

Silesian Identity

The interplay of memory, history, and borders



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Abstract

This dissertation provides an ethnographic account of contemporary Opavian Silesian identity (or identities) and its negotiations. In particular, it is concerned with the question of how Silesian identity is being negotiated by various social actors in and between the town of Opava and the neighbouring area of Hlučín, which together comprise the tourist region of Opavian Silesia. In focusing on Opava and the Hlučín area, inhabited by Opavians and Hlučínians respectively, I not only explore the internal constitution of a group and analyse its narrative accounts, but also pay special attention to the social organisation of the differences between these two groups. The aim of this project is not to address the question of whether Silesian identity exists objectively, which is taken for granted by the majority of scholars working on Silesian identity do, but rather to explore how various social actors negotiate and utilise the concept, including these scholars themselves. I start from the premise that identities are relational, situational, and instrumental, and throughout the dissertation I focus on the groups' external and internal contestations, exploring the ways in which various social actors try to overcome these differences. The present negotiations over Silesian identity have proved to be problematic in all their temporalities, as they relate to issues in the past, the present and possibly the future. I therefore investigate how certain versions of the past are being reconstructed and negotiated in the present, how these versions inform and reflect on the present, and the possible implications of this for the future. I consider competing representations of Silesian-ness and competing reconstructions of the past that are related to it through the theoretical framework of 'dominant v. demotic discourses' and 'difficult heritage', focusing on commemoration practices, tourism, the politics of display, and hierarchies of knowledge.

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Introduction

‘Před řekou je cisařská, za řekou je prajzká’¹

I am standing on a bridge stretching across a river. I remember when this particular bridge was built, following the flooding of July 1997; I turned eleven years old that year. I even remember the previous bridge that stood here before it was flood-ravaged and subsequently demolished. As a child, I was fascinated by its seemingly solid iron suspension ropes, faithfully hanging between two towers and anchored at each end of the old bridge. I also remember how disappointed I felt when the old suspension bridge was replaced by an ordinary rigid structure. I recall that the old bridge’s body was painted in a dark hue, but whether it was black, blue, or green I don’t know.

The bridge spans the Opava River. To distinguish the river from the town of Opava, the river is often referred to by the locals as Opavice. In much the same way as rivers the world over, Opavice provides a reference point and thus helps people orientate themselves in both the physical and symbolic landscape. It also serves to navigate their personal and group relationships. The Opavice river marks a natural border between the former Prussian and Austrian territories, and accordingly the two river banks symbolically represent Us and Them. However, as rivers divide, bridges connect. With this in mind, I slowly ambled along the sidewalk in the mellow light of early September 2015, heading northeast, where a few kilometres away, the present-day border between the Czech Republic and Poland can be found. Once I step off the bridge I am in Kateřinky, with the old town centre at my back.



Picture 1. Bridge between Opava’s old centre and Kateřinky, 2015

¹ ‘In front of the river is the Empire [Habsburg Empire], beyond the river is Prussia’: a common saying in Opavian Silesia.

In this dissertation, the main, very broad question of my research is how is Silesian identity is negotiated by various social actors in ‘Opavian Silesia’; how it is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. Based on interviews, narrative accounts, textual analysis, and ethnographic participant observation in fieldwork conducted from August 2015 to September 2016 in the town of Opava and the neighbouring Hlučín area, representing the Silesian borderland between the Czech Republic and Poland, this dissertation provides an ethnographic account of contemporary Silesian subjectivity, contextualised within broader social dynamics. The objective of this project is not to address the question of whether Silesian identity empirically exists, but rather to investigate how various social actors negotiate and instrumentalise the concept. Throughout the chapters that follow, I consider competing reconstructions of the past through the framework of competing narratives, commemoration practices and difficult heritage, tourism, the politics of display, and hierarchies of knowledge.

Drawing on the notion of ‘the presentation of self in everyday life’ (Goffman 1969 [1956]), I argue that social actors (individuals, groups, and institutions) frequently make an active effort to attribute particular social meanings in harmony with their ambitions, visions, and self-image. At the same time, while social actors try to represent themselves in the approved and recognised fashion, as well as in accordance with their positive self-affirming perceptions, social actors’ interactive and dynamic negotiations over social meanings are problematic because their identities are often ambivalent, multi-layered, relational, situational, temporal, and most of all, contested. In studying how Silesian identity is negotiated in and between Opava and the Hlučín area, which together form the tourist region of Opavian Silesia, I treat collective memory and cultural heritage as constitutive features of the formation of collective identities and examine the dynamics

of negotiation through Baumann's theoretical framework distinguishing dominant from demotic discourses (Baumann 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002).

Building upon scholarship in memory studies, I work with the premise that collective memory is created in the present, serves present-day purposes, and both reflects on and determines present-day social conditions. Since various social actors struggle to advance their views of the past and its meaning, collective memory is essentially contested. At the same time, their perceptions and conceptualisations of the past directly reflect on their understandings of the present, as well as their visions for the future. Thus, I argue, collective memory and its dynamics can be treated as an extraordinarily useful tool for exploring and examining the politics of negotiating collective identities. Silesian identity, I contend, is particularly interesting for its fluctuations and the number of ambivalent social meanings ascribed to it. Consequently, in this dissertation, I focus on the dynamics and politics of how Silesian identity is negotiated by various social actors in the Silesian borderlands.

The interest of this dissertation is therefore set in a historical land called Silesia. In particular, it focuses on a tiny portion of Silesia, nowadays sometimes called Opavian Silesia, covering the town of Opava and neighbouring Hlučín area, both situated in the north-east borderlands of the Czech Republic. Opava is inhabited by *Opavians*, the Hlučín area by *Hlučíns* (*Hlučíňané* in Czech, *Hultschiners* in German). However, Hlučíns are also called *Prajzáci* (*Prajzák* for a male, *Prajuzla* for a female). The term *Prajzák* is most likely derived from the German word *Preußen*, meaning Prussia (Kubátová 2015 and 2016, Mečiar 2008, Plaček 2000). Indeed, as discussed in the following chapters and subchapters, the Hlučín area was part of Prussia and later of Germany from 1742 to 1945, with a brief exception lasting eighteen years from 1920 to 1938. Opava, on the other hand,

was under Austrian administrative and cultural influence for nearly four hundred years, from 1526-1918.² Sometimes native Opavians, as well as inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and villages situated ‘in front of the river’, refer to themselves as *Cíсарáci*, which can be loosely translated as ‘subjects of the [Habsburg] Empire’ (from ‘Kaiser’).³

In terms of contextualisation and referential framing, *Cíсарáci* use this name for themselves only in relation to *Prajzáci*. On the other hand, *Prajzáci* use the latter name for themselves in relation to all the communities that surround them. In other words, the terms *Prajzáci* and *Cíсарáci* constitute a binary opposition; however, by extension *Cíсарáci* covers all the inhabitants of the Czech lands as having belonged to the Habsburg Empire,⁴ while the term *Prajzáci* is used exclusively to the inhabitants of the Hlučín area alone. Even though both Prussia and Austria-Hungary disappeared long ago, during my fieldwork it became clear to me that the differentiation between *Us* and *Them* within the conceptual dichotomous framework of *Prajzáci* and *Cíсарáci* constitutes a lived reality for these local populations and thus remains meaningful despite the fall of the two empires.

In this dissertation, I use both terms, *Prajzáci* and *Hlučíns (Hlučíňáci)*, when referring to the inhabitants of the Hlučín area. In doing so, I follow two patterns. First, I respect the word choices of my informants: thus if an informant prefers to describe themselves or others as *Prajzáci* or *Hlučíns*, their choice of words is reflected in my writing. Secondly, in my understanding, the Hlučín area’s identity arose as a consequence of the southern strip of Racibórz being separated from the rest of the former Duchy and naming the newly

² Successively part of the Habsburg Monarchy (1526-1804), the Austrian Empire (1804-67), and Austria-Hungary (1867-1918).

³ ‘Prusoki’ or ‘Prajzoki’ and ‘Cysoroki’ in Po Naszymu.

