

# **BETWEEN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE CITY: CHANGES OF THE LIVING SPACE OF FOLK TRADITIONS AND THE FOLKLORE MOVEMENT IN THE CZECH LANDS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

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As a researcher of a grant project<sup>1</sup> team focused on the development of the Czech (Czechoslovak) folklore revival movement<sup>2</sup>, I have conducted many interviews of former and present members of urban folk ensembles in the past three years. We have focused especially on how the ensembles have changed their work with folklore heritage in the context of the cultural politics of the day, and on the role of the ensembles in the daily lives of their members. We have observed the personal life stories of individual people,

1. *Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore*. GACR grant project (directed by Daniela Stavělová), focused on the folklore movement in the Czech lands in the second half of the 20th century.
2. We are aware of issues connected to the term *folklore movement*; it can be discussed as an organized “movement” with a platform in former Czechoslovakia only in the context of 1948-1989. During that time, the movement was formed, or often reformed (as many folk music and dance groups had already existed) in the spirit of communist cultural politics, in order to fulfil the ideas of the ideologically constructed mass culture (Stavělová 2017: 412). The roots of the folklore movement are older and relate to the Czech national movement, which had grown increasingly from the end of the 19th century, and then during inter-war Czechoslovakia, when a new “national” culture was created. The platform of the movement, from its beginnings, generally consisted of organized groups: 1) those who were devoted to maintaining folk (folklore) traditions in their original places, or in the places where their original bearers moved to study or work; 2) those groups who focused on keeping folk traditions and performing them, having learned the folk songs and dances only after membership. (In today’s terminology, this is called “an area of artistic special interest activity.”) Since 1989, this platform has functioned as an original genre of art, which in many aspects continues in the directions formed by the 1948-1989 developments, especially with regards to organization and artistic ideas. In 1990, there was an attempt to provide an umbrella organization for the movement, embodied in the Czech Folklore Association, which represented many folk ensembles. Its legacy has continued in various regional folklore associations of diverse quality; they organize events like national folk-costume balls, festivals, exhibitions, competitions, and the training of folk ensembles.

their motivation, and their evaluation of their own involvement in the sphere of the so-called “people’s artistic creativity”, which was part of communist cultural politics intended for folk ensembles. The narratives as well as periodicals of the time, official documents and publications that deal with the development of the folklore movement have provided interesting findings. Some of these have already been named in ethnological papers specialized in the development of folklorism in Czechoslovakia; nevertheless, they lack detailed explanation. Other findings prompt us to re-evaluate the (often) critical approaches to this cultural platform, which was not nearly as unified as it seemed on first sight.

There has been a relatively heated discussion among Czech historians these days that represents a negotiation between the simplified black-and-white view on ordinary daily life in the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia pitted against the dangerous relativism that takes an apologist stance towards communist dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> That is why these aspects are included here. All the evaluations of the 1948-1989 Czechoslovak folklore movement tend to claim that folklore was misused by the communist state power structure (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2013). This meant that after February 1948, a view on folk culture (or possibly on a part of it, which was labelled people’s art) changed in a way that was principally based on an application of the Soviet model. Within the new political doctrine, folk culture was meticulously revised, the goal being to separate the so-called backward folk traditions from progressive folk traditions. Progressive folk art became a cultural model of the new socialist culture. It was to be a national people’s art in its form, but socialist in its content. Many folk ensembles, following the requirements of the new artistic creation, performed a pseudo-folk repertory: political agit-prop scenes and sketches formed in the spirit of traditional folk songs and dances, or current

3. See, for instance, the open letter from Michal Klíma to historian Michal Pullman. *Forum* 27 [online] 16. 7. 2020 [accessed on September 20, 2020]. Accessible at: <<https://www.forum24.cz/michal-klima-pise-dekanu-pullmannovi-jak-to-vite-ze-lide-nechteli-za-socialismu-na-rivieru-omlouvate-diktaturu/>>.

versions of them.<sup>4</sup> The misuse of folklore generally may also be seen in the introduction of ideology to the whole platform of the folklore movement, including the politicization of all folklore festivals and celebrations.<sup>5</sup> The repertory of ensembles as well as programmes of cultural events were observed by party members and were subject to censorship. Nevertheless, after some time, the role of ideology was limited to external representation: it was an inevitable part of the media promotion of all performances and festivals; it was visible in the titles or subtitles of events, and the majority of folklore festivals (as well as other cultural events of the period) were compulsorily “dedicated” to main political events of the year selected by the regime.

