

# “Before they build a shopping park here”: Štefanské Hody at Kamenná Kolonie, Brno, as a Case of Functional Folklore

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### Abstract

This article examines Štefanské hody, an autumn feast held since 2009 in Kamenná kolonie (Kamenka), a former quarry workers' settlement in Brno, now an artistic, gentrifying neighbourhood. Drawing on fieldwork (2023–2025) and participant observation at the 2025 feast, it asks how residents turn part of the city into a place that, for a few October days, feels and functions like a village. Rather than measuring it against an imagined authentic original, it treats the tradition as a symbolic construction made in the present. The analysis draws on Lefebvre's production of space and de Certeau's tactics, while Turner's *communitas* and Bey's "temporary autonomous zone" explain the event's social texture and political-affective effect. Alongside recent studies of invented urban carnivals in the Czech lands, Štefanské hody emerges not as degraded folklore but as functional, locally situated folklore, whose significance lies in its transmission and its capacity to bind a changing community.

### Keywords

production of space, invented tradition, functional folklore, *communitas*, gentrification, urban festivity, Brno, *hody*

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## Introduction

At 6:45 p.m. on 8 October 2025, the first verse of the song “*Hody sa blíží...*”<sup>1</sup> began to echo through Kamenná kolonie in Brno. To an outsider it might have sounded like a Moravian folk tune, but, in fact, it was a punk-rock song by the local group The Mamrds,<sup>2</sup> whose opening verse captures the collective local sentiment:

*“Tady se čas měří od hodů k hodům  
Dokud na nás aparát nepustí vodu  
Dřív než tu postavěj shopping park.”*

The verse may be translated as: “Here, time is measured from one *hody* (feast) to the next, until the authorities flood the place with water, before they build a shopping park here.” This article takes this as its point of departure and asks how, during a few days each October, the residents of a small Brno neighbourhood transform their surroundings into a place that feels like a self-governing village in the middle of Czechia’s second-largest city.

Kamenná kolonie—known locally and hereafter also referred to as Kamenka—sits at the bottom of a disused quarry barely two kilometres from the centre of Brno. Built in the 1920s as an emergency workers’ settlement, it has since the 1960s been inhabited by artists and, more recently, by university-educated professionals, following a trajectory that local and journalistic sources increasingly describe as one of revival but which this article interprets as gentrification. Since 2009, residents have organised Štefanské hody, an autumn feast modelled on the Moravian village *hody* (a patronal feast and village fair) while openly departing from it: the feast commemorates not a church patron but Stefan Schoedel, a neighbour whose death was attributed to the delayed arrival of an ambulance—a pointed reminder of the colony’s marginal place in the city’s infrastructure.

The claim that the festival turns the street into a village is what this article sets out to examine rather than assume. I argue that Štefanské hody is best understood not through the opposition between authentic and invented tradition but through the social production of space. Following Lefebvre (1991: 38–39), space is understood as actively produced through practice rather than given in advance, while, following de Certeau (1984: xix), the feast is interpreted as a set of tactics by which residents temporarily appropriate a regulated urban environment. Turner’s concept of *communitas*

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1 “The Feast Is Coming” in English.

2 The Motherfuckers in English.

(1969: 96) describes the levelling of social distinctions during the feast, while Bey's "temporary autonomous zone" (1991) serves not as a master theory but as a way of characterising the political-affective effect of this temporary reconfiguration.

I also take a position on the concepts of folklore and folklorism. Earlier scholarship distinguished sharply between authentic folklore, transmitted organically across generations, and its staged or revived "second existence" as folklorism (Moser 1962; Bausinger 1966). As Handler and Linnekin argued, this opposition is untenable: tradition is "wholly symbolic", a construction made in the present rather than a core of inherited traits (Handler – Linnekin 1984: 273–274), and Bendix has shown how the discipline's search for authenticity bred misleading dichotomies such as folklore and fakelore (Bendix 1997). What matters for living practice is not its origin but how it is transmitted and the role it plays in the community that performs it. Štefanské hody is therefore neither degraded folklore nor mere folklorism but an example of *functional folklore*.

The wider stakes extend beyond a single feast. Štefanské hody forms part of a broader Czech phenomenon, documented since the early 1990s, in which urban communities construct festivities modelled on historical forms of rural carnivals or patronal feasts, selecting and appropriating their elements to meet present needs (Stavělová – Kratochvíl 2016: 569). The Kamenka case is distinctive because it takes place in a gentrifying former workers' settlement, is organized by residents with considerable cultural capital, and openly combines musical registers—cimbalom bands alongside a punk-rock group—with a pronounced streak of self-irony. Recurring worries that the feast might "die out" reveal an awareness that it exists only through its annual repetition.

