

ARCHIVES, AESTHETICS, AND ALTERITY: EVALUATING THE NEGOTIATING THE REVOLT CONFERENCE IN PRAGUE

ARŞİVLER, ESTETİK VE ÖTEKİLİK: PRAG'DAKİ İSYANI MÜZAKERE ETMEK
KONFERANSININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

The notion of subculture has been significant in cultural and communication studies. While it often emphasized oppositions between mainstream and alternative formations, the scene framework (Šima & Michela, 2020, pp. 5-6) offers a more fluid and localised approach to cultural participation and identity. Despite this shift, the subcultural approach remains valuable for understanding cultural practices like punk that exist outside formal institutions. Cultural studies' marginal position within academia (Serbes, 2025, p. 180) has allowed subcultural research to explore resistance, communication, and cultural production beyond institutionalised norms.

The *Negotiating the Revolt Conference*, held in Prague from 16-18 May 2025, offered an opportunity to explore punk's communicative, political, and aesthetic relevance in post-socialist societies. Hosted by the Institute of Czech History at Charles University and organised with the Punk Scholars Network, the event gathered punk communities, scholars, artists, and musicians in a repurposed industrial venue. The program featured panel discussions, film screenings, archival exhibitions, and memory walks, reflecting punk's role in resistance, imagination, and daily life. This paper evaluates the conference from a communication studies perspective, focusing on how punk contributes to cultural memory and resistance.

Day One: Populism, Protest Memory, and Sonic Dissent

The first day began with a public debate, "Studying Populism through Cultural Inquiry", moderated by Ondřej Daniel. The session featured Finn Smith

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(University of St Andrews), Petr Gibas (Masaryk University), and Martin Šorm (Czech Academy of Sciences). Following the debate, participants joined a memory walk, “Tracing the Memory of Protests Against the IMF and World Bank Meeting in September 2000 in Prague”, organised by the Centre for the Study of Popular Culture and led by Ondřej Daniel, Tomáš Kavka, and Jiří Andrs. The walk, starting from the Eternia venue, retraced sites linked to the 2000 alter-globalisation protests.

In the evening, the program moved to Klub 007 Strahov, a key venue in Prague’s underground music scene. The concert featured performances by MDC, a politically charged hardcore punk band from the U.S., and BARACKCA, a Hungarian punk-hardcore band known for their critical lyrics and energetic shows.

Day Two: Post-Socialist Pasts, Gendered Spaces, and Subcultural Continuities

In the evening, the program transitioned to an exhibition and book launch featuring visual artist Stanislav Grežďo and historian Miroslav Michela, whose collaborative project documented Czech subcultural memory through zines, posters, and protest imagery. The day concluded with a concert at Subzero Club, located inside the Eternia complex, where bands such as Chorobopop, Zuby nehty, Lidské zdroje, Marcel, and Davová psychóza performed. A punk DJ set followed, emphasising not only continuity with the past but the creation of new spaces for affective and sonic community. Together, the day’s events emphasised the durability of punk’s cultural infrastructure, as well as its capacity to challenge hegemonic narratives from below. The second day of the conference opened with addresses from Miroslav Michela, Ondřej Daniel, and Karolína Válová, emphasizing the need to approach punk as a historical lens for examining social transformation. Panels throughout the day explored punk’s connection to post-socialist memory, aesthetics, and political expression.

The first session, chaired by Ondřej Daniel, examined punk’s intersection with modernity in Ireland, post-punk in Soviet cinema, and civil society in 1980s Slovenia. These discussions framed punk as both a reflection of systemic rupture and a mode of cultural expression during transitions. In the second panel, Viktória Taskovics and Liutauras Kraniauskas focused on historical discourse and continuity in Hungarian punk, while Daniel revisited Czech punk’s role in antifascist activism, challenging binary resistance frameworks (Daniel, 2020, p. 64).

Afternoon sessions shifted to feminist interventions and body politics. Pavla Jonssonová, Marie Arleth Skov, and Jennifer Ramme highlighted gender

dynamics in punk, showing how it has both marginalised and empowered voices. A panel on semiotics and nationalism, featuring Marta Haiduchok's study of anarchist-nationalist expressions at a Ukrainian music festival and Miklós Mitrovis's work on Hungarian media during regime change, illustrated punk's negotiation of public visibility under different political climates.

The evening featured an exhibition and book launch by Stanislav Grežďo and Miroslav Michela, documenting Czech subcultural memory through zines and protest imagery. The day concluded with a concert at Subzero Club inside Eternia, where bands like Chorobopop, Zuby nehty, Lidské zdroje, Marcel, and Davová psychóza performed, followed by a DJ set. The day highlighted punk's cultural resilience and its challenge to hegemonic narratives.

Day Three: Socialist Afterlives, Peripheral Archives, and Transnational Punk Memory

The third day featured a packed schedule of panels on punk's temporal, spatial, and aesthetic dimensions. The morning session, chaired by Marie Arleth Skov, began with Pdraig Parkhurst's analysis of *Die Skeptiker* in East Germany, followed by Matthew Worley's exploration of punk in Thatcherite Britain and Adam Rubczak's examination of late socialist Polish punk aesthetics. The second panel, chaired by Stan Erraught, focused on punk's relationship with urban space, with Xawery Stańczyk discussing politicisation in Poland, István Sántha's ethnography of anarchist punks in Budapest, and Pavel Šuška's geographic analysis of postsocialist racism.

In the afternoon, chaired by Martina Napolitano, Sławomir Kuźnicki critiqued angry masculinity in *Idles'* lyrics, while Brigitta Davidjants examined the evolution of Estonian punk. A regional panel, chaired by Davidjants, covered punk in Tito-era Yugoslavia, Egor Letov's Siberian punk legacy, and the melancholic significance of the final generation of Soviet punks, discussed by Jānis Daugavietis.

