

Dienstag 22. Mai 2018, 18.00 Uhr

Wiener Philosophisches Forum

Sprachen: Deutsch/ Englisch/ Slowakisch

Michal Vašečka

Collective amnesia of Slovaks on their migration and integration experiences in the past.

Proposed article reflects recent so-called migration crisis in Europe, its perception by people living in Slovakia, and consequences on political life in Slovakia. Author describes both restrictive legislation and administrative performance of Slovakia and Slovaks towards migrants and shows how migration crisis revealed unpleasant truth about inclusivity of Slovak society towards „others“.

Bearing in mind long history of migration of Slovaks from the country in the past, as well as reputation of Slovaks as migrants in 19th and first half of 20th centuries, author analyzes how Slovaks became victims of all types of forgetting about their inglorious past and marginalization by host countries of their late favorite destinations - structural amnesia, repressive erasure, prescriptive forgetting, forgetting that is a Constitutive in the formation of a new identity, forgetting as annulment, and lastly forgetting as humiliated silence.

Author compares destinies and route of refugees coming to Slovakia with stories of Slovaks who were searching for decades refuge and prosperous life mostly in the USA. Among others he depicts story of four Slovaks from Brutovce captured close to the German border in 1888 on their way to the USA. Author shows how these illiterate people were subjects of scam by smugglers and how they were depicted as the most backward of all migrants from the 'East' (called Hunkies in the USA before the WWI). Analysis shows how 'grandsons' of these people who, at the end of a day, made their fortune in the USA, reject refugees coming into countries of the European Union countries these days without mercy.

At the end of his analysis, author shows how above-mentioned collective amnesia has been utilized by enemies of open society and has exposed crisis of liberal democracy in Slovakia.



Dr. Michal Vašečka (1972) is sociologist by background. He is a director of the Bratislava Policy Institute, he operates also at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts since 2015 and at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno since 2002. He focuses his interests on issues of ethnicity, race, and migration studies. As a visiting scholar he operated at the New School University in New York (1996-1997) and at the University of London (1998), in 2008-2009 he lectured at the Georgetown University in Washington, DC, in 2015 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in 2016 he was a scholar-in-residence in the ISGAP at Oxford University. Michal Vašečka is a founder of the Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, he served a director of the CVEK in the period from 2006 to 2012. In 1998-2005 he operated at the Slovak think-tank Institute of Public Affairs as a program director on expert analysis of the Slovak transformation process with a focus on national minorities and the state of civil society in Slovakia. He has been a consultant for the World Bank in 2000-2008 and in 2011-2012. Since September 2012 Michal Vašečka serves as a representative of the Slovak republic in the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), human rights body of the Council of Europe. Since 2010 Michal Vašečka is a chairman of the Board of the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia. Dr. Vašečka serves as a non-resident research associate at the European Centre for Minority Issues in Flensburg.

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