The article proceeds from a note on methodology and on my own shifting position in the field, through the transformation of the settlement and the broader context of the patronal feast, to the origins and organisation of Štefanské hody. This is followed by an ethnographic account of the four-day feast in 2025, and an analysis that foregrounds the production of space and community, before closing with a discussion of functional folklore.

## Methodology and position in the field

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork carried out over two years (2023–2025), with intensive participant observation during Štefanské hody in October 2025. Over this period, I attended the principal events of Kamenka's ritual year—the carnival celebration known as *fašank*, the Sts Philip and James' Eve celebration, the May Day festivities, the Kamenka

Open festival in the summer and Štefanské hody itself—alongside numerous informal visits. The material presented here rests primarily on participant observation and on field notes written during and immediately after these events. It is complemented by a small number of conversations and interviews with residents, most of them members of the Šlajerky female choir and their partners and friends. All photographs were taken by me during the 2025 Štefanské hody. Throughout the article, I refer to residents by their first names or the nicknames they are known by within the community; full names are given only for public figures in the colony's history and for persons already named in published sources.

The emphasis on participant observation rather than on extended interview testimony is a deliberate choice. My focus is less what residents *say* about their tradition than what they *do* with space, sound and their bodies over four days—how a street is turned, in practice, into a stage, a dance floor, and a dining hall. Given this focus, and the scope of a single article, the interview material is drawn on illustratively rather than serving as the evidentiary backbone of the argument; a fuller treatment of residents' own accounts must be the subject of a separate work.

A note on research ethics is in order. The research was conducted openly: my role was known to the organisers and to those most closely involved in the feast—the Šlajerky, the members of Jeden Kmen and the other figures who recur in these pages—although, at an open public event attended by hundreds, it could not be communicated to every participant. The interviews and conversations drawn on in the article were conducted with informed oral consent. The site itself cannot be meaningfully anonymised: Kamenka and its feast are extensively documented in the press and in a recent commemorative volume (Reiner et al. 2025). The naming practice described above is therefore all the more important. However, in one case I go further, referring to a participant only by his role in the feast and withholding the nickname by which he is known locally, since some of the scenes in which he figures could embarrass him outside the community. The photographs reproduce public moments from a public event and were taken openly.

My own route into the field shaped what I could see. I first came to Kamenka in 2023, after a concert in Brno, when my band was invited to the release party for the album *Basjn* by Jeden Kmen, a fantasy-folk group that draws on folk idioms and an invented, quasi-mythic imagery rather than on a documented regional repertoire—whose members include several residents of Kamenka. The evening ended in the Duck Bar, the neighbourhood's pub and meeting place, and I was struck by the fact that an atmosphere reminiscent of a village pub could exist in the

middle of the city of Brno. As an ethnomusicologist and anthropologist, I kept returning, and over the following years my position shifted from that of an outside observer to that of a participant and, to some extent, friend—even carrying baskets of slivovice<sup>3</sup> during the house-to-house invitations—a shift that reflects the permeable social, cultural, and musical boundaries of Kamenka.

### **Kamenná kolonie: From workers' settlement to gentrifying neighbourhood**

Any account of Kamenka's history must reckon with the character of its sources. Over the past decade, and especially in connection with its 2025 centenary, a substantial body of writing about the place has appeared: a commemorative book (Reiner et al. 2025), a heritage website documenting Brno's workers' settlements,<sup>4</sup> tourism and municipal websites, and feature articles in the regional and national press. These materials are not neutral repositories of fact but artefacts of the revival they describe. The fact that so much is now written, filmed, and recorded about a hundred houses situated at the bottom of a quarry is evidence of the cultural revaluation this article analyses. I therefore use them both as sources and, where relevant, as objects of analysis, noting that some (such as the Dělnické kolonie project) rest on scholarly foundations, while others are journalistic.

