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Who Counts as the Nation? A Contribution to Dialogic Knowledge Production

Disgusted by and tired of the current ethnocentric, nationalist discourse in the presentation of the heroes and history of Czechia, I proposed Olga Fečová, an 80-year-old Romani woman, for high state honors in 2020, not just as the archetypal mother of a prominent family of musicians, but for her lifelong, relentless care for children, particularly those at risk – and not just Romani ones.

Although the President of Czechia did not give her state honors, both Olga and I got some attention from the media, which I used to conquer another pillar of discourse: the National Museum. I convinced them of the need to present Olga and her family as part of the museum's significant work in an exhibition online, wherein Olga performs their music at a housing estate in northern Bohemia and acquaints visitors with the activities of her family members and their history. The design of the storyboard for this exhibition involved the entire family and impacted the organization of all its aspects, actually yielding knowledge production that was participatory (Hérendez – Gay y Blasco 2018). Together, we discussed what to (un)reveal from the family history, I have learned – directly and indirectly – which meanings are ascribed to different “exhibits” (photos, sound- and video recordings; Araujo 2010), Olga and I jointly created the personal narrative of the script. From the perspective of applied/public ethnomusicology, it was a good school of negotiation with institutions of the state that have become accustomed to a national narrative that is ossified.

The symposium presentation will demonstrate key moments from the production of the exhibition as well as its final form.

Bio

Zuzana Jurková studied ethnology and musicology at Charles University and flute at Brno Conservatory. She is the head of the Anthropological Studies and the ethnomusicological program at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University. In her work, she concentrates on Romani music, urban ethnomusicology, music and remembrance, and applied ethnomusicology.