

**Lenka RUDOVÁ: *Paris in the French, Czech and American Tourist Guidebooks (1918-1939)*, Master thesis, Prague – Paris – Budapest 2016, 108pp.**

### **Report by the main supervisor**

Paris has for long attracted tourists from various parts of the world; a similar statement can be recently made about the cohorts of urban historians who turned attention to all possible aspects of modern French capital. And yet the master thesis by Lenka Rudová has much new to say to the debate. The originality of the thesis was secured by two smart decisions of the author: 1) to look at the image of Paris in the guidebooks from the comparative perspective; 2) to shift the major emphasis from the city itself to the genre of the guidebook. The result is a very informative thesis that brings many valuable insights into the development of mass urban tourism in the interwar period, with analytical focus on the tourist guidebooks as one of the key features of the process. From this perspective, the prevalently negative answer to Lenka's main hypothesis, that is, the significant variations between the representations of Paris in respective language-defined guidebooks, is a highly valuable finding, as it clearly reveals the relevance of the already established, and in fact transnational, patterns and practices of urban tourism, or a shared culture of tourism.

As regards the structure, Lenka's thesis is basically divided in the historical-contextual part (history of tourism, formation of the main collections of guidebooks) and the analytical part (analysis of the interwar guidebooks). As regards the former, I can highly appreciate not only the broad range of literature used, but also the skillfulness with which the literature was exploited. The chapters on tourism and tourist guidebooks far exceed a merely introductory function and in fact provide a very good synthesis. At the same time, the chapters do not divert from the main focus of the thesis.

Regarding the analytical part, the author works with a more limited sample of eight guidebooks, which are nevertheless subject to detailed and scrupulous analysis. Besides comparative perspective, Lenka makes use of geographical perspective in chapter about itineraries, and gets partly inspired by semiotics in the chapter on global images of Paris. The analysis in fact *did* revealed certain relations between the texts and the countries of audiences, even if others than expected (e.g. the differences in itineraries, sporadic references to home countries). At the same time, the analysis also pointed out relative stability of the image of Paris (global images).

The thesis is underpinned with a robust theoretical background that focuses on the links between the guidebook and the urban space. This leads to a double perspective on guidebooks, which gives a particular strength to Lenka's thesis: the guidebooks are approached as the important product of modern tourism and at the same time as one of the urban texts that create particular images of a city and mediate them to the users.

To sum up, the thesis by Lenka Rudová is an excellent piece of academic text that is very strong in empirical, theoretical and methodological sense, and written in very cultivated academic style. Lenka has undergone an enormous progress within the two years of the TEMA study and became prepared for advanced studies in cultural urban history. For all these reasons, I gladly recommend the thesis for a successful defense and suggest the highest grades: 1 in Czech, 5 in Hungarian, 18 in French.

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