The settlement emerged in the 1920s at the bottom of an abandoned quarry on the northern slope of Červený kopec, separated from the Brno exhibition grounds across the River Svratka. Its first resident, Jan Vychodil, moved into the former quarry administration building in 1925; during the late 1920s and 1930s houses were built largely without official permission, and by 1929 around a hundred dwellings stood on the quarry floor (Živný 2025; Kamenná kolonie). Built by brickyard and factory workers using rejected bricks and salvaged rubble, the houses followed the uneven terrain, creating the narrow winding, labyrinthine streets that survive today. Living conditions were initially harsh: water was carried from a spring or the river until a standpipe arrived in 1927, electricity reached the upper colony only in 1941, and modern water and sewerage infrastructure was installed in the 1950s through the self-help initiatives called Akce Z.<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1)

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3 Moravian plum brandy.

4 <https://www.delnick nekolonie.cz/kamenna-kolonie> [accessed 28 May 2026].

5 Akce Z was a state-organized programme of “voluntary” unpaid labour in communist Czechoslovakia, in which citizens were expected to spend their free time building or improving local public amenities (such as roads, pavements, parks, and community buildings) for their towns and villages.



Figure 1 Kamenná Street, the main street of Kamenná kolonie.  
Photograph by the author, 2025.

The decisive shift began in the 1960s, when artists, filmmakers and sculptors started moving into the colony as original working-class residents left for modern housing estates. Residents recall the 1970s and 1980s as a period when Kamenka became “an island of freedom”, where everyone did their own thing (Bernard 2025). After a quieter interval in the 1990s, the years after 2000 brought a “new wave” of younger families and a revival of communal events, including *hody*, concerts, and neighbourhood gatherings (Bernard 2025; Živný 2025). Today, the settlement’s social composition has been thoroughly transformed: what was once a working-class settlement is now widely seen, both by its residents and the press, as an intellectual and artistic enclave, home to a notable concentration of artists and creative professionals. Rather than rely on precise figures, I take this perceived reputation to be part of the phenomenon itself—it reflects the way Kamenka is talked about, by insiders and outsiders alike, as a place of bohemian and creative life.

This trajectory is, in the conventional sense of the term, one of gentrification: the replacement of a low-income, industrial working-class population by residents with high cultural and educational capital, and the accompanying revaluation of a formerly stigmatised place. This is significant for what follows, because today’s organisers of *Štefanské hody* are not transmitting an inherited village culture. They are instead constructing a local tradition

from a position of considerable cultural capital, in a neighbourhood whose very desirability now exposes it to the redevelopment pressures that The Mamrds evoke in their song. Viewed in this light, the feast is, among other things, a way of asserting and performing belonging in a place undergoing rapid transformation.

### **Hody: A patronal feast and its Moravian form**

To situate Štefanské hody, it is useful to explain what the term *hody* ordinarily means. In the Czech lands a feast is known as *hody* (chiefly in Moravia) or *posvícení* (chiefly in Bohemia), though there are other regional names such as *pout'*, *krmeš* or *odpust*; it originated as a church feast commemorating the consecration of the local church (Lidová kultura 2007: 781). A patronal feast of this kind, combined with a village fair, is not peculiar to the Czech lands: comparable observances are widespread across Catholic and Orthodox Europe. What is more distinctive is the particular Moravian elaboration of the feast, and it is this regional form that Štefanské hody both echoes and reworks.

The encyclopaedia *Lidová kultura* describes *hody* as a regionally varied complex of customs, entertainments, songs, dances, foods, costumes and decorations (Lidová kultura 2007: 781). Villages once celebrated the feast at different dates according to their patron saint, until an edict of Emperor Joseph II in 1787 sought, for economic reasons, to unify its observance on the third Sunday of October. The reform was never fully observed, and many places continued to celebrate both an “old” and a “new” feast (Lidová kultura 2007: 781). It is worth noting that Kamenka’s Štefanské hody, held on the second weekend of October, takes place close to this Josephine date—a faint structural echo of the patronal calendar even in a feast with no church to consecrate.

In much of Moravia the organisation of the feast fell to the *stárkovská organizace*, the association of village youth (*chasa*) led by elected *stárce*, who managed the house-to-house collections, the invitations, the dancing, and the raising of a decorated *máj* (maypole) in the centre of the ritual space (Lidová kultura 2007: 782). As Pavlicová and Uhlíková observe, such traditions have been continually reshaped over time. They caution against the older habit of treating recorded historical forms as an “original” against which later practice appears as a degraded “second existence”, since transformation is a normal feature of living practice (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2024: 6–8). It is this template—with its procession, collection, maypole, and youthful organisers—that the Kamenka feast both models itself on and departs from in creating its own version. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2 The decorated máj (maypole) at the centre of the feast. Photograph by the author, 2025.

