the prohibition of crossing the Czechoslovak-Polish border, hence the necessity to travel to Poland across East Germany.

The past twenty years in the Czech Republic have seen a considerable increase in the number of enterprises focusing on subcultures. Now the choice of places to go is very wide, but only a few of them truly embody the subcultural spirit. Furthermore everything the subculturalists need can be easily purchased in a shop or on the internet. If an entrepreneur chooses subcultural customers as a target group, some important factors have to be taken into account when looking for a suitable locality. The entrepreneur shouldn't only consider the common economic factors but also the "soft" factors represented by the specific nature of the target group. Since e-shopping is a serious competitor to the stone shops, it's important to localize them somewhere close to the potential customers. The locality shouldn't be too distant so that the joy of buying and instant ownership overrides the possibility of on-line purchasing. Also, transport facilities of the subcultural members have to be taken into account. As mainly young people are concerned, places should be easily accessible by public transport or walking. As for clubs and pubs, close proximity of night transport is welcomed. From this point of view, Prague's centre seems to be the most convenient locality, however high prices of rents pose a sizeable disadvantage. Since punks and skinheads don't represent a truly profitable group of customers, the enterprises they support have to be located in lower cost areas. In the heart of the city we can only find two subcultural clubs. One of them is still offering quite cheap prices due to its lack of suitability for other enterprises. The other one is somewhat more expensive, which isn't very appealing for all subcultural members on the other hand it contributes to certain age selection and the younger ones aren't very common among locals.

This problem doesn't apply to subcultural shops, where music records and branded merchandise are rather expensive. Generally shops tend to appeal to a broader spectrum of customers in order to remain profitable. Some of them can survive even in the city centre, where they can also profit from the concentration of tourist customers.

In case of spatially demanding rehearsal rooms, the financial issue is even more pressing as costly soundproof arrangements have to be taken into account. The costs may be eliminated by placing the rehearsal rooms in peripheral areas of the city. These are generally cheaper and offer a wider choice of outlying localities with lower population density.

Localities offering certain compromises among all the requirements tend to form a circle around the city centre. They are easily accessible and not too overpriced, especially within the former industrial quarters. The majority of the enterprises investigated by this paper are found within this circle.

Subcultural centres found in peripheral areas are usually supported mainly by people living locally. Should such enterprises become "subcultural centres of significant importance", they'd have to attract a wider circle of subculturalists by offering an extremely attractive programme. Subculturalists are usually willing to travel long distances only in order to attend exceptional events, such as concerts of famous bands, demonstrations etc.

In the same way immigrants accumulate in the quarters already inhabited by other immigrants, preferably of the same nation, subculturalists also tend to gather in particular areas. In Prague these areas are of a small scale and are scattered all around the city. For this reason it's a better idea to open a subcultural shop nearby other existing subcultural centres, rather than in a modern shopping mall rarely visited by people other than by the mainstream society. In general we can say that enterprises may attract subculturalists principally in cases where they are located in an area falling into the usual action space of such people. Good places are the surroundings of football stadiums or of concert halls, famous clubs etc. Nevertheless the success of the enterprise will always lie in the community and the overall ambience that forms within it.

6. Decision-making when choosing a subcultural venue

When choosing a place to go for a particular reason, we all are under the influence of both external factors and our own psychological characteristics. In addition we are also influenced by our membership to some kind of social group. For punks and skinheads a subculture is the social group they belong to.

In the early years of the punk subculture in Czechoslovakia the only thing that mattered was to find a place that allows punks to stay in. There weren't many pubs at that time and most of them strictly refused to let the punks in. The pubs that had once let the punks in quickly won fame among the whole Prague's punk community. Usually, the situation within the pub soon became unbearable for its entrepreneurs and the punks had to troop away. This kept going on and on in circles.

Nowadays punks and skinheads have a lot more options and when they are looking for an enterprise to go to, they tend to give preference to the ones considered to be

centres of their subculture or at least related to their subculture. That's why they mostly go to the venues they already know, that already have become sought after. Personal relationships developed within such venues usually play an important big part. Visiting a venue they were recommended to might also be considered, even though entering a new place might be rather complicated for some individuals. The unity among subculturalists is often limited to the degree of separate communities and the newcomers never know whether they're going to be accepted or whether they will accept the community themselves. The diversity among different communities can be significant.

Of course the decision-making is also determined by the fact whether it's our own decision or whether there are other people involved. How many of them are participating in the choice? Whose opinion or decision is placed more weight on? What are the personal preferences of the participants? Where are the participants travelling from and what time is the most convenient for them? What kind of activity do they want to pursue? Which enterprise does offer sufficient seating capacity? There are other factors which are often considered, such as: music programme, football broadcasting, opening hours, night transport, offers and prices of drinks, safety of the place etc.

7. Conclusion

This paper attempts to offer a picture of the socio-physical space from a totally different perspective, namely the one of punks and skinheads. On the example of such people we could explore the way the awareness of belonging to a specific social group determines or influences one's spatial behavior and perception. The self-identification with a specific social group may be an integral part of the mind of all of us. The strength of this mental connection is different for every individual and also varies according to the group it's linked to. This paper proves that in the case of the members of subcultures the influence of subcultural identity can be very significant.