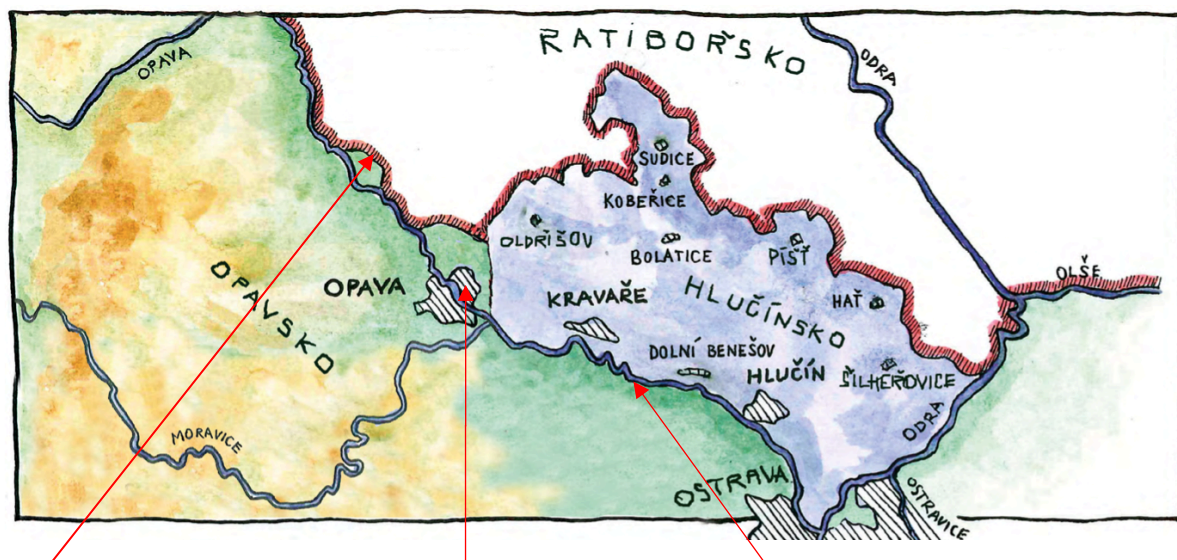
⁴ The Czech Lands which constitute the Czech Republic are Bohemia (*Čechy*), Moravia (*Morava*), and Czech Silesia (*České Slezsko*).

emerging, previously non-existent entity as the Hlučín area. As such, it makes sense to talk about *Hlučíns* as category of identification only since 1920, not earlier. On the other hand, by the same logic one might argue that in this case it does not make sense to talk about *Prajzáci* as a category after 1920. However, that would be a mistake, as many *Hlučíns* think and talk about themselves as *Prajzáci*, especially when wanting to highlight their Prussian cultural heritage, and the term is also used by Opavians, often with emotionally mixed connotations. There is also a third possibility for referring to the Hlučín area's inhabitants, which is the term *Moravci* (Morawecs). However, during my ethnographic fieldwork, I did not encounter a Hlučín area inhabitant who would identify themselves as *Moravec*, and thus I do not use the term in this dissertation.⁵

The bridge mentioned in the above vignette lies on Baker Street and connects Opava's city centre with its suburb of Kateřinky, also known by the locals as Katherain. Kateřinky used to be a separate village before it was merged into the town's agglomeration. At the present day it is a relatively modern town suburb with a mixture of large panel-block flat buildings, colloquially called *Paneláky*, and semi-detached and detached houses, but also manor houses and faux chateaus. This suburb has an ambiguous borderland status, situated between the town of Opava and the Hlučín area (*Hlučínsko* or *Prajská*). As depicted on the map below, Kateřinky, even though situated 'beyond the river', was never a part of Prussia or the German Empire. As a result of this ambiguity, both Opavians and

⁵ To the best of my knowledge, the term was used within the dominant national narrative by the early Czechoslovak government to legitimise the annexation of south Racibórz based on the argument that 'Morawecs' (*Moravci*), an ethnic variation of Moravians (*Moravané*), should be repatriated to the Czechoslovak state. An alternative reading stresses that 'Morawecs' fell under the Moravian Archdiocese: 'This ecclesiastical border produced and conserved the ethnic difference of the Morawecs vis-à-vis Germans, Slunzak, and Szlonzoks, who lived in the Breslau Diocese' (Kamusella 2012: 729). Even though I did not meet any living Hlučíns who would identify as Morawecs, when I was studying audio-recordings of now deceased men from the Hlučín area who had served in the Wehrmacht, some of them self-identified as *Moravec*. I also encountered the term while familiarising myself with a number of local chronicles and historical newspapers, especially the *Catholic Newspaper*.

Hlučíns consider Kateřinky as their territory. For Opavians, it is part of Opava and as such it is inhabited by Opavians. On the other hand, following the equation that ‘in front of the river is the Empire, beyond the river is Prussia’, for Hlučíns Kateřinky is part of the Hlučín area.



Czech-Polish national boarder Kateřinky suburb Opavice River and former Prussian-Austrian border

Map 1. In front of and beyond the river

At this juncture, I feel I should briefly introduce the origin of the term ‘Opavian Silesia’, both in the context in which it originated, as well as for the manner and spirit in which I use it throughout this dissertation. The phrase, in terms of its literal inception as opposed to the multitude of meanings that it represents, does not necessarily lie within historical events or emerge from border demarcations based on conflict or treaty. At least initially, it was the brainchild of collective regional bodies and was intended to encompass, embody, and promote regional tourism and boost the profile of the historically embedded region of ‘Silesia’. However, I am not suggesting that the term for this particular geographical region is merely an evocative slogan that came about as a result of urban brand management – quite the contrary. I suggest instead that it is a multifaceted concept

that is highly complex, its constant evolution and negotiation involving many different groups with many different motives.

What distinguishes this dissertation from the few existing studies dealing with Silesian identity in Czech Silesia (for example, Bakala 1969, Pallas 1970, Jirásek 1991, Jirásek 1998, Siwek and Bogdová 2007, Knapík and Jirásek 2010, Šrajerová 2015) is that it does not attempt to conceptualise Silesian identity as a potentially objective reality. In other words, the aim here is not to prove or disprove whether Silesian identity exists as an objective phenomenon that can be studied, measured, and evaluated. Instead, drawing on the Thomas Theorem that asserts that ‘if a person perceives a situation as real, it is real in its consequences’, I am interested in exploring the fluctuations in Silesian identity as a consequence and result of peoples’ behaviour and their subjective interpretation of reality (Thomas and Thomas 1928: 571-572). Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide an ethnographic account of how Silesian identity is negotiated in Opavian Silesia.

Methods and Methodology

Positionality

My first encounter with Opavian Silesia dates back to the mid-1980s, when I was born in Opava to a mother who was a native of the area and a father whose family had come from South Bohemia to ‘build’ Silesia (*budovat Slezsko*), as many other families did after the Second World War. However, my family, half native, half *náplava* (new settler, *naphywowi* in Polish), moved to Prague when I was a child. I only returned to Opava much later as a Master’s student in social and cultural anthropology at the University of Amsterdam to conduct a brief ethnographic study. It was the academic year 2012-13, by

which time the desire of many Silesians living in neighbouring Poland to be recognised as a minority group was being quite clearly expressed, especially in the national Polish census of 2012. Over 800,000 people claimed Silesian identity in the census, which makes Silesians Poland's largest minority, albeit an officially unrecognised one. Consequently, there is a vast body of literature dealing with the so-called Silesian question or Silesian identity on the Polish side of the border. However, we know comparatively very little about seemingly lukewarm Silesian sentiments on the Czech side of the border, especially from the Anglophone literature. As a result of these clearly demarcated sentiments, I became interested in exploring the complex, multi-layered and often contradictory negotiations of Silesian identity and Silesian-ness in the Czech Republic's north-east borderlands.

I was born in Katherain, the suburb already mentioned that straddles the border between Opava and the Hlučín area, as well as the border between the Czech Republic and Poland, and that is also where I lived throughout my time in the field. On the one hand, being 'beyond the river', it should fall within the limits of the Hlučín area; however, it belongs to Opava, as its designated suburb. As my birthplace, I found that it served me rather well during my fieldwork; it seemed almost as if my status within the community, rather than just based on my position as a relative newcomer or outsider, was instead based on an inherited and geographically bound birthright. I was surprised how often I was asked 'Where does your family come from?' by my informants, who often seemed quite puzzled by my peculiar accent. The importance of this seemingly innocent question became clear to me fairly quickly, especially in the Hlučín area. More often than not, after asking about my origin (*Odkud pocházíte?* / 'Where are you *originally* from?'), respondents were clearly pleased with my local birthplace, suggesting partial belonging to the Hlučín area (...z Katherainu? *No to jste skoro naša!* / '...from Katherain? You are almost one of us,

then!').