### Štefanské hody: Origins, organisers and forms

Unlike the Moravian village feast, Štefanské hody in Kamenka did not originate from a church consecration but from a local death. The feast commemorates Stefan Schoedel, a local resident who died in 2009 after a delayed ambulance failed to reach him in time—an event widely understood within the settlement as a symptom of its neglected position in relation to the city’s services (Reiner et al. 2025). Out of this grief, the architect Petr Hurník—a resident and one of the figures behind the colony’s cultural revival—proposed reintroducing a feast that, according to local memory, had not been held since the 1950s.

That earlier feast is documented. According to testimonies collected in Reiner et al. (2025), *hody* were celebrated in Kamenka after the Second World War, with the first taking place in August 1945 with a procession and a brass band. One resident, Ludmila Hanáková (born 1928), recalled that festivals were held every few years as spontaneous expressions of relief at having survived the war. These post-war feasts already adapted rather than reproduced the village template—an early instance of the conscious reworking that marks the present-day event. They lapsed in the 1950s, leaving the settlement without them for around half a century.

The organisational history of the revived feast is important for understanding how it functions. Following Hurník's initiative in 2009, the feast was, after his death in a cycling accident in 2016, taken over by the Duck Bar—the local pub and social hub—under its operator Hana Staňková, who expanded it into a larger event drawing visitors from across Brno. When she gave up the management of the pub at the end of 2024, the organization of the feast passed to the Šlajerky Association, a formally registered *spolek*,<sup>6</sup> with the assistance of the new Duck Bar operators (interview with Žaneta, member of the Šlajerky Choir, 28 October 2025). The name Šlajerky now denotes two related entities, which I distinguish throughout: the Šlajerky Choir, the women's singing group led by Jarmila Slaninová that performs at the feast, and the Šlajerky Association, the body founded by the same circle in 2024 to organise the event. This trajectory—from one resident's initiative, through a pub's stewardship, to a registered association—is itself a compelling case study of how a grassroots tradition becomes institutionalised in a post-socialist city.

The shape of the feast has settled into a four- to five-day rhythm. On Wednesday and Thursday evenings (and Friday, if any houses remain to be visited) the Šlajerky make house-to-house invitations through the settlement's lower and upper sections: Dolní Skala and Horní Skala. Saturday brings the main feast: a costumed procession sets out in the early afternoon from Horní Skala, accompanied by a cimbalom band funded by the collected contributions, and dances down to the maypole in Dolní Skala. There, the feast is inaugurated with communal singing and a black-powder salute, followed by performances by costumed Kamenka children and by the Šlajerky Choir. Sunday closes the cycle with a neighbourhood lunch and a final, quieter Šlajerky performance.

Importantly, Štefanské hody has never claimed to continue an authentic rural tradition—a feature most evident in its music, which openly draws on disparate sources: Moravian folk songs sit beside The Mamrds' punk track "*Hody sa blíží*", and a Wallachian *odzemek* may be danced where, by strict regional logic, it does not belong. Beyond music, the feast assembles its own invented ritual elements, most strikingly the *domobrana* or militia, that is, men in quasi-historical dress who fire black-powder salutes. The costume reflects this bricolage: rather than reproducing a documented regional *kroj* (folk costume), residents wear what they call the *kamenkovský kraj*, a composite outfit unified less by historical fidelity than by the settlement's own

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6 A "*zájmový spolek*" is a Czech legal form of voluntary association (registered as a *spolek* under the Civil Code) whose members come together to pursue a shared non-business interest, such as a sport, hobby, or a cultural or community activity.

emblem, a stylised flower representing its little houses. Therefore, when residents speak of “traditional costumes”, they mean this invented Kamenka folk costume rather than any single regional original—a distinction that is important for the argument that follows. (Fig. 3)



Figure 3 The Kamenka domobrana (militia) in quasi-historical dress.  
Photograph by the author, 2025.

Despite, or rather because of, its openly constructed character, Štefanské hody has become central to Kamenka’s sense of identity. The 2025 centenary of the settlement saw the Brno jazz label Bivak Records issue an LP compilation entitled *Skala* (Rock), featuring musicians associated with the settlement—external recognition that local cultural production is now deemed worth preserving, even as it continually evolves. The 2025 edition of the feast, on which this article draws, therefore carried particular symbolic weight: it was explicitly promoted as a celebration of Kamenka’s hundredth anniversary, a circumstance worth bearing in mind when reading the ethnography that follows. At the same time, the recurring worry that the feast must “be big, so that it doesn’t die out” (interview with a member of the Šlajerky Choir on 11 October 2025) registers an awareness that this is a tradition sustained only by repetition and participation. As Hobsbawm and Ranger note, invented traditions seek continuity with the past through repetition (Hobsbawm – Ranger 1983: 1); at Kamenka that continuity is consciously rebuilt each year.