In regard to the misuse of folklore, we must ask how to view its participants, especially its subjects. A detailed attempt to answer this is provided in the paper “*Quid Pro Quo*”: *Czech Folklore Revival Movement in the Light of Totalitarian Cultural Policy* (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2018). In conclusion, the paper agrees with the views of numerous contemporary historians, saying that everyday life in socialism was full of inner contradictions, discrepancies and paradoxes, and that the communist system did not function only as a “contrast to the seemingly apolitical life in private versus the ‘totalitarian’ life in public” (Kolář – Pullman 2020). It is evident that there is more than applying a black-and-white approach, and viewing folk collectives (e.g. folk ensembles, groups, and music bands) in the communist regime in Czechoslovakia as supported by the regime and serving the regime, on the one hand, and as ‘islands of freedom’, on the other. It is a special paradox that one and the same ensemble could simultaneously fulfil both roles. Interviews with dozens of narrators of various generations have shown that

4. This concerned mainly the 1950s, and partly the 1960s, but with exceptions – for instance, in the mid-1980, the Břeclavan folk ensemble created a stage program called *Remembering Jan Černý*, which included songs of this type.
5. Many of them originated prior to 1948, but they were forced to represent communist culture politics. Their organization committees were subject to political surveillance. Persons who were inconvenient to the communist regime were excluded from its preparation, or (especially in the 1970s and 80s) they worked there secretly.

the motivation of individuals greatly differed from that of whole collectives; even the most politically active folk ensembles did not have unified base. They danced, sang, and performed side by side with members who were fervent communists, with those who were considered class enemies, those whose parents or grandparents were imprisoned by the communist regime, as well those who were not allowed to continue in their previous activities or jobs for political reasons. For them, folklore meant an escape from the burden of reality; a way to survive. Nevertheless, a large part of the membership was represented by a silent majority, who to a certain extent were a part of “loyal and equal society” (Kolář – Pulman 2020); they were indifferent to the governing regime, or simply learnt to live under it. The narrative of one of our respondents precisely reflects an opinion on this silent majority:

*“You know, a person, or the essence of a person is to be useful somehow in life. Some may achieve it, each in their own way, but it’s hard to live your life by simply going home, cooking, and sitting around, with no interest in anything. This won’t do. If you are just a little bit intelligent, you have got to do something. So, you can be active in sports and enjoy it. Well, we found this activity which fulfilled us, made us whole, and I don’t know how to say it. Then even in such a society, we were allowed to breathe easy.”<sup>6</sup>*

Let us go back now to an important feature of the folklore movement in the Czech lands – its heterogeneity. This did not only concern individual collectives and their membership, but also touched on the conditions of their emergence, goals, and work methods. As has been discussed many times, the organized folklore movement did not emerge only as a result of the cultural and political development after February 1948; it is linked with the period of enthusiasm that followed the end of World War II.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless,

6. A member of the Vsacan folk ensemble (woman, born 1934), interviewed in Vsetín on November 15, 2018. Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Science; document collections and archives.

7. It was organized and directed by ethnographic sections of the education of the public councils which were executive bodies of national committees. See Jirovský 2005: 112-113.

the development of this field provided a smooth follow-up to older tendencies from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and interwar Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, it even extended some deeds that had taken place under German occupation,<sup>8</sup> sometimes with dubious motivation. It is worth mentioning the activities of various ethnographic troupes, homeowner associations, and Slovácko circles (whose activities spread from the urban environments of Prague, Brno, Kyjov and Bratislava to the rural areas of the Slovácko region<sup>9</sup>), as well as the activities of the local branches of sporting organizations, for example, Orel (Eagle) and Sokol (Falcon), and those associations supported by political parties, such as the Unions of Agrarian and Republican Youth, the Association of Rural Youth, and the Youth Union of Czechoslovakia after the war. As a result of the communist dictatorship, all associations and unions were banned towards the end of 1950; some were allowed to continue in their activities exclusively under the political supervision of especially trained workers. Furthermore, this was allowed only within the mass platform that worked under the factory clubs of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, basic organizations of the Socialist Youth Union<sup>10</sup>, as well as within newly established awareness-raising venues (cultural houses, awareness meeting buildings). The boom of the so-called people's artistic creativity in the spirit of communist ideology significantly transformed the prevailing approach to folk traditions. This can be illustrated in a text from the 1950s that reflects the tasks of the newly established folk song and dance ensembles:

8. The beginning of the gradual development of a platform linked with an effort to preserve and maintain public presentation in the Czech lands was already established at the end of the 19th century. The effort was linked with the Czech national and emancipation movement, and the role that its representatives saw in folk culture. (See e.g. Pavlicová 2015).

9. A Slovácko circle was established in 1928 in Tvrdonice and in 1939 in Mikulčice. To compare, see Krist, Jan Miroslav 1970: *Historie slováckých krúžků a vznik souborů lidových písní a tanců na Slovácku* [*The History of Slovácko Circles and the Emergence of Folk Song and Dance Ensembles in the Slovácko Region*]. Praha: Ústřední dům lidové umělecké tvořivosti.

10. A successor of the former Czechoslovak Youth Union.

*“What are the new conditions of life from which our ensembles have arisen? Before we answer the question, let us remind ourselves what the grounds were like for all those old ‘folk lore circles, groups’, ‘folkloristic units’, and so on. The basis for associations of this type were the keeping and preserving of ‘folk lore and national’ peculiarities.”* (Bonuš 1951: 12)

Folk song and dance ensembles were set different goals based on the Soviet model. Being a new form of “training, cultural, and educational work”, ensembles had to study folk traditions and to revive and further develop the forgotten traditions in the spirit of the new art, that is, to process the traditions into small or large art forms (Klusák 1962: 5) intended primarily for stage performance.

Folk song and dance ensembles represented a mixture of very divergent collectives. They included urban ensembles with no proper link to a specific geographical region; their repertoire included folk songs and dances from all regions of Czechoslovakia. There were urban ensembles that focused on one specific regional folklore which was geographically distant from the city (Prague and Brno folk ensembles are typical examples). Finally, there were urban folk ensembles located within a specific ethnographic region or subregion who primarily drew their repertoire from the particular local area. Some urban ensembles were specific in this respect because their members, or some of them, had personal experience with or were witnesses of folk traditions, and could use that when establishing an ensemble. There is the example of Břeclavan, a folk ensemble representing the traditions of the Podluží region. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and in many communities up to present), there was such a strong tradition of community feasts (*hody*), that the young dancers who were accepted into the ensemble had already been active participants and performers of regional folk song and dance. An awareness of their own local specific features is evident from the answer of a long-standing member of Břeclavan. When asked about his perception of the difference between urban and rural folk ensembles, he stated:

“An urban ensemble is one that is open to people who don't know much of anything, but something unites them – an interest. They more or less learn everything about it in the ensemble.”<sup>11</sup>

The folklore movement inevitably also included rural ensembles and groups that logically were identified with a particular local or regional tradition. In some cases, it was a living folk tradition that allowed direct contact with its authentic bearers, some of whom were even the founding members of these ensembles.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, it was mostly an extinct tradition, and these ensembles attempted to reconstruct it, either with their own activities, or with the help of professionals. It was the stage that served as the principal space for the presentation of selected tradition manifestations by ensembles: folk songs and dances, folk costumes, traditional customs, rituals, and ceremonies. Gradually, there evolved a brand-new genre of art related closely to folk tradition. In this way, folk tradition has, on the one hand, served as **the main source of inspiration**, as a type of “marketplace” from which the ensembles choose the necessary material for their activities. On the other hand, folk traditions are an object of **transformation**, and often even **revitalization**, such as a revival or reconstruction of extinct musical groups, folk costumes, and folk dances. Finally, folk tradition has even been **enriched** with new elements; for example, the impact that the folklore movement had on the development the *Verbuňk* dance in the Slovácko region, or the *Odzemek* dance in the Moravian Wallachia region. Moreover, there was an impact on the development of bagpipe and cymbalom music bands, and on the composing of new songs in the spirit of folk tradition (so called new folk songs), which quickly became popular thanks to broadcasting.