Other element that served me well with regard to access, trust, and overcoming the insider/outsider dichotomy was my surname. It came as a surprise to me that, if spelled with a different diacritical mark as *Mušálek*, my family name *Musálek* (*Musálková* for females) turns out to be quite common within the Hlučín area. Family names in this area underwent several changes throughout the twentieth century (first, they were Czechised, then Germanised, and finally Czechised again). Consequently, the existence of multiple spellings, or the absence or substitution of several letters and diacritical markers, are very common occurrences.

A further advantage of having spent my childhood in the Silesian borderlands is that I am almost fluent in *Po Naszymu*, the Silesian local tongue. Knowing the local language/dialect was an invaluable advantage, not only in terms of linguistic competence, but also on a more symbolic level. Along with my surname and the fact that my mother's side of the family has lived in the region for at least five generations, my linguistic competence afforded me instant connections and a relatively high level of access to the local populace. These connections not only enabled my relationship with people outside of the Silesian University, they also permitted a deeper level of comprehension when connecting and interpreting songs, folk tales, proverbs, jokes, poems, and fables, which would have been difficult to access and understand straightforwardly otherwise. In addition to my linguistic competence in *Po Naszymu* and to the fact that I am a native Czech speaker, I also have the ability to understand spoken and written Polish, a skill I enhanced during an intensive Polish course provided by Oxford's Modern Languages Department in the academic year 2014/2015. Conversely, and unfortunately, I only have a basic knowledge of German. Yet this potential drawback proved unproblematic during my fieldwork, as most of my informants had simple or no knowledge of the German

language themselves. Nevertheless, my lack of German comprehension did somewhat constrain me in accessing secondary sources, whether academic publications or archival materials.

Anthropology at home

Even though it has become common practice to conduct anthropological research in Europe, as well as anthropology at home, I shall briefly reflect on the possible challenges of conducting this kind of research. One argument against anthropology at home warns that the ‘native’ researcher might take various social practices for granted, without questioning their origin, meaning or purpose. On the other hand, ‘native ethnography’ might also benefit from the researcher’s deep knowledge of the social realm, awareness of subtle social meanings and relations, and fluid and unparalleled competence in the native language (Rapport 2002).

Another methodological concern associated with doing anthropology at home is the fusion of the traditional binary opposition between insider and outsider. However, regarding the ethnographers’ role in the field and questions of belonging, I found the categories of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ highly blurred in my everyday experience of the fieldwork. Even in the post-fieldwork phase, I find the dichotomy problematic. Should I be considered a native or non-native ethnographer? And how was I seen by my informants? Certainly I was seen as ‘trustworthy’ by some, but at no point was I granted full membership in either of the Opavian Silesia’s communities that I worked with. I was neither ‘going native’ nor ‘going home’. Instead I was trapped in liminality, in the transitory and ephemeral stage.

In her stimulating paper, ‘How Native is a “Native” Anthropologist’, Kirin Narayan argues against the fixity of a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’

anthropologists. Instead of emphasising the dichotomy between outsider and insider, she proposes that ‘we might more profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpreting communities and power relations’ (Narayan 1993:671).

When trying to overcome the division between anthropology ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’, Jewish ethnography provided me with countless examples and fruitful discussions of researchers ‘trapped’ in between two worlds (for example Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991, Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2013, Veidlinger 2016). When referring to renowned Jewish ethnographer Barbara Myerhoff, Victor Turner invoked the concept of the ‘thrice-born’ ethnographer:

...the first birth is our natal origin in a particular culture. The second is our move from this familiar to a far place... the third birth occurs when we have become comfortable within the other culture – and found the clue to grasping many like it – and turn our gaze again towards our native land. We find that the familiar has become exoticised; we see it with new eyes.

(Turner 1980: xiii in Deutsch 2016: 27)

While I remain hesitant to adopt the idea of a ‘double cultural rebirth’, I appreciate that such transitions are accompanied by the researcher’s own shifting identifications.

Two Ethnographic Traditions

My family and I moved from Silesia to Prague when I was eleven years old. After grammar school, which I attended in Prague, I enrolled in a joint undergraduate degree course in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Aberdeen. With my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in social research, which took place mainly in Britain, my theoretical and methodological perspective comes primarily from the Malinowskian Anglo-American approach of socio-cultural anthropology, rather than from the more ethnological and folkloric approaches of continental Europe. However,

during the university holidays I managed to obtain a bachelor's degree at the Faculty of Humanities at the Charles University in Prague. Thus I had an opportunity to deepen my knowledge of philosophy, historiography and social sciences, but also to learn at first-hand about the differences between the British and Central European ethnographic traditions. As anticipated, conceptual differences in theory, method, and above all epistemology between these two traditions played a significant role during my fieldwork. The tension between the two epistemological positions of what constitutes social reality and how it can be studied was immanent throughout my research and is also incorporated either implicitly or explicitly in every chapter of this dissertation. Therefore, without claiming to be at all comprehensive, in this introduction I provide an outline of the basic differences between the ethnographic traditions of central Europe and Anglo-American social and cultural anthropology respectively.

Ethnography in the Central European context developed more or less independently of the British and American traditions of social and cultural anthropology, its methods possessing a primarily folkloric and historiographical rather than Malinowskian character (Hubinger 1996: 18). Varied by region, ethnography has historically taken the form of *Volkskunde* in Germany, *Ludoznawstwo/etnografia* in Poland, *Néprajz* in Hungary and *Národopis* in the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia, all of which were subsequently heavily influenced by and frequently took the name of Soviet *Etnografia* during the socialist period. In the Czech and Slovak contexts, the field of *národopis* has been formally renamed '*etnografie a folklór*' and later '*etnologie*' at institutions of higher education.⁶ Nevertheless, the central folkloric and historiographical methodology of these

⁶ a) Even though the Department of *Národopis* at Charles University in Prague was renamed the Department of Ethnography and Folklore in 1968 and in 1991 again renamed the Department of Ethnology, the former head of the Department of Department, František Vrhel, acquired the academic title of 'Doctor of *Národopis*' in 1997.

newly minted fields still comes from the earlier *národopis* tradition (Hubinger 1996, Skalník 2002).

During my fieldwork, I collaborated with researchers working in and on Silesia, who, in keeping with the methods of Central European ethnography (*národopis*), focus typically on a historical time period within a particular part of the region. In Opavian Silesia, the most influential research on the topic emerges from six different institutes: (1) the Silesian University in Opava, (2) the Slezské Zemské Muzeum in Opava, (3) the Silesian Institute in Opava, (4) the Museum of the Hlučín area in Hlučín, (5) the Provincial Archives in Opava, and (6) the Matice Slezská, with its headquarters in the Národopisný area of Dolní Lomná. Those employed to conduct, evaluate, and present research in these institutions almost exclusively hold advanced degrees in history. However, I also met employees who had completed training in philosophy, *kulturologie* (i.e. the ‘study of culture’), sociology and the various subfields of *národopis* (ethnography, folklore, ethnology, and native studies).

These institutions and those employed to do research are important to this study for two main reasons. I see all of the above-named organisations as powerful and influential social actors in constructing and negotiating a Silesian identity in Opavian Silesia, in combination with other sources of identity construction that I will note and discuss in the subsequent chapters. The aforementioned institutions are unique among such social actors because their legitimacy, power, and authority are frequently derived from their claims to scientific knowledge (Foucault 1970, Latour and Woolgar. 1979). My objective is to treat the research conducted at these institutions as ethnographic phenomena in their own right,

b) The Institute of Národopis under the Academy of Science was renamed the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in the late 1960s, being renamed again the Institute of Ethnology in 1999.

c) The largest ethnographic academic journal established in 1891, *Český Lid: Národopisný Časopis* (‘Czech People: Národopis Journal’) has since been renamed *Český Lid: Ethnology Journal*.

studying the impact of such research in local contexts through participant observation, as well as formal and informal interviews with both researchers and non-academic local residents exposed to such research. My focus is not on how scientific knowledge is produced per se, but rather on how the multiple scientific understandings emerging from these institutions are locally distributed and challenged, being themselves only a handful among numerous competing discourses and narratives.