## Ethnography: The four days of the feast

### Wednesday: Invitations and intimacy

The ritual cycle begins not on the main feast day but three evenings earlier, with the intimate house-to-house invitations that mark out the social and spatial boundaries of the celebration.

*“Arriving in Kamenka around 6 p.m. on Wednesday 8 October 2025, I follow the sound of singing to Dolní Skala, where the Šlajerky Choir—seven women and six girls, all in Kamenka costume—are already going from door to door, singing a cappella (the violinist, Julie, is absent this evening). Against the hum of the Brno ring road in the distance, the female voices carry down the narrow lanes. Silvano, a resident, carries snacks and two bottles of slivovice; others have brought home-made treats; Jarmila, as leader, wears a collection box ‘for the musicians’. The pattern is repeated at every house: the choir sings a song such as ‘Chodíme, chodíme’ or ‘Pod horú jatelinku’, the residents open their doors, Silvano offers slivovice, the Šlajerky issue a personal invitation to Saturday’s feast, and a contribution goes into the box.” (Fieldnotes, 8 October 2025)*

The group’s composition revealed an informal but practised organisation. As we moved through the dusk, this practice produced what Lefebvre calls *representational spaces*—lived space charged with meaning through use (Lefebvre 1991: 39): metre-wide lanes became stages, and gardens with open gates became legitimate stops. At one house, the sound engineer Jarda, a member of the band Vítrholc—like several of the musicians, a Kamenka local rather than a hired outsider—demanded extra verses before the choir could move on, illustrating how residents shape the ritual rather than merely receiving it.

The exchanges disclosed the community’s values and anxieties. *“You have young people, and that is the ultimate luxury!”* one resident told the group (Fieldnotes, 8 October 2025), capturing Kamenka’s preoccupation with the generational continuity on which such practices depend. The Šlajerky themselves debated the repertoire—*“No one knows that one; let’s do ‘Čerešně’, even the kids know it”*—a reminder that “tradition” here is continually negotiated. My own place that first evening remained marginal; I hung back at the procession’s tail, though one singer, Veronika, drew me in. This gradual incorporation bears out Finnegan’s observation that in local music-making what matters is often less the music than the social relationships through which it is sustained (Finnegan 1989: 306). *“By half past eight a light rain*

*sets in; one resident sends a contribution by QR code—a thoroughly contemporary adaptation of the traditional collection—and the evening ends at the Duck Bar.”* (Fieldnotes, 8 October 2025)

#### Thursday: Tensions and negotiations

Thursday’s invitations to Horní Skala exposed the contested side of tradition-making.

*“The mood is markedly less relaxed than the night before. Three musicians join the procession—one older and two younger violinists—but tuning problems surface at once, and, more tellingly, the men wear jeans and quilted jackets rather than costume, a visible break from the costumed choir. Communication keeps stalling. At 6:07 p.m., Julie finally calls out in frustration, ‘Can you stop playing for five minutes so we can hear each other?’, and later reprimands the youngest player for playing one song while the women sing another.”* (Fieldnotes, 9 October 2025)

The friction was instructive. The musicians were not from Kamenka, and their outsider status was significant: they were musically competent but lacked the local competence needed to know when to play and when to stop, which songs suited which houses, and how to read the evening’s cues. As Finnegan notes, local musical worlds overlap through shared venues, networks, and, above all, the locality itself (Finnegan 1989: 305). Over the following days, this gap narrowed as the hired players were incorporated into the event’s rhythm—a smaller-scale echo of my own incorporation. *“When Silvano has to leave early, I take over his basket of slivovice and snacks; the Šlajerky pronounce me a ‘good Šlajer’, and I find myself stepping forward to offer drink and food rather than hanging back.”* (Fieldnotes, 9 October 2025)

This transition marked a shift in my position in the field: I was no longer documenting the ritual so much as performing it.

#### Saturday: The feast, its climax, and communitas

Saturday 11 October brought the main feast and the biggest transformation of the street.