Activities of many folk ensembles extended from the stage to the sphere of maintaining folk traditions: in many of these urban

11. A member of the Břeclavan folk ensemble (man, born 1962), interviewed in Břeclav on May 1, 2019. Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Science; document collections and archives.

12. There is a special category of army ensembles: their membership depended on the length of army service and on whether there was any availability in the given period of suitable dancers and musicians at all.

and especially rural collectives, the ensembles took over the role of bearers and organizers of folk traditions, be it harvest feasts, carnival, Easter and Lent customs or Christmas carolling. In many aspects, these activities are anachronical; despite their natural development, that is, the logical extinction of numerous folk traditions due to the loss of their function in the transforming society, the folklore movement provided them with new functions. Instead of the original ritual, economic, prosperity, and religious functions, there are visible aspects of entertainment, integration, and representation, sometimes even performance. This is very evident in the response of a former member of the Dolina folk ensemble of Staré Město:

*“...ritual carolling starting with ‘beating’ women with willow branches, carnival, harvest feast, St. Nicholas carolling, but these activities also reflected our interest, because we saw some kind of fulfilment in them, and we had friends there, so it was kind of a social activity.”*<sup>13</sup>

Despite all the above-mentioned changes, there are especially rural ensembles who have prolonged the existence of folk traditions, or have even extended their occurrence. In some respects, urban ensembles have become a ‘pendant’ of local rural societies, because many ensembles and their followers have been maintaining customs that their founders had established: Easter and Christmas practices (St. Stephen’s Day and New Year’s Day carolling), various dance occasions and balls.

Evidently, the content of the term ‘living folk tradition’ may be questioned; nevertheless, it is taken for granted that folk ensembles have become the real bearers of tradition, especially in numerous Moravian communities,<sup>14</sup> both in the eyes of the public and scholars. With the passage of time, they have become the only bearers.

13. A member of the Dolina ensemble (man, born 1952), interviewed in Staré Město on November 21, 2017. Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Science; document collections and archives.

14. The folk ensembles of the Chodsko region of Bohemia are special for their close links to local living tradition and conservative approach to their performance. For details, see the paper of Marta Ulrychová (2015) at the Náměšť colloquy.



It was a paradox of the social development in the period of the communist dictatorship that, on the one hand, it defined itself as opposed against Christian-oriented rural strata and the Christian content of folk culture. On the other hand, the social development distinctly favoured folk art as a stepping-stone of ideologically defined new socialist culture, especially in the first fifteen years. In the spirit of such a philosophy, based on the Soviet model, the main task of the folklore movement was to develop folk traditions under new social conditions. In fact, most of the ensembles in the Czech lands had no possibility to build on any living folk culture. As such, the study of sources and field research on the few remaining folk traditions became a starting point, which consequently contributed to stage repertoire and the ensembles' philosophy of dance, music and singing traditions. The most authentic (re)construction of folk tradition form became a principal method. As a result, new interpretation forms and styles of extinct manifestations of folk culture were often introduced, and were gradually accepted not only by the folklore movement and the general public, but surprisingly also by numerous original bearers, and then further developed by dozens of followers.

There is a special issue which concerns the establishment of regional styles of music due to the activities of several outstanding musicians and arrangers. The birth of typical sounds and ways of arranging Czech folk music is connected particularly to Zdeněk Bláha (born 1929), Jaroslav Krček (born 1939) and his brother Josef Krček (born 1946), Zdeněk Lukáš (1928-2007), and Vladimír Baier (1932-2010).<sup>15</sup> Music groups in Moravia had their principal model for interpretation and music arrangement in the Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments (Czech acronym BROLN). The most influential personalities connected to this orchestra include Jaroslav Jurášek, Jaroslav Jakubíček, Jaromír Nečas, and

15. For details on the activities of all the mentioned musicians, see Vondrušková, Alena (ed.) 2000: *Od folkloru k folklorismu. Slovník folklorního hnutí v Čechách [From Folklore to Folklorism. Dictionary of the Folklore Movement in Bohemia]*. Strážnice: Ústav lidové kultury.