As a researcher interested in the Upper Silesian borderlands, I appreciate the institutions' research findings and the body of literature that it has produced and developed over the past two hundred years,⁷ for, as Chris Hann has put it, it would be 'both arrogant and naïve' to ignore the 'local intellectual tradition' as well as the 'indigenous contribution' to the social sciences and humanities (Hann 2007: 9; also Scheffel 2007: 33). During my fieldwork, I dedicated myself to the task of acquainting myself with the local intellectual tradition while at the same time deepening my knowledge of the region, seeking to raise appropriate academic critiques, rather than entirely dismissing the methods and conclusions of local researchers.

One of the reasons why *národopis* enjoyed such popularity and governmental support was its system of reciprocal patronage with the state apparatus, where the academic discipline and the government supported and exploited each other during both the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) and the socialist period (1948-1989). Grounded in the study of 'folk cultures' as 'national cultural heritages', *národopis* ethnographers were seen as central to the preservation of the national tradition, qualifying them for state patronage.

Though *národopis* flourished in the twentieth century, the Malinowskian British tradition

⁷ The Slezské Muzeum v Opavě celebrated its bicentenary in 2014.

was, with a few remarkable exceptions, unknown in Czechoslovakia until the early 1990s. To many *národopis* ethnographers, their first encounter with social anthropology's methodology, theory and scale of inquiry was a shock. For example, Juraj Podoba⁸ recalls:

The first time I was confronted with the essential disparities between Anglo-Saxon or Western social (and cultural) anthropology and East-Central European ethnography (etnografia, *národopis*, *néprajz*) was at the first biennale conference of EASA [...] in 1990. I was there as a young and, befittingly, naïve Eastern European Ethnographer, along with a group of colleagues, just shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain. I could not get over my surprise, and the nature of that first encounter was a kind of cultural shock. I unexpectedly found myself face to face with an advanced, modern social science that, while it dealt with a similar subject area (though thematically much broader) as East-Central European ethnography and folklore studies and was also based on ethnographic research, did so in a substantially different way. (Podoba 2007: 28)

Even though some anthropological publications were translated and available in socialist Czechoslovakia, only Morgan was allowed significant exposure by the state due to his centrality to the material theories of Marxism, though a very limited number of works by Tylor, Frazer, Boas, Malinowski, and Lévi-Strauss were also available. These publications, as Podoba states, were not representative of the dynamic and quickly changing anthropology of the second half of the twentieth century (ibid.). With the return of expatriate anthropologists to Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, the structuralist *národopis* and Engels-Morgan evolutionist traditions were directly challenged, especially by scholars such as Vladislav Holý lecturing at St Andrew's University, Ernest Gellner at Cambridge University, Leopold Pospisil at Yale, David Z. Scheffel at Thomson Rivers University, and Petr Skalník, at that time at the University of Basle. Shortly after the fall of communism, social anthropology and *národopis* (already renamed 'ethnography and folklore' and/or 'ethnology') became disciplinary rivals in Central Europe.

⁸ Juraj Podoba is a senior researcher at the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Science in Bratislava.

The opponents of *národopis* often comment on its orientation towards the past and its consequent inability to study the living present (Skalník 2007: 35-38). Similarly, *národopis* has been criticised for its tendency to be heavily grounded in detailed knowledge of the region and its emphasis on folk material culture, while having no interest in or ability to understand and theorise existing social relations, dynamics and social change (Hubinger 1992, Podoba 2007, Skalník 2002). According to Skalník, ‘národopisci-ethnographers’ are seen as ‘established intellectual communities’ that ‘do, under the usurped name of ethnology, everything possible not to let social anthropology exist as a fully recognised academic discipline along with others’ (Skalník 2007: 36). *Národopis*, Skalník continues, is ‘intellectually sterile’, ‘isolationist’, ‘loaded with Marxist-Leninist evolutionism’ and ‘unable to study the present in which we live’ (Skalník 2007: 36). Similarly, Václav Hubinger, also an advocate of social anthropology over *národopis*, complained that ‘we don’t have social anthropology, because there is *národopis*’ (Hubinger 1992: 32), implying that the two approaches are unequivocally and mutually exclusive of one another.

In contrast, Zdeněk Uherek, in defence of the *národopis* tradition, accuses the social anthropologists who emerged following the Velvet Revolution of conveniently attacking *národopisci* ethnographers at a time when they ‘had no place from which to launch their defence and no means of doing so’ (Uherek 2007: 47). Other *narodopists* such as Josef Vařeka have argued against social anthropology, condemning it as a foreign intellectual tradition that has been imported and imposed without having any socio-historical roots in Central Europe. He refers to social anthropology as ‘unheard of in our and neighbouring universities’, a discipline that has been ‘smuggled in’ by lecturers such as Holý (Vařeka 2005: 182). Given the xenophobic arguments of researchers like Vařeka and the contemptuous attitude towards folklore common in social anthropology, neither extreme

has been able to foster an academic culture of mutual respect for the two approaches.

In 2007, a special issue of the *Czech Sociological Review* was issued, capturing the heated debate over Chris Hann's proposal that 'Social and Cultural Anthropology should form a common scholarly community with the "national ethnographers" [*národopisci* ethnographers], since these two styles of enquiry complement each other; but such integrated communities remain rare, in Britain no less than in Central and Eastern Europe' (2007: 1). Among the contributing scholars were those already named above, such as Skalník, Podoba, Scheffel, and Uherek, as well as Don Kalb, Michael Stewart, and Michał Buchowski.

Stewart, Kalb, Uherek, and Buchowski concur with Hann's opinion that 'we should conceive of anthropology as a unified field, subsuming both national ethnography and socio-cultural anthropology' (Hann 2007: 52). Hann praises Buchowski's Institute in Poznań as 'a good example of how various traditions and sub-disciplines in anthropology can co-exist fruitfully within a single structure' (ibid.). However, all but one of the contributing authors agreed that in Central Eastern Europe, there exists a strong resistance to social and cultural anthropology (ibid.). At the same time, Buchowski notes that for social anthropologists the field of folklore has carried a stigma ever since Malinowski displaced Frazer in British and American anthropology (ibid.: 53).

Other contributors such as Skalník, Podoba, Scheffel, and Katherine Verdery argue that there are 'essential disparities' between the two disciplines. Skalník reasons that the initiative to establish a 'genuinely comparative and cosmopolitan anthropology department', as suggested by Hann, 'might be a nice dream but is unrealistic because the power holders within nationography [*národopis*] in the Czech Republic and its analogues elsewhere in post-communist Europe would not allow it' (2007: 339). Verdery, in

contrast, considers that the relationship between *národopis* and social anthropology is related to a further binary opposition, that between the West and the East. Given the different contexts of ‘western-style anthropology’ and eastern-style national ethnography, she argues that the two cannot be simply brought together into a single department (2007: 52).

Despite the heated debates and mutual antagonism, I am confident that my focus on the detailed knowledge associated with *národopis*, together with theory and the emphasis on cross-cultural comparison associated with social anthropology, have benefited and enhanced my research in a mutually supportive manner. I am responsive to the demands – more often articulated within post-colonial than post-socialist contexts – to acknowledge and take seriously the native intellectual tradition. In his paper ‘Hierarchies of Knowledge in Central-Eastern European Anthropology (CEE)’, Buchowski argues that most ‘Western’ scholars working in CEE tend to ignore indigenous scholars, neither engaging with them intellectually, nor including them in edited volumes (2004: 5–10; also Verdery 2007: 50). I am aware of his critique, and even though I am not sure to what extent I can be labelled either a ‘Western’ or an ‘Eastern’ scholar, I find engaging with both traditions exciting and fruitful, as I believe that the two styles of enquiry complement each other.

Memory and discourse as methods

From early August 2015 to late September 2016, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Opavian Silesia. During my fieldwork, various interpretations of the past, which I approached in terms of memory politics, were the subject of my anthropological gaze and formed an important part of the ethnography. Memory can be utilised in a variety of ways in empirical research, but its potential to illuminate everyday social and cultural life

is determined by the particular way in which it is conceptualised. I conceptualise and ‘use’ memory as a theoretical framework as well as a methodological tool rather than as an object of research in itself. As thoroughly discussed in the section on memory in Chapter 1 (see Appendix I), in order to focus on memory politics as a mode of investigation, memory needs to be considered in its own terms, distinct from the epistemological criteria of history (Keightley 2010).