*“I arrive at 11:30 a.m. to find preparations under way but the street still quiet; ‘We hope it will be big, so that it doesn’t die out here,’ one of the Šlajerky says. During late morning the street is remade: tables*

*appear alongside the houses offering wine, home-made food, baked goods, old books and vinyl, most of them unattended, yet nothing goes missing.” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)*

These practices operated, from the standpoint of those taking part, on neighbourly understanding rather than on visible permission. Whatever formal arrangements may exist behind the scenes—and like most such events the feast presumably involves some notification of the city district—what was important in the lived experience of the day was that the exchange proceeded through trust and custom, not through any visible apparatus of regulation.

*“Behind the maypole a small beer tent goes up, with a single tap and a DJ. By 1:30 p.m. the Kamenka militia gathers at the house of its commander, a local resident—men in their thirties in quasi-historical dress, muskets propped against the wall, the commander himself packing gunpowder into flasks while a cauldron of kyselica<sup>7</sup> simmers on the street. The programme opens around 2:30 p.m. with the cimbalom band Čardáš, a professional ensemble engaged for the day, in front of the Duck Bar. Perhaps a hundred people have gathered, most in costumes of every conceivable kind; the Kamenka flower-logo recurs across otherwise disparate outfits, lending visual unity through an invented rather than historical emblem. Children run freely through streets the feast has made safe, and through which no car can now pass.” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)*

*“At 2:32 p.m. the procession sets off for Horní Skala. At its turning point the dancing becomes general—anyone with anyone, women dancing together, wine circulating, children weaving a human snake. ‘Shall we take a break there, like we always do?’ someone asks Jarmila. Břeťa, in costume, draws the men into the dance; Džugo, drummer for both Jeden Kmen and The Mamrds and, like them, a local, hands a bottle of white wine to passers-by; most drink and wander on without returning it, so that it comes back all but empty.” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)*

The question put to Jarmila shows how “tradition” was at once remembered and improvised; the circulating bottle, returned all but empty by strangers, enacted a form of communal consumption that quietly suspended

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7 Kyselica is a traditional, Czech and Slovak thick sauerkraut soup made with potatoes, smoked meat, sausages, cream, and spices.

ordinary notions of ownership. “*At the crossroads before the descent to Dolní Skala a car tries to push through from below. It has no chance: no one in the procession makes way, the dancing simply continues, and the driver waits some ten minutes for it to pass.*” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)

This moment crystallised the event’s spatial logic. This is not to claim that the feast stands outside the law—it unfolds, like any such event, within the city’s administrative order—but rather that, in practice and in the experience of those present, ordinary traffic rules had simply ceased to apply, displaced by a different ordering of the street produced from below. Tellingly, when an ambulance needed to pass shortly afterwards, everyone made way at once—the temporary order suspended bureaucratic rules while preserving its ethical ones, a distinction to which I will return.

*“At 3:18 p.m. the procession reaches the maypole through Dolní Skala, where perhaps three hundred people have gathered, and the militia performs its salute. Without amplification, the commander calls out a sequence of dedications: ‘In honour of Hurník and Štefan, powder to the pan!’ and a volley from five muskets; after reloading, ‘In honour of those who are no longer with us—for Milan Koutný!’; then ‘In honour of her 368th birthday, and with the wish that the Inquisition does not catch up with her this year either, a salute for Jarmila!’, at which the Šlajerky cheer; and finally, ‘For all the newborns, and against sadness!’”* (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)

These dedications accomplished a remarkable amount of work within a single sequence. The dedication to Hurník and Štefan linked the salute to the feast’s origin in loss, while the dedication to Milan Koutný folded a more recent death into the same commemorative gesture. Jarmila’s “368th birthday” and the “Inquisition” reference were a genuine tribute wrapped in deliberate, hyperbolic absurdity, while the final dedication turned the community’s focus to birth and the future. The humour is constitutive rather than incidental: by honouring its central organiser through a joke about witch-hunts and an impossible age, the militia performs reverence and self-mockery at the same time, adopting the solemn form of a ritual salute while rejecting the notion that the form is ancient or sacred.