A highlight was the roundtable with Luk Haas, Martin Valášek, and Tamás Rupaszov, moderated by Radim Kopáč. Haas, known for documenting overlooked punk scenes, shared insights from his 1989 visit to Istanbul and engagement with Türkiye's punk scene, including the first underground scene report in *Maximum Rocknroll* and the compilation *Sevdasız Hayat Ölümdür*. As Haas has noted in *Profane Existence*, his archival methodology is rooted in mobility and the desire to connect with new communities and bands in overlooked regions (Haas, 2012). This approach has allowed him to narrate punk histories from areas often absent in Western-centric narratives (Serbes, 2024, p. 174). The day concluded with the documentary *Garáže* by Tomáš Bulánek, followed by a DJ session.

Day Four: Fanzine Archives, Subcultural Embodiment, and Translocal Struggles

The final day focused on punk's archival, aesthetic, and social dimensions, with an emphasis on underground documentation and DIY networks. The morning panel, chaired by Martina Vuksan, highlighted fanzines as tools of historical preservation and political commentary. Jonáš Jánsky examined *Podzemák*, a Slovak fanzine, as both a cultural mediator and political chronicle. Aušra Kairaitytė-Užupė discussed the Lithuanian fanzine *KNK* in the 1990s, and Mateusz Flont analyzed the Polish fanzine *QQRQ* within the self-publishing framework.

The second panel, chaired by Selin Yağcı, explored subcultural performance and political representation. Aldis Gedutis analyzed *A Clockwork Orange* through the lens of the Sex Pistols, while Hüseyin Serbes examined Türkiye's Istanbul-based punk scene, focusing on zines, sonic resistance, and spatial negotiations. Rebecca Carr discussed punk embodiment and gendered visibility in *Summer of Sam*.

The closing panel, chaired by Ondřej Daniel, returned to the themes of memory, legitimacy, and continuity. Alexandra Karamoutsiou highlighted female voices in Thessaloniki's DIY music network, Marianna Lucarini reflected on punk as retro, and Selin Yağcı compared punk scenes in Ankara and Madrid. Balázs Apor analyzed the revival of punk in Hungary. These discussions echoed Čisář and Koubek's (2012) insight that punk, while referred to as a "scene," often functions through fragmented forms of symbolic affiliation and localized struggle. The day concluded with reflections and exchanges of zines and playlists, reaffirming punk's role in ongoing cultural critique and translocal solidarity.

Subcultural Memory and the Archive Turn

A significant thread running through the conference was the sustained focus on punk as a site of memory, shaped by grassroots archival practices and alternative infrastructures of documentation. One of the defining features of the conference was its attention to punk's role in shaping collective memory through non-institutional means. Many presentations moved beyond treating punk as a musical or stylistic form, instead examining how subcultural actors produce and preserve knowledge through ephemeral media. Fanzines, protest leaflets, cassette covers, and self-published newsletters were explored as forms of "archives from below," grounded in dissent and local specificity. This perspective was exemplified in the contributions of Dr. Miroslav Michela, a historian at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and a lecturer at Charles University. As editor-in-chief of *Forum Historiae*, Michela has long advocated for integrating cultural memory studies with grassroots archival practice. At the

conference, he curated an exhibition of Central European punk materials that highlighted the archival value of subcultural print culture.

Istanbul Underground Praxis in Context

The Istanbul underground scene was presented as a significant example of subcultural persistence shaped by political rupture, urban transformation, and grassroots creativity. The presentation, *Istanbul Underground Praxis: A Subcultural Evolution Amid Political Shifts*, examined Türkiye's punk culture within an increasingly authoritarian and market-driven environment.

As recent research has shown (Serbes et al., 2025), punk and fanzine cultures in Türkiye developed in response to the 1980 military coup, with fanzines serving as counter-publics against state censorship. Their circulation spread beyond Istanbul, becoming tools of cultural production and opposition embraced by local communities.

The presentation highlighted how the Istanbul punk scene articulated resistance through material practices over decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, restricted public space led to the proliferation of informal venues, self-published zines, and home-recorded demo tapes. With the rise of digital platforms in the 2000s, punk communities adapted to new communication modes, despite challenges to autonomy. Istanbul punk remains attuned to contemporary political issues like economic inequality, human rights, and environmental degradation. A curated selection of fanzines, particularly *Mondo Trasho*, illustrated this trajectory, showing the scene's adaptability and responsiveness to shifting socio-political conditions.

Closing Thoughts

The *Negotiating the Revolt* conference in Prague reexamined punk as a dynamic cultural and political expression. The conference emphasised the importance of face-to-face collaboration, challenging the logic of digital platforms. Punk's position within systems of visibility and commodification was also discussed. As Daniel (2022) notes, punk has moved into mainstream spaces while maintaining its oppositional character, underlining the need to update subcultural frameworks without dismissing their relevance.

The conference also focused on translocal connections. Punk's discourse, shaped by shared influences and collective memory practices, highlights its ongoing struggle for cultural autonomy in the face of political repression and historical amnesia. As Phillips (2023, p. 4) reflects, punk emerged during a time of societal crisis, offering both escape and critique. This duality continues to shape punk's role today.

The conference created a meaningful space for engagement among academics, artists, and scene participants. By treating punk as a site of cultural

practice, political engagement, and memory work, *Negotiating the Revolt* offered a compelling model for subcultural research, illustrating how punk helps marginalized voices build community and transmit experience across time and place.

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