Since the 1970s, a number of scholars have asserted that there has been a ‘memory boom’ in all areas of the social sciences (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). However, the methodological issues surrounding the use of memory are, with a few exceptions, rarely addressed (Berliner 2005, Keightley 2010). In her article ‘Remembering research’, Emily Keightley (2010: 56) contends that in contemporary academia, the question of the implications of collective memory research for the construction of individual and collective temporal identities and historically rooted cultures is heavily under-theorised. One exception might be the field of oral history and life histories, for which memory as a methodological tool has played an essential role in collecting data. In this way, eliciting memories has allowed alternative histories and marginal accounts of the past to be uncovered and reconstructed in social and cultural history (ibid.: 61). Similarly, oral history has favoured qualitative interviewing through which striking detail and depth are poured forth. These interviews are largely conducted on a one-to-one basis and are guided by the researcher. Themes are introduced, prompts used, and questions asked, but the unstructured format allows participants to lead the discussion and fully explore and articulate their remembered experience. Additionally, couples and small groups may be interviewed together to elicit collective accounts which allow the discursive negotiation of mnemonic accounts to be seen first-hand (ibid.). In much the same way, during my fieldwork, the collection and analysis of oral and life histories proved to be an important

aspect of my research.

At this point, in between the present subsection discussing methodological considerations and the forthcoming section on 'Research methods', I would like to address the widely used and extensively contested notion of 'discourse'. The 'discourse' in this dissertation is a twofold concept because I treat it as both data to be collected and the topic of analysis. There are numerous definitions of discourse available in the academic literature. For example, Potter and Wetherell maintain that discourse involves 'all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds' (1987: 7). Parker asserts that a discourse is 'a system of statements which constructs an object' (1990: 191), while Hollway states that a discourse is 'a system of statements, which cohere around common meaning and value' (1983: 131). My own understanding of discourse is the closest to two distinct but complementary interpretations, that of Michel Foucault, relating discourse to power and arguing that 'power' is constructed through discourse and implicated in what is constructed as knowledge, and that of James C. Scott exploring 'everyday resistance' (Foucault 1999; Scott 1985, 1990).

Discourse analysis in general, and Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) in particular, typically involves some kind of historical enquiry, analysis which addresses the mechanisms of power and it is directed to the formation of subjects through material and signifying practices (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2008). Whether it is critical discourse analysis of the dynamics between the dominant and demotic discourses in Opavian Silesia, close linguistic analysis of negotiations over a memorial inscription, narrative analyses of personal accounts, or thematic analysis of Jana Schlossarková's poems, I argue that all these approaches, which I adopted in my research, come under the umbrella of discourse analysis.

Other Research Methods

For my dissertation, the primary method of data-gathering was overt participant observation. Participant observation is perhaps the most significant of all ethnographic methods (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). During my fieldwork, I adopted Raymond Gold's typology of participant observer roles and consciously distinguished between different levels of involvement during participant observation (1958). Gold differentiated between: 1) *the complete participant*, who takes an insider role and is fully part of the setting; 2) *the participant as observer*, who gains access to a setting by virtue of having a natural and non-research reason for being part of it. Participants as observers are part of the group being studied; 3) *the observer as participant*, where the social role has only minimal involvement in the social setting being studied. There are some connections to the setting, but the observer is not naturally and normally part of the social setting; and 4) *the complete observer*, in which the researcher does not take part in the social setting at all. Gold's example of the 'complete observer' situation is watching children at play from behind a two-way mirror (ibid.).

During the fieldwork, I was certainly conducting neither the first nor the last type of participant observation, as they represent two extreme ends of the insider/outsider binary opposition. However, I found the differentiation between Observer as Participant and Participant as Observer, expressing the two degrees of involvement, useful. For example, when I was helping to design an exhibition as a part-time employee at Hlučín museum, I understood my position was that of 'participant as observer'. On the other hand, when I was 'only' a visitor to an exhibition at the Silesian museum in Katowice without any additional involvement, I understood my position to be that of 'observer as participant'. Of course by being there one already participates, but I suggest that there is a difference

between being at the Silesian University as a visiting fellow with an institutionalised social role and just visiting the university as a site of my interest, for example. The difference can also be explained in terms of being an insider who observes and records social life around them and being an outsider who participates in and records some aspects of life around them. With regard to overt or covert participant observation, I adopted the former position and made every effort always to be clear about who I was and what my intentions were.

As part of pre-fieldwork arrangements, I was able to secure an academic position as a visiting fellow at the Silesian University in Opava for the academic year 2015/2016.⁹ The fellowship afforded me access to various resources and the University's facilities. Furthermore, it provided me with first-hand access to the prominent social actors who have been, and are, actively involved in negotiating Silesian identity. During my active involvement in the everyday life of the University, I was able to observe first-hand how the notions of Silesia and 'Silesian-ness' were 'handled' and utilised on academic grounds; what issues and challenges were identified by social actors when employing the concept of Silesia; and finally, the relational dynamics between the Silesian University, the town hall, and the regional tourist industry.

Regarding my responsibilities as a visiting fellow, I was the course convener and lecturer for two courses during the summer semester of 2016, one graduate and one undergraduate. The graduate course was convened under the Faculty of History and was entitled 'Introduction to Memory Studies'. The undergraduate course was under the Faculty of Public Policy and was called 'Nations and Nationalism'. As both courses were taught fortnightly, I spent at least two days at the university on a bi-weekly basis.

⁹ Not to be confused with the Silesian University in Katowice, Poland.

Additionally, I had regular meetings and consultations with various scholars at the University, as well as attending the Centre of Empirical Research team meetings as an external consultant. I was also asked to proofread a few English texts for an academic journal, *Central European Papers*, published by the University. However, most importantly, like many anthropologists before me, I was just ‘hanging out’, talking to everybody who was willing to talk to me, from the University’s rector, associate professors, post-docs, students, librarians, porters, to cleaners, as well as to several of the Roma construction workers who were building the University’s new library. From the very beginning of my involvement at the University, the University employees, my colleagues and my students knew that I was conducting an ethnographic study on the construction of Silesian identity.

While I was able to gain instant access to various non-academic groups and individuals, thanks in large part to my linguistic and cultural competence, in the case of my involvement with the Silesian University, gaining trust and acceptance was initially more challenging. From the beginning of my stay at the University, local scholars expected me to acquire a detailed knowledge of Silesian history and familiarise myself with existing scholarship regarding the issue. Several experts on Silesian history recommended a number of publications that I should be aware of – and, much like any university or academic, many of these publications were written by those who suggested them – as well as suggesting that I compile and share an annotated bibliography in order for them to identify and subsequently correct any potential gaps in my knowledge. Through this meticulous study of the topic and the scholars’ publications, I became not only acquainted

with the historiographical realities of the region, but also with contemporary hierarchies of the displaying of these realities.¹⁰

Together with my systematic study of this literature, I also became involved in archival research. Because of my affiliation with the University, I was given access to various manuscripts, documents, and records that were held in the Special Collections library. Archival research, a highly regarded method of scientific investigation in the humanities and historical fields, is the primary research method of most of the Silesian scholars with whom I interacted. Similar to a rite of passage, conducting archival research and becoming conversant with the content of the archives consequently involved a significant change in my social status within the academic community, as well as with people outside of academia. Drawing on my detailed knowledge of archival research, my admittedly quite limited ability to recall detailed information regarding regional historical specificities enabled me to claim expert knowledge and modify the power dynamics if and when it was needed. However, as previously mentioned, my unfortunately basic knowledge of German, coupled with the fact that I cannot read Kurrent (the traditional German blackletter typeface), imposed certain limitations on my access to archival sources.