Emanuel Kukša.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, in some ethnographical regions, amateur ensembles also evolved within the folklore movement, becoming the bearers of a typical sound and interpretation style of the folk music in their area.

In the Slovácko region, these included the Břeclavan ensemble and its cymbalom music band, headed by lead violinist Josef Kobzík (1929-2000) of Břeclav, the Strážnice Cymbalom Music Band, with lead violinist Vítězslav Volavý (1922-1983) of Strážnice, the Jura Petrů Cymbalom Music Band, headed by lead violinist Juraj Petrů (1922-1984) of Kyjov, and the cymbalom music band of the Hradišťan folk ensemble, headed by lead violinist Jaroslav Václav Staněk (1922-1978) of Uherské Hradiště.<sup>17</sup> The most outstanding role models of folk music in Moravian Wallachia included Jan Rokyta<sup>18</sup> (1938-2012), who was also art director of the Technik Cymbalom Music Band of Ostrava, and Zdeněk Kašpar (1925-2002), lead violinist and art director of Jasénka folk ensemble of Vsetín. Kašpar's impact in his region was considerably smaller compared to that of the above-mentioned lead violonists from the Slovácko region. All these *primases* and directors also devoted their time to the folk movement and collecting folk songs and dances, considerably influencing the artistic image of the dance arrangements of their respective ensembles. Simultaneously, according to the requirements of the cultural policies of the period, these *primases* developed folk traditions, enhancing them with their own musicianship, taste for music, and understanding of the genre interpretation of folk music. Evidently, they were charismatic

16. For details on BROLN and the musicians discussed, see *Od folkloru k folklorismu. Slovník folklorního hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku [From Folklore to Folklorism. Dictionary of the Folklore Movement in Moravia and Silesia]*, edited by Martina Pavlicová and Lucie Uhlíková. Strážnice: Ústav lidové kultury, 1997.

17. For details see *Od folkloru k folklorismu* (as in note 16). Each of the named musicians was the subject of a specific monograph.

18. The activities of Jan Rokyta, radio editor and cymbalom player, are unique and should not be compared to other outstanding musicians. He did not focus on developing particular traditions of a specific region (that is, his native Moravian Wallachia); his activities extended beyond his region, having greater impact.

personalities who became authorities and the rightful bearers of tradition, both within the folklore movement and their respective regions. Although many of them conducted diverse field research among folk singers, musicians, and dancers, it did not matter whether they actually continued in maintaining the original manifestations of folk culture, or whether they only reconstructed them based on their experience in the field of musical and dance folklore, or simply invented them (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2018: 185).

The various competitions of “people’s artistic creativity” and folklore festivals played an important role in the development of the folklore movement. These activities allowed ensembles not only to meet, but to challenge and influence each other. Their position as role models was reinforced by the media, especially by radio broadcasting, as it provided much air- time to presenting the music of the ensembles of the folklore movement. The four decades of broadcasting of what was considered “folk music” on the centralized and state-owned radio were what formed the general public’s understanding of what defined authentic folk music. As a result, presentations by the authentic bearers of folk tradition became aesthetically unacceptable for radio listeners, as was documented in a period review on “folklore” programs by Radio Brno of Czechoslovak Radio:

*“Folk song recordings are made in all the main stations of Czechoslovak Radio, some of which have their own radio orchestras. Outside of these ensembles, which today have produced a majority of the material on the airwaves, there are recordings commissioned of ensembles of people’s creativity, as well as recordings of authentic folk music. This, in fact, is an exception compared to the treatment of other music genres on the airwaves. Nevertheless, this fact is not always accepted favourably by those listeners who are used to technically virtuous performances. Such a narrow focus on the technical side has pushed out from the airwaves many outstanding folk performers with strong artistic impact, both individuals and groups. Those tones which fall beyond the ideal sound of European artificial music, as can be found with selected folk performers, have so far been considered unaesthetic.” (Holá 1964)*

Outstanding personalities of the Horňácko region folklore movement had a unique position in this regard. This subregion of the Slovácko region managed to maintain an uninterrupted tradition of folk (string) instrumental music, due to the long-standing interest of intellectuals and artists, although brass bands, as a novelty in cultural streams, have kept their popularity as well. Musicians as tradition-bearers were an organic part of various activities of the folklore movement in Horňácko, which they formed considerably through their performance. Of the most known, there are two main lead violinists: Jožka Kubík (1907-1978) and Martin Hrbáč (born 1939). Kubík was an authentic bearer of folk tradition, a Roma lead violinist who found a completely new space for self-representation in the folklore movement. Hrbáč, a mechanical engineer, was a typical product of the folklore movement, and simultaneously fulfilled the role of proper successor of the authentic string-band and vocal tradition in Horňácko. Both men have become authorities whose impact reached far beyond the borders of their region.