Most respondents in this research project were familiar with a large percentage of the venues under research. Their lives are focused around these venues, which proves a simple fact: within the city there is a certain range of specific localities uniformly kept in the minds of punks and skinheads. The mainstream society isn't too aware of them or they do not play any part in their action space. Even the subculturalists themselves differ in the way they perceive each of the localities this paper investigates. In many cases the significance of the locality is directly proportional to the subculturalist's will to extend his/her action space in order to include this locality. Prague's Club 007 is a notable example of such phenomenon since, in spite of its rather complicated accessibility, it attracts punks and skinheads from all parts of Prague, often even from the whole country. We may well call it a "subcultural centre of significant importance". The localities visited only because of their close proximity are an antithesis of this phenomenon as the users aren't required to leave their usual action space. It was also recorded that some respondents' satisfaction with the locality of their home is a consequence of its distance from their favorite subcultural centres.

These centres may even represent the central point of the subculturalists' action space, whereas in the case of mainstream society this central point is normally represented by the locality of their home.

The interviews with the respondents also affirm that the overall character of a place is significantly affected by the community inhabiting it. This character is subjectively perceived, assessed and influences the spatial decisions of the subculturalists who know or use this locality.

The paper also dealt with the interaction among subcultural venues and subcultural identity of punks and skinheads. It became obvious that not only the subculturalists change the character of the enterprise they spend their time in, but also this enterprise impacts on the process of identity development of its users. The time spent in a particular centre may give rise to one's decision to become a subcultural member.

This research also recorded some common features regarding the location of many popular subcultural centres within Prague. Most of them are located out of the city centre yet not on the very peripheral areas. This is mainly due to the implication of accessibility of rental costs and also good transport accessibility for most users. Close proximity of other subcultural localities may also appear favorable for many subculturalists.

This paper contributes to uncovering some of the differences between spatial perception of the people who belong to some kind of subculture and the mainstream society as a whole. It also partly adverts to the considerable differences between the socialist and post-socialist situation in Prague. Lastly, the paper attempts to define "the sense of subcultural space". Yet this research is just an initial exploration and exposes many unanswered questions, which invite further analysis and interpretations.

References

- ALASUUTARI, P. (1995): *Researching culture – qualitative method and cultural studies*, Sage publications, London.
- BELL, D., VALENTINE, G. (1995): *Mapping desire; Geography of sexualities*. Routledge, London.
- BUTTIMER, A., SEAMON, D. (1980): *The human experience of space and place*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- DISMAN, M. (2000): *Jak se vyrábí sociologická znalost*. Nakladatelství Karolinum, Praha.
- FLICK, U. (2006): *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage, London.
- FUCHS, F. (2002): *Kytary a řev aneb Co bylo za zdí – Punk rock a hardcore v Československu před rokem 1989*. Published by the author.
- GELDER, K., THORNTON, S. (1997): *The subcultures leader*. Routledge, London.
- GORDON, M.M. (1947): *The concept of the subculture and its applications*. *Social Forces* X/1947, New York.
- HARVEY, D. (1992): *Social justice, postmodernism and the city*. *International journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16.
- HEBDIGE, D. (1987): *Subculture – the meaning of style*. Routledge, London.
- HENDL, J. (2005): *Kvalitativní výzkum – Základní metody a aplikace*. Portál, Praha.
- MAREŠ, M. (2003): *Pravicový extremismus a radikalismus v ČR*. Barrister & Principal, Brno.
- MAREŠ, M., SMOLÍK, J., SUCHÁNEK, M. (2004): *Fotbaloví chuligáni*. Barrister & Principal, Brno.
- MUGGLETON, D. (2000): *Inside subculture – The postmodern meaning of style*. Berg, Oxford.
- PETRUSEK, M. (1985): *Úvod do obecné sociologie I. díl*, Vítkovice.

- PETRUSEK, M. (1996): *Velký sociologický slovník II. díl*, Karolinum, Praha.
- ROZBOŘIL, Z. (2002): *Záhada – studie klubu a subkultury v něm vzniklé*. Bakalářská práce, vedoucí práce PhDr. Csaba Stalo, Ph.D., Fakulta sociálních studií, Masarykova Univerzita v Brně.
- SEAMON, D. (1984): *Environmental perception and behavior: an inventory and prospect*. University of Chicago, Chicago.
- SIBLEY, D. (1995): *Society and difference in the west: Geographies of exclusion*. Routledge, London.
- ŠÍPEK, J. (2001): *Úvod do geopsychologie*. ISV Praha.
- WOLFF, S. (1994): *Ways into the field and their variants*. In: FLICK, U., KARDORFF, E., STEINKE, I. (2004): *A companion to qualitative research*. Sage, London.

Résumé

Geografie subkultur: punks a nerasističtí skinheads v Praze

Tato studie se zabývá geografickými aspekty subkultur v Praze na příkladu dvou tzv. subkultur mládeže – punks a nerasistických skinheads. Hlavním předmětem průzkumu je vliv subkulturní identity na jedincovo prostorové vnímání a chování, rozhodování a výběr lokalit. Studie byla provedena pomocí metod kvalitativního výzkumu, zejména metodou zúčastněného pozorování, různě strukturovaných i neformálních rozhovorů. Z hlediska důležitosti role v životech příslušníků dvou zkoumaných subkultur bylo více než 30 subkulturních lokalit v Praze vyhodnoceno jako centra subkulturního významu. Snahou studie je vysvětlit proces vzniku subkulturních center a prostorového zakořenění subkulturního ducha, dále pak popsat hlavní atributy subkulturního prostoru a celkový význam tohoto prostoru pro příslušníky subkultury a subkulturu jako takovou.