My colleagues from the University often acted as gatekeepers, introducing me to other informants, including their families and neighbours. Consequently, I began to see some

¹⁰ By this I am not referring to the issues of contested historical truth (whether something happened or not), but rather to narrative preferences and choices from an available historiographic repertoire. For example, the existence of detention camp for ‘German’ children in Opava in 1945 is not a contested historical truth. To the best of my knowledge, nobody is trying to disprove it. On the other hand, even though it is considered to be a ‘historical truth’, it is rarely mentioned in public talks or publications, nor displayed in museum exhibitions.

of these academics not only on the University's grounds, but also meeting them in cafés and pubs, as well as in their homes with their families. In addition to my 'professional' life at the Silesian University, I actively participated in the everyday life of the town. I relied heavily on local newspapers and noticeboards to inform me of local events and happenings, as well as on word of mouth and various invitations to participate in local social life. I was constantly looking for new informants to widen and diversify my social circles. For example, I became member of a local gym and attended weekly classes, where I formed several friendships with other gym members, who were not part of university life. I also actively tried to push myself outside my comfort zone, going to football matches of SFC Opava [Silesian football Club of Opava] and attending weekly Sunday church services, alternating between the town of Opava and towns and villages of the Hlučín Area.

In the Hlučín area, I was actively involved in the Museum of the Hlučín Area, as it organises numerous activities. The 'Museum of the Hlučín Area' [*Museum Hlučínska*], located in the town of Hlučín, was established in 2005 as a grassroots organisation. Its establishment reflected the commonly held local feeling that the Hlučín area, as well as its inhabitants, had been under-represented by well-established museums such as the Silesian Museum in Opava or the Ostrava Museum. The Hlučín Museum has two exhibitions, a temporary exhibit that changes every three months, and a permanent one entitled 'Who are the People Living in the Hlučín Area?' [*Kdo jsou lidé na Hlučínsku?*]. Throughout my fieldwork, I occasionally took shifts at the permanent exhibition, welcoming visitors, selling tickets, and answering any questions regarding the exhibit. I intentionally chose to work during public holidays or days set aside by the people as those that celebrated and recognised some collective achievement, such as Victory Day

on May 8th, or during Christmas or Easter, as each day represented different values and brought different types of visitors to the Museum.

Through my involvement, I became a member of the ‘Friends of the Museum of the Hlučín Area’s Society’¹¹ and regularly attended the society’s meetings, public lectures and discussions, and book launches, as well as participating in excursions within Upper Silesia. The society also publishes an ethnographic journal bi-annually, *Hlučín Area: Ethnographic Journal*, focusing exclusively on the Hlučín area. I also became a member of the journal’s editorial board, and I took the opportunity to write an article for the journal about the relationship between toponymical changes and collective identity, as demonstrated by the changing names of Hlučín’s main square. I attached an advertisement to the end of the article, inviting any readers interested in the topic and/or my research to contact me, when I would gladly interview them. Both the article and the advert proved to be popular.

In addition to participant observation, conducting interviews was my primary method of data-gathering. I conducted numerous informal interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews. By informal interviewing, I mean situations that lack structure and control and are difficult to audio-record (Bernard 2006). When possible, I took field notes about the informal interview, and later in the day I wrote more detailed descriptions of the event as part of my fieldwork dairy. Unstructured interviews are characterised by a minimum of researcher’s control. The aim is to allow the people to open up and express themselves in their own terms and at their own pace (ibid.). Together with informal discussions and unstructured interviews, I also conducted several elite

¹¹ Společnost přátel muzea Hlučínska.

interviews. In speaking of the 'elite', I am not automatically referring to someone of high social, economic, or political standing, as it is not necessarily the figureheads or managers of organisations and institutions who have greatest claim to elite status (Harvey 2011). Instead I am referring to those who have social networks, social capital, and strategic positions within social structures, making them capable of exerting influence. It is also worth noting that 'elite status' is not fixed, but changes as people both gain and lose their status over time, and as they travel from place to place (Harvey 2011).

Another method I used during research is photo-elicitation. Inspired by Harper (2002), I use photographs to stimulate dialogue with participants about their memories, their interpretation of the events depicted, and interpretation of the relationship between past and present. In addition to the private photographs that a number of my informants shared with me, I also used photographs from museums (Hlučín Museum, Silesian Museum in Opava, and Silesian Museum in Katowice) and from the university and Silesian Institute's archives. As part of the Opavian Silesian Museum's project on Silesian identity, memory, and region, the Museum team managed to collect a large number of photographs depicting 'Silesian everyday life' throughout its past. Furthermore, lots of interesting data were created when informants were reflecting on and comparing photos in their private family albums and the very same pictures published by the Hlučín Museum in ethnographic monographs. Having the very same pictures – a portrait of a young soldier, for example – presented within two very different social settings allowed and encourage informants to reflect on their personal and family lives within a broader historical and social context and to overcome the private/public dichotomy.

Finally, in this dissertation I use different levels of anonymization depending on the context and person. I am using pseudonyms for all of my research participants, except for Jana Schlossarková and Alexander Burda. In the latter two cases I am simultaneously

engaging with their personal accounts and narratives as well as their published work to such an extent that separating the two would not be possible. In fact, both of them are important figures in this dissertation precisely because of their published work: Jana Schlossarková is the author of a poem, *How It Was For Us* (Chapter 4 and elsewhere), and Alexander Burda is the co-author of a cookbook, *Opavian Silesia: Here we Serve Regional Dishes* (Chapter 6). In the cases of various public figures and officials, even though I am using pseudonyms, some features that I have decided not to omit from the descriptions might make them identifiable. However, being an elected official at a public institution carries a certain degree of accountability to the public as well transparency regarding one's public decisions. On the other hand, even though various information that I was given in confidence informed my research, analysis, and overall understanding of the social context of my field, sensitive personal information regarding Opavian or Hlučín officials do not form an explicit part of this dissertation. Regarding other informants who are not public figures, together with using pseudonyms, I also changed their places of residence and age, but retained their gender. Finally, because of the geographical, historical, and cultural context as well as the aims of my research, I could not anonymise the places (Opava and the Hlučín area) without compromising the core themes, data, and analysis of my research.

Structure of Thesis

In the forthcoming chapters, I provide an ethnographic account of contemporary Silesian subjectivity and its negotiations in and between Opava and the Hlučín area, contextualised within broader social dynamics. The negotiations proved to be problematic in all their temporalities, as they relate to issues of the past, present, and future. Therefore, I investigate how certain versions of the past are being negotiated and reconstructed at

the present day, how these versions inform and reflect on the present, and what might be the possible implications for the future. I pay special attention to ‘the social organisation of differences’ between Opavians and Hlučín, as I start from the premise that identities are relational, situational, and instrumental. In doing so I focus on the two groups’ external as well as internal contestations and explore the ways in which they try to overcome these differences.

My findings and conclusions are based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted from August 2015 to September 2016 in the town of Opava and the neighbouring Hlučín area, which together constitute the tourist region of Opavian Silesia in the Silesian borderlands between the Czech Republic and Poland. Together with my main research method, which was participant observation, I also collected oral histories, life histories, and narrative accounts, as well as carrying out textual and discourse analysis and archival research. I actively participated in the everyday life of Opavian Silesia, involving a broad array of social interactions, and I was affiliated and actively engaged with various official institutions and small local associations.

The objective of this project is not to address the question of whether Silesian identity empirically exists, but rather how various social actors negotiate and instrumentalise the concept. Throughout my ethnographic chapters, I consider competing reconstructions of the past through the framework of demotic and dominant discourse, commemoration practices and difficult heritage, tourism, the politics of display, and hierarchies of knowledge (Chapters 3-6).

In the first two chapters, I develop the fundamental theoretical presumptions and understandings that inform this dissertation. In the introduction, I have provided a brief geographical and historical exposition of the region and its local populations, as well as

an outline of the methods and methodology of my research. In the conclusion at the end of this dissertation I provide the reader with an overview and synthesis of its main points and arguments, its contributions to both academic theory and practice, the limitations of the study, closing remarks, and further suggestions for research.

I hope by this point to have clearly demonstrated that my aim is not to approach the question of identity in terms of whether there is, ‘objectively’ speaking, a Silesian identity or Silesian-ness or whether the Silesian local tongue *Po Naszymu* is a distinctive language or only a dialect of a certain language. For me as an anthropologist subscribing to the Anglo-American tradition, the key denoter is what people say they are, while also aiming to trace the genesis of identities historically. Unlike several folklorists, historians, quantitative social scientists, and linguists presently working within the region, I do not feel that the Silesian identity or Silesian ‘language’ are social facts whose existence needs to be proved or disproved scientifically. On the contrary, I treat them as social constructs, and their existence and nature as being constantly negotiated by various social actors, including the folklorists, historians, quantitative social scientists, and linguists themselves.