*“The cimbalom band then plays while the Šlajerky sing and the children weave around the maypole (in one direction only, a simplified version). Around 3:45 p.m. the children take small wooden valaška axes and Jenček, in Wallachian dress, leads ‘the old Wallachian odze-*

*mek’—no one minding that a Wallachian dance is being performed in the middle of Brno—after which the band slides into ‘Pásli ovce Valaši’, a Christmas carol made fitting by communal will, and then, at 3:57 p.m., into the theme from Pirates of the Caribbean, played over and over: an unabashed postmodern pastiche that nonetheless fits the event. People jump over the valaška, and, as residents urge, anyone who wants to can jump, regardless of costume, age, gender or ethnicity.” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)*

This is the essence of what Turner calls *communitas*, the spontaneous sense of togetherness that arises when ordinary social structures are temporarily set aside (Turner 1969: 96). Age, gender, ethnicity and even the authenticity of one’s costume cease to mark distinctions within the feast.

*“After four o’clock the valaška-jumping winds down and a group photograph gathers the costumed crowd, with the militia and the Šlajerký to the fore, before the gathering disperses among the houses and, above all, in front of the Duck Bar. From this point the entertainment becomes, as it were, organised ad hoc: at 5:09 p.m. Jarmila receives a birthday gift in the form of an impromptu performance by the Ogárek Trio—in fact The Mamrds singing bawdy folk songs a cappella, without microphones, in the street among the people, to general laughter and applause.” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025) (Fig. 4)*

*“The remaining hours blur into general festivity. I sit with the militia at the commander’s house, where Ctibor hands me a wooden bowl from the windowsill for kyselica; I do not think about who has used it before me, but accept the soup and eat. Across the street a children’s shooting range has appeared, where Nerf guns are being fired at cardboard targets with no one supervising. When someone needs to cross, the shooting pauses and then resumes, the children resetting the targets themselves. The communal eating continues into the night. I leave around two in the morning, down an almost empty street. Despite the hours of dancing and drinking no one has called the police and there has been no visible trouble—though the commander, having fallen asleep drunk on the street, is carried home in the now-empty soup cauldron, waking to shout ‘Mob, forward!’” (Fieldnotes, 11 October 2025)*



Figure 4 Group photograph at the maypole, the militia and the Šlajerky in the foreground. Photograph by the author, 2025.

That final image—the militia commander asleep in a soup pot, borne home by his neighbours and shouting mock-revolutionary slogans—captures the spirit of the whole: genuine revelry interwoven with ironic performance, its carnivalesque excess contained within a frame of mutual care.

#### Sunday: Aftermath

Sunday's programme—a final performance by the Šlajerky at Dolní Skala, just in front of the house of the previous day's militia commander on the main street—stood in deliberate contrast to the previous day's abandon, as it was smaller, calmer, and closer to an open-air concert than to the self-organising revelry of Saturday. The return to a more structured, scheduled form marked the closing of the temporary order the feast had opened.

## Producing space, producing community

The most productive way to read Štefanské hody is not as a question of authenticity but as a case of the social production of space. For Lefebvre, space is not a neutral container but is produced through practice. He distinguishes *representations of space* (the planned order of authorities), *spatial practices* (the routines of everyday use) and *representational spaces* (space as lived and charged with meaning) (Lefebvre 1991: 38–39). During the feast, Kamenná Street is decisively shifted into the third register: streets that on an ordinary day carry cars and deliveries become, through singing, dancing, processions and shared eating, a stage, a dance floor, a dining hall and a ritual arena. The transformation begins days earlier with the chalked requests to park elsewhere—not official signage but neighbourly appeals that prove nonetheless effective—and culminates when the dancing procession renders the blocked car simply irrelevant.

De Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics brings this into clearer focus. Whereas strategies belong to institutions that command their own space, tactics are the manoeuvres of those who operate within a space ordered by others, seizing momentary opportunities within it (de Certeau 1984: xix). Štefanské hody is tactical in exactly this sense: residents do not control the city's legal-administrative order, but for a weekend they appropriate some of its streets, producing a different spatial order from below. Only here does Bey's "temporary autonomous zone" earn its place—not as a theory that explains the feast but as a name for the affective charge of this reconfiguration: an area effectively liberated for a time, before dissolving without confronting the state head-on (Bey 1991: 101). That the procession halts a car yet instantly yields to an ambulance reveals the order's ethics: bureaucratic rules are suspended, but the duty of care is not.

While Lefebvre and de Certeau explain how the space is produced, Turner helps illuminate what is produced within it. The feast generates the conditions for *communitas*: in the liminal time of the procession and the maypole, conventional markers of status give way to an unstructured sense of equality, so that, as residents insist, anyone may join the dance regardless of costume, age, gender or ethnicity (Turner 1969: 96). Džugo's circulating wine bottle, the shared soup bowl, the unsupervised shooting range all enact a temporary loosening of the ordinary boundaries of property and supervision. However, Turner's caution also applies: *communitas* cannot last, and Sunday's return to a scheduled performance marks its dissolution.

