



Laudatio¹

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Your Magnificence, Mr. Rector, honorabiles, spectabiles, distinguished members of the scientific councils, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Let me introduce Professor Jeffrey C. Alexander, the world's leading expert in the field of cultural sociology. An April 2019 article in *Sociological Quarterly*, "The Prestige Elite in Sociology," included him in a list of the most cited living sociologists. He is the originator and senior leader of the influential strong program in cultural sociology, and a recognized innovator in the sociological study of iconicity and social performance. He serves as Co-director of the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University. He is regularly invited for research fellowships and lectures at leading universities around the world and is frequently a keynote speaker at international sociological congresses. His extensive publishing activity includes insightful theoretical analyses as well as popularization texts – both of which have been translated into dozens of languages. His work has significantly influenced the shape of sociology in the 21st century.

His professional life has been associated with two of the most prestigious universities in the world – the University of California, where he completed his doctoral studies and where he served in various academic positions for nearly thirty years, and Yale University, where he has been for the past twenty years.

The cooperation between Masaryk University, or rather the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University, and Professor Alexander began in 2005. In 2006, he wrote a special preface to a scholarly publication produced at the Department, which included translations of two of his texts. Professor Alexander soon became not only a collaborator, but also a supporter and an ambassador of sorts for the Department of Sociology in Brno. He has visited many times since then. In addition to individual lectures, in 2010 he led a several-day intensive proseminar on cultural sociology for master's and doctoral students. Even after completing his time in the department, he agreed to evaluate the students' final seminar papers. He would send them detailed comments, having returned to the United States, within a day, often within hours of receiving an email attachment. The interest and support from a world-renowned sociologist in their work was an important, inspiring, and motivating life experience for the students.

Also, thanks to Professor Alexander's recommendation, other top experts have visited the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University to give lectures and conference

¹ Speech delivered on the 26th of October, 2023 at the Masaryk University honorary doctorate award ceremony.

papers: José Casanova, Bernd Giesen, Isaac Reed, Ron Eyerman, Phil Smith, Carlo Tognato, Giuseppe Sciortino and others. At the same time, the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University has provided facilities for long term research fellowships for members of the department and talented doctoral students over the past fifteen years. Others have been invited to participate in the Center's annual conference or to contribute to its research projects. A former student of Jeffrey Alexander and later co-author of one of his publications, Nadya Jaworsky, is now an established member of the Brno Department of Sociology with a strong publication record in the field.

Professor Alexander's sociological research on citizenship is another important contribution to contemporary world sociology. A recent research project on the relationship between citizenship and political populism, which he led, is the latest contribution to the sociological understanding of our world. A member of the Department of Sociology in Brno also participated in this project.

Given his close professional and personal relationship with Masaryk University, and with the city of Brno itself, there is no need to mention the many other good reasons that justify Masaryk University honoring Professor Jeffrey C. Alexander with its highest academic award – an honorary doctorate degree. Professor, thank you for the enormous mark you have left on our University, Faculty and Department. Thank you for your example as a top social science researcher who inspires not only us, but sociologists around the world.