

4th EFPP Group Section Conference



BRIDGING IDENTITIES

28 - 31 / 5 / 2009 / Prague / Czech republic

"Bridging Identities. Clinical Impact of Groups."

Was held

28th - 31st May 2009

Prague / Czech Republic

**The European Federation for Psychoanalytic
Psychotherapy in the Public Sector (EFPP)**

EFPP

and

**The Czech Society for Psychoanalytic
Psychotherapy (ČSPAP)**



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*Thank you for your participation and
support!*

4th EFPP Group Section Conference „Bridging Identities - Clinical Impact of Groups“ was organised by the European Federation for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Public Sector (EFPP) and the Czech Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (ČSPAP) between 28th - 31st May 2009. The Conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in Diplomat Hotel, DOX (a gallery of modern arts) and the Mayor Residence. The 242 participants came from 33 different countries within and outside Europe to enjoy rich scientific and cultural programme, including 6 main speakers, 9 members of EFPP Executive. Lively nature of the conference was demonstrated by the number of participants in discussion groups: English 147, French 21, Czech 31, (Total 199) and in experiential groups: English 108, French 16, Czech 28 (Total 152).

Prague was chosen as the first city of Central and Eastern Europe to organise the EFPP Conference (apart from the Adult section conference in Dresden in 2005 following German reunification). An integral part of the conference were exhibitions of visual art, multimedia presentations, texts, photographs and other cultural events relating to the subject of bridging identities. The topics of identity, search for roots, the loss and re-creation of the meaning of life, inner and outer reality are absolutely relevant in today's

world. Both the visual artists and Conference speakers dealt with the phenomena of parallel worlds, separateness and alienation, impossibility to communicate, traumatic and traumatising personal and group relationships and feelings of isolation as a painful parts of the present times.

We believe that the conference participants co-created a mental space for the topic of bridging identities and for integrating group experiences from both former East and West Europe, from groups run within state health care systems as well as in private practice, from democratic and totalitarian countries.

As you know, the history of the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia) as one of the most promising European democracies before Second World War was violently interrupted by the Nazis and then Communist regimes with its group ideologies that mobilised totalitarian internal objects and false identity in its inhabitants. During the communist era there existed two split off views of external reality: the official, ideologically correct versions and the secret, personal and private perceptions. This split contributed to the blurring of the differences between perceptions and projections of good and persecutory self and object representation. Alongside the many obligatory, official and ideologically correct groups, characterised by passive conformity to an enforced, adaptive, false identity there grew up spontaneously underground split off spaces of privacy or private spaces including families and psychotherapy groups.

Small groups (family or dissident) helped to maintain a private 'mental underground' and survived suspicious political and social reality. These destructive social processes need to be balanced with the experience of a creative movement in Bohemia in the twenties and thirties of extraordinary productivity of the specific cultural milieu of Prague Jews (both Czech and German) and Czech artists and also in the 14th century when Prague emerged as the intellectual and cultural centre of Central Europe under the rule of the king Charles IV. His reign was characterised by a transformation of the nature of Empire when he organised the states of the empire into a peace-keeping confederation. He is called "father of the homeland" and he might be seen as a group conductor forming the symbolic space and facilitating the depressive modes of mental functioning over the paranoid-schizoid ones, he preferred the symbols to acts of war. He founded Charles University in 1348 and supported many ways of intellectual and artistic expression which you can discover during your stay in Prague.

The key lectures were presented by invited speakers: Earl Hopper, René Kaes, Gila Ofer, Morris Nitsun, Rudolf Balmer, Ulrich Schultz-Venrath and two subplenary sessions by: Isaura Manso Neto and Thor-Kristian Island, Helena Klímová and Olga Marlinová with cooperation of Earl Hopper.

Stimulating and provoking papers presented in the plenary inspired small discussion groups (in English, French, German, Czech) conducted by experienced colleagues. The format of two main speakers and their dialogue followed by small group discussions proved to be effective format enabling to elaborate and „metabolise“ complexity of themes.

Heterogenous and international character of discussion groups allowed the participants to reflect on the different ways of dealing with group, institutional and societal themes. Small group and large group provided unique experience and gave a flavour of these two „classical“ group analytical approaches.

I would like to thank on behalf of the organizing committee all participants who decided to come to Prague and contained various kinds of globalized anxieties that were at the time of the conference present as a Mexican flu, economic downturn or financial crisis. 242 conference participants formed a brilliant group and helped to create the conference.

I find it difficult to describe enormous work undertaken by the Organising Committee lasting two years before the conference. Committee worked as a kind of self-organising and well-functioning group and I would like to express my thanks to Hana Drabkova (ministry of languages and meticulous preparation), Marie Hoskova (ministry of scientific programme and courage), Dana Karova (ministry of finances), Lucie Lucka (ministry of public and good relations) and Ludek Vrba (brain of the team and ministry of organisation and foreign affairs). The steady support and assistance which was of crucial importance for us was provided by Peggy Deeny, Anne Holländer and other EFPP representatives. Milena Slavicka and Kamila Zenata were responsible for highly professional and aesthetic preparation of the Conference and the original and playful spirit of the art exhibitions/presentations shining through the whole Conference structure. This was orchestrated by Milena Slavicka, the art history professor, editor of many outstanding art journals and professor of Academy of Fine Art in Prague together with the Czech painter and group-therapist Kamila Zenata. I would like to extend my thanks also to Lydia Tischler and Michael Sebek for their key role in the establishment of the CSPAP and early link into the European space of psychoanalytical psychotherapies (EFPP). Pavel Bém, the Mayor of the City of Prague who professionally works as a family psychotherapist, gave substantial financial support to us. The City of Prague also organized the gala dinner for us and generously offered the residences for our guests. Pavel Bém's personal interest in our Conference was very important for morale. We appreciate all this and thank him for his help. The Conference contributed to consolidate and expand professional networks and to develop a common ground for future work across national and cultural boundaries.

David Holub
Conference Chairperson