Placed in the context of other recent Czech festivities, Štefanské hody reveals what is, and is not, distinctive about it. Stavělová and Kratochvíl show that, since the early 1990s, a growing number of Czech festivities

have been modelled on the historical form of the rural carnival, with urban communities selecting and appropriating its structural elements for present purposes (Stavělová – Kratochvíl 2016: 569); Stavělová further links the proliferation of such urban carnivals to a strong contemporary need for identification and community-building (Stavělová 2023). Štefanské hody clearly belongs to this family and shares its central feature: the conscious assembly of a contemporary event from inherited festive elements. What sets the Kamenka case apart is its setting in a gentrifying former workers' settlement, the high cultural capital of its organisers, its brazen mixing of registers from cimbalom bands to punk rock, and its pervasive self-irony. Whereas some invented carnivals seek to present themselves as heritage, Štefanské hody wears its constructedness openly.

This is where invented tradition must be handled with care. The concept is useful, but, as critics of its cruder applications stress, it is too often deployed to sort practices into “genuine” and “spurious”, as if a recently created tradition were therefore inauthentic (Handler – Linnekin 1984; Bendix 1997). The Kamenka material challenges any such reading. When The Mamrds write a punk song that becomes the feast's “traditional” opening, or residents concoct a Kamenka “folk costume” (*kamenkovský kroj*) from disparate elements around the settlement's flower logo, no one imagines they are reclaiming an ancient tradition—yet the practice is no less effective for that. What the participants perform is precisely the act of creating their own tradition. The self-irony of the militia's dedications and the cheerful incongruity of a Wallachian dance and a film theme played on the cimbalom are not failures of authenticity but the very means through which a shared local form is claimed. Following Handler and Linnekin, this is what all tradition is: a construction made in the present. The Kamenka feast simply renders that process unusually visible.

### Conclusion: From folklorism to functional folklore

Štefanské hody shows how an urban community produces, for a few days each year, a space and a form of sociality markedly different from those of ordinary city life. Over four days in October 2025, the residents of Kamenka turned a quarry-floor street into a self-ordering feast in which cars gave way to dancers, exchange operated on trust, and conventional distinctions briefly dissolved. The significance lies less in the worn vocabulary of folklore versus folklorism than in what the case reveals about the production of space. How, through procession, song, salutes, shared food and the raising of a maypole, a regulated environment is tactically remade

from below, with Bey's "temporary autonomous zone" naming the affective charge of that remaking rather than explaining it.

Read in this light, the opposition between authentic and invented tradition dissolves. Following Handler and Linnekin (1984) and Bendix (1997), and in accordance with Pavlicová and Uhlíková's caution against treating documented forms as an unchanging "original" (2024), I argue that what matters in a living practice is not its origin but its transmission and its function for the community that performs it. Štefanské hody is openly constructed, mixes registers freely and is shot through with irony; yet it does the work that a feast does—binding neighbours, commemorating the dead, welcoming the newborn, and asserting the value of a place under pressure. It is, in this precise sense, not degraded folklore and not mere folklorism but a *functional folklore*: a consciously created tradition that nevertheless functions, for its place, time and community, as authentically their own.

This reframing also illuminates the place of the feast within Kamenka's gentrification. The same cultural capital that has transformed the settlement's population underwrites the feast's knowing, self-ironic style; and the feast, in turn, performs a claim to belonging in a neighbourhood whose desirability now exposes it to the very redevelopment against which The Mamrds sing. Like the recent wave of invented urban carnivals documented by Stavělová and Kratochvíl (2016) and Stavělová (2023), Štefanské hody is a response to the contemporary hunger for community and identification; what it adds to that picture is the case of a gentrifying former workers' settlement that builds its solidarity precisely by staging, year after year, its own invented village.

Finally, the feast's often-voiced fragility—the fear that it might "die out"—turns out to be the source of its strength rather than weakness. Because Štefanské hody depends wholly on being recreated again each October, it cannot be taken for granted, and its very constructedness keeps it open to adaptation in a way that practices presented as immemorial are not. When Monday comes, the temporary order dissolves and the street returns to its ordinary role—until the following October, when the work of producing the space, and the community, begins again.

June 2026

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