For a similar reason, I do not adopt an action anthropology approach, which would require me to assist various Silesian groups in their struggle for legitimacy and recognition. What I am interested in is the exploration of the dynamics of social negotiation over the formation of collective identity.

Even though I am inclined to understand these dynamics in constructivist and instrumentalist terms (as opposed to methodological primordialism or essentialism), I am aware that instrumentalism is only one of the many layers of social negotiation. In so far as collective identities are constructed by social dynamics, there is a reciprocal

relationship involved, as collective identities also construct features of social dynamics. Furthermore, I consider the views of the various social actors to be part of the ethnography. This does not mean that I reject the movements' values and agency as real and constitutive of social reality for the actors involved. However, I recognise that there are always other social actors involved in the negotiation of Silesian identity and that these social actors have different values and agencies that are equally real in their consequences. To treat these various views ethnographically is not to lapse into radical relativism. On the contrary, this analytical tool will allow me to focus on the dynamics of negotiation between various social actors, rather than the credibility of particular competing claims.

Chapter 1 – Silesia: Language, Nationality and Borders

What is Silesia, and where it can be found? In Chapter 1, which focuses primarily on theoretical concerns and premises rather than ethnographic material, I discuss the theoretical frameworks I use to inform and analyse my data. I begin by introducing Silesia as a significant Central European region with a turbulent past. After providing a very brief and simplified historical background to the region, I then address questions regarding the differences and theoretical possibilities of Silesian-ness as a national, ethnic, and regional identity in conjunction with the Silesian language or dialect called *Po naszymu*. At present Silesia is not officially recognised as a country, and most of its territory lies within Poland's national borders. A comparatively smaller area lies within the Czech Republic, and a tiny strip can be found in Germany. Even though this dissertation has only focused on a fraction of Czech Silesia, a brief comparison is made with Polish Upper Silesia. As an archetypal borderland, Silesia needs to be understood within the scholarship on borders, as well as with respect to current political and economic circumstances. Finally, through the particular case study concerning the negotiation of Silesian identity in Opava

and the Hlučín area, I discuss the European Union, state borders, social boundaries, regions, and border regions, and their interplay with the creation of the cross-border Euroregion Silesia.

Chapter 2 – Natives and Newcomers

Who are the Silesians with whom this dissertation is concerned? What unites them and what differentiates them? In Chapter 2, I provide the ethnographic and sociological background to Opavian Silesia's inhabitants, namely *Opavians* and *Hlučíns*, who also often distinguish themselves in terms of *Natives* v. *Newcomers* or *Císařáci* v. *Prajzáci*. While being Opavian or Hlučín refers to a geographical location (at least from a semiotic perspective), the other classificatory oppositions refer primarily to distinct historical events and cultural heritage. Focusing specifically on the historical context, I examine the case of Opavians and Hlučíns regarding their collective identity and collective memory, citizenship, residential and marital preferences, migration, employment rates, and religious affiliations. Turning subsequently to the social phenomena of memory and the contemporary rise of scholarly interest in its study since the 1970s ('the memory boom'), I discuss the scope of its relevant paradigms and the distinctions between them, elaborating on how 'remembering' and 'forgetting' can be conceptualised as constitutive processes of identity formation. In particular, I discuss the various possible conceptualisations of the notion of 'history' and 'memory', a theme that is discussed and examined in the context of various settings and circumstances throughout this dissertation. In this second theoretical chapter, I lay the conceptual foundations for the premise that various versions of the past are continually made and remade in the present, from present perspectives and for present-day purposes. This will form a basis for arguing, in the following ethnographic chapters (Chapters 3–6), that this process of reconstructing certain versions of the past involves social actors vying for narrative

legitimation of their desired collective identity. During this process, history, rather than simply being preserved, is often rewritten in the present for present-day purposes.

Chapter 3 – Dominant Discourse: Silencing German Memories

What is the official narrative regarding Silesia's past and present? Can elisions and hidden narratives be recognised within the dominant discourse? What memories and narratives are being officially silenced, and why? To address these questions, I scrutinise the negotiations over what constitutes Opava's cultural heritage and what can be understood as Silesian-ness, paying particular attention to the tensions between Czech and German national sentiments. In this first ethnographic chapter, I discuss the politics of commemoration through the example of the decision of Opava's town hall not to support the erection of a memorial dedicated to the 'Germans' who were expelled after World War I. To make sense of this opposition, I argue that if silenced German memories were incorporated into Opava's official historical narrative, the majority of the population might feel that their positive self-perception was being threatened.

In other words, this kind of collective denial, or even collective amnesia, is triggered by the need to manage one's current identity. At times it seems necessary to discard certain memories to maintain a new identity and avoid potential cognitive dissonance. Some Opavians, like the town hall representatives, thus try actively to suppress and discard any memory that considers the German past relevant and/or meaningful. The rejection of the German memorial can be understood as one of the many strategies employed to deal with an uncomfortable past and undesirable memories. I also argue that, in this case, collective denial is constitutive in the formation of a new collective identity. To support these arguments, I explore why the project to erect a 'German' memorial remained unrealised, while a 'Jewish' memorial was allowed to come into existence. In so doing, I draw on

several personal narrative accounts and ethnographic portraits of individuals who were directly involved in the negotiations.

Chapter 4 – Dominant v. Demotic Discourses of Silesian Memory and Identity

Is the official narrative being openly and systematically challenged? If so, by whom, why, and how? Chapter 4 aims to understand and explore the coexistence of the dominant discourse and the demotic counter-narratives. It is organised around two ‘arrival stories’, one (my arrival at the Silesian University in Opava) representing the dominant discourse, the other (my arrival at the Hlučín Museum) representing its demotic counterpart (Bauman 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002). Through the narrative framework of the first story, I attempt to reconstruct and narrate the Czech grand national discourse as adopted, enhanced, and propagated by Opavian academics. On one hand, in Opava, I was able to experience the methodological nationalism of Opavian intellectuals and their overt promotion of Czech national identity, partly by their relegating the ‘German’ fragments of the past and German identity to oblivion. In the second case, I observed how local intellectuals incorporated several challenging versions of the past into their collective memory relating to Silesian ‘German-ness’ and to the experiences of the Second World War, treating it as their ‘difficult heritage’ (Macdonald 2009).

In employing the concept of ‘difficult heritage’, I focus on the joint efforts of the Hlučín area representatives to make sense of, cope with, and institutionalise the collective memory of Hlučín by incorporating these experiences into public memory while preserving a positive self-perception and collective identity. I introduce the Hlučín historical narrative with analyses of a well-known poem written by Jana Schlossarkova,

‘How It Was For Us’, and of the comic *Hlučín Century*.¹² Finally, using an ethnographic vignette of ‘Hlučín in the Parliament’, I demonstrate the Hlučín people’s ‘dual discursive competence’ (Bauman 1996, 1997, 2002), suggesting that oscillating between the two discourses has the potential to create change and tension.

Chapter 5 – Grandfathers in the Wehrmacht

What makes Hlučín collective memory and identity ‘difficult’? What coping mechanisms are used to overcome these difficulties? Chapter 5 discusses narrative accounts of the Hlučín men who were involved in the German army during the Second World War, which I theorise as ‘Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories’. These stories, although highly valued by the tellers’ families, are only shared carefully and sporadically outside the Hlučín area. They are valued as an integral part of Hlučín’s difficult heritage, but, when viewed through the prism of the dominant discourse, they are also highly problematic. To neutralise the tension between their dominant and demotic elements, I argue that Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories are often narratively constructed as stories of ‘everyday acts of resistance’ (Scott 1985, 1990). As in the well-known Czech novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* (*Švejk*), Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories involve a carefully constructed balancing act, where the main character oscillates between openly adapting to the system and covertly resisting and challenging its machinery. Through the laughter and ridicule involved in these heavily stylised stories, Hlučín people often maintain that, although their grandfathers may have been ‘holy fools’, they were never Nazis. Interestingly, in constructing the standardised narratives of ‘Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories’, the narrators combat the tension derived from the dominant discourse by drawing on the very thing that causes the tension: they appeal to a classic Czech novel and a national Czech auto-stereotype. After presenting an

¹² The chapter contains a version of this comic in English translation. The Czech original is given in Appendix 1.