## **Conclusion**

Discussions on the role of the folklore movement for maintaining some elements of folk culture are far from concluded. Social transformations have made an impact on this part of cultural heritage. It is considered not only an area of artistic special interest activity linked to fulfilling personal needs, but it has become an important form of social and cultural capital on local and regional levels, primarily in many Moravian regions. In this respect, the environment of folk traditions, especially that of ethnic and cultural traditions have increased significantly. Individual communities are more often supporting associations focused on this area. They are searching for their roots and are willing to finance the reconstruction of folk culture, or, more often, a romantic image of it. The use of folk traditions for the sake of representation and for the promotion of various subjects may result in the danger of misusing folklore. Some of the consequences arising from this are known from past experience as folklore in the service of political

and economic power. This includes the misuse of folklore as tourist attractions, advantageous advertising capital, or as a part of political marketing, all leading to automatically negative reactions in certain segments of society.

It is evident that today many participants of such commercial and political events are somehow short-sighted – they have quickly forgotten the role that the folklore movement was forced to play prior to 1989. The principle of “quid pro quo” continues to function as always: fulfilling the personal needs of performers is a priority (such as in presenting themselves publicly, gaining funds for activities, costumes, and releasing sound media). Let us hope that the environment of folk traditions will be exposed as little as possible to political or economic manipulation or misuse. They may be authentic traditions, or those constructed under the influence of the folklore movement. Within this, they are a part of a broad sphere of artistic and pseudo-artistic manifestations that related to the past, but are simultaneously seeking their place in today’s world (Pavlicová 2015: 203). Let us hope that the future will not bring narratives that are similar to the ones that were recorded during our research of the folklore movement during the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. As was stated by one of our reminiscing respondents:

*“Yes, sure, we attended and performed at all these [political] events, but it was necessary, as we understood it, for the ensemble to be able to continue to function, to be allowed to perform; for people to be able to go there, so we could enjoy ourselves, so we could live as an ensemble. It really was such a libation or offering, but one that we could identify with, and did not need to feel ashamed of in any way.”*<sup>19</sup>

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19. A member of the Vsacan ensemble (woman, born 1934), interviewed in Vsetín on November 15, 2018. Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Science; document collections and archives.

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## Summary

The folklore movement in the Czech lands is connected to the period of enthusiasm that immediately followed the ending of World War II in Europe, although its importance is rooted in the inter-war development of Czechoslovakia and older activities. It would be a mistake to relate it only to the development of culture and politics after the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. Nevertheless, a Soviet cultural model was used after February 1948: folklore ensembles were considered a new form of “educational, cultural, and training work.” As such, they were supposed to develop folk traditions in the spirit of “the new creativity,” processing them into small and large artistic forms intended for artistic performance. Gradually, a new stage and musical genre were developed that were represented by outstanding personalities, who became role models for the way they worked with folk material. This related predominantly to rural culture; however, very soon the city became its new environment. Folk ensembles emerged both in cities, where they had no link to specific local or regional tradition, and in towns which belonged to specific ethnographic regions. There also emerged some ensembles whose members (at least some of them) had living experience with folk traditions at the time of establishing the ensemble. Members would often reconstruct and revitalize folk traditions, sometimes even reinventing them completely. Then there were village ensembles, which not only performed, but had other functions in the community. Various activities of folk ensembles contributed to the fact that in the second half of the 20th century, folk traditions became not only a space for artistic self-realization, but an important form of social and cultural capital at the local and regional levels.

**Key words:** folklore movement in Czechoslovakia; folk song and dance ensembles; folklore on stage; folklore and politics; revitalization and reconstruction of tradition; folk tradition as political capital.