ethnographic vignette and literary analysis of the novel to illustrate just how closely the latter is paralleled in these Wehrmacht soldiers' stories, I tell the life story of František Hanáček, who was himself drafted into the Wehrmacht army and who shared memories of his adventures with me.¹³

Chapter 6 – Tourism and Cuisine in the making of Opavian Silesian-ness

Do the dominant and demotic discourses ever meet in a positive and creative manner? If so, how and to what end? After discussing various perspectives and investigating the different dimensions of the negotiation of Silesian identity, this chapter focuses on the tourist dimension. It may seem counterintuitive at first to introduce this aspect into the thesis, but as it kept appearing during my research and was always in one way or another related to the questions of identity and cultural heritage, it clearly warranted further exploration. Silesian identity not only involves public contestation, negotiation, and representation of the past and the present, but also its consumption. How, and by whom, is 'Silesian-ness' marketed and consumed? How is Silesian identity negotiated by various social actors in Opavian Silesia in relation to tourism? What are the goals, visions, contradictions, and obstacles involved in creating the organisation known as 'Opavian Silesia's Tourist Destination'? This chapter discusses how Opavian Silesia is being recreated for commercial tourism-driven success within a single, unified narrative. I provide a number of ethnographic examples of dynamic negotiations between various groups in Opava and the Hlučín area over what constitutes Opavian Silesia's cultural heritage and Silesian cuisine, and how Opavian Silesia should be conceptualised and displayed to the 'tourist gaze'. Despite the Silesian University's claims to expert knowledge regarding what can be considered 'authentic' Silesian cultural heritage,

¹³ A fuller version of this life story is provided in Appendix 2.

negotiations on the ground over Opavian Silesia's narrative have provided a more egalitarian field of discourse giving local social actors a voice in defining their branded, collective representation. The negotiations over what constitutes Opavian Silesia, as well as the joint efforts to arrive at a mutually agreeable conclusion, have the potential to act as a vessel creating and promoting a more comprehensive and inclusive version of Opavian Silesian identity.¹⁴

¹⁴ A conclusion to the thesis is also provided.

Chapter 1. Silesia: Language, Nationality and Borders

In this chapter, I provide a very brief introduction to Silesian history and address the questions of who inhabits it. Is Silesia inhabited by Silesians according to the inhabitants themselves and/or the relevant authorities? What language do the inhabitants of Silesia speak? And does it matter? When investigating how Silesian identity is being negotiated in and between the town of Opava and the Hlučín area, it became apparent to me that large-scale social dynamics and national and transnational political and ideological forces play important roles in on-the-ground negotiations. In this chapter, I highlight the importance of language as a means of ethnic and national identification, paying special attention to the question of the ‘Silesian language’ referred to as Po Naszymu. I also discuss the possible political implications of classifying Po Naszymu as a language or a dialect. If Po Naszymu should be considered a dialect, then the question is, a dialect of what language? Silesia could be understood as an archetypal borderland where not only various states, but also cultural and linguistic influences converged. However, during the socialist period, Poland and Czechoslovakia, two states between which Silesian territory has been divided, made a substantial effort to assimilate Silesian inhabitants into the respective state and its dominant ethnic and national identity. Together with the forceful czechisation and polonisation of the inhabitants, the everyday use of the German language and Po Naszymu have been strongly discouraged in Silesia. However, since the fall of the Iron Curtain, and especially since both Poland and the Czech Republic entered the European Union, there have been several attempts to ‘find a common language’ in the Silesian borderlands. One example of such an attempt is the creation of the ‘Euroregion Silesia’, encompassing the Czech town of Opava and the Polish town of Racibórz, including the Hlučín area.

Silesian History: A Very Brief Introduction

Writing about Silesia is a challenging task for a number of reasons. For example, having disappeared from the present-day map, where is Silesia? How should one deal with a missing land that never really went away? It clearly exists in the minds of its inhabitants, as well as those of the relevant nation-state authorities. One possible solution would be to go ‘back in time’ and use the traces of the past to reconstruct the borders of Silesian land and to superimpose it on the modern-day Central European states. Indeed, that is what I attempted and what is to be found in the text below. However, as the Silesian border has changed frequently in the past, its demarcation needs to be contextualised within the relevant historical period and socio-political situation.

According to Tomasz Kamusella, Silesia, a Central European region with a volatile past, marks an area where Bohemian, Moravian, German, and Polish spheres of influence converge, both historically and contemporaneously (1999). Despite the aspirations of some, Silesia has never managed to become a state in its own right, leaving it vulnerable to the territorial ambitions of the states in which it has existed (Kamusella 1999, Fukala 2007). Throughout most of the last millennium, Silesia has been a constitutive part of the Czech Kingdom and the Habsburg Empire. In the eighteenth century, after the Silesian Wars, it was divided between Austria-Hungary and Prussia. Prussia expanded significantly as a result of its conquest of seven-eighths of Silesian territory in the 1740s, later called Prussian Silesia. From the total area of Silesia of 40,625 sq. km, Prussia gained 35,786 sq. km (Kamusella 1999: 38). The Prussian military’s conquest of Silesia entailed a dramatic increase in the territory of the Prussian state by a little less than fifty percent, and the Prussian population of 2,240,000 was also increased by the addition of 1,160,000 Silesians, who thus constituted nearly a third of Prussia’s population following the conflict (Kamusella 1999: 38). Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, was left with only

a narrow south-eastern strip of Silesia, consequently named 'Austrian Silesia', and constituting only one-eighth of the former Silesian Land.

The Prussian king Frederick II introduced an assimilationist policy, providing incentives to German-speaking settlers from outside Silesia to populate the region, a commonly used means of strengthening Prussia's territorial possessions politically and economically through expansion of the German language (Kamusella 1999: 119). Generally speaking, German colonists settled in Slavonic-speaking areas, meaning that the Slavonic settlers had to establish themselves in German-dominated areas (ibid.). At the same time, Bohemians, Moravians, and Polish-speaking Protestants emigrated from Catholic Austrian Silesia to Protestant Prussian Silesia to escape religious persecution (ibid.). After the Austro-Hungarian defeat, only Austrian Silesia (later 'Czech Silesia') remained under Habsburg control and continued to be part of the Bohemian Crown Lands. Since then it has been commonplace to distinguish between Prussian Silesia (later part of Germany, today most of it belonging to Poland) and the comparatively much smaller Austrian Silesia (later part of Czechoslovakia and today part of the Czech Republic). During Austro-Hungarian rule, Austrian Silesia was organised by the Empress Maria Theresa as a separate Crown Land, with its capital in what is now the Czech town of Opava (Kamusella 1999, Žáček 2005).

From a socio-economic perspective, events after the partition of Silesia were marked by numerous reforms and the onset of industrialization in both Austrian and Prussian Silesia (Kamusella 1999, Žáček 2005). Even though the industrial development of Austrian Silesia was not as dynamic as that of Prussian Silesia, there were considerable developments, especially in linen and textile production (Kamusella 1999: 146-148). Equally, the wealth of iron ore and coal deposits in Silesia began to be exploited (Kamusella 1999: 42). As early as 1772 the first ironworks were established in Ustron

(Ustroń), which was soon followed by the great iron furnaces in Witkowitz (Vítkovice), Leskowetz (Leskovec, Liskowiec), and Trzenietz (Třinec, Trzyniec) (ibid.). The development of Prussian Silesia seemed to have been even more dynamic than that of Austrian Silesia, particularly with regard to manufacturing. During the earliest 'proto-industrialization' period, linen and other textile production generated the region's initial wealth (Žáček 2005). Following the early success of the textile industry, the Prussian government became interested in exploiting the rich mineral resources of Silesia to create an armaments industry as industrialization continued. The first steam engines on the European continent were installed in Silesia, steel mills were erected, and the rich coal and iron deposits were heavily exploited and utilised (Kamusella 1999: 44).

However, as a consequence of rapid industrialization within what was still effectively a feudal system, a growing number of serfs were forced to work not only on their lords' land but also in the mining pits and performing other industrial labour. 'The tragic social situation contributed to the emergence of the utmost poverty, widespread alcoholism, appallingly unhygienic living conditions, and crime' (Kamusella 1999: 44). As an additional consequence, the intensified industrial production of Upper Silesia required improved transportation to connect it with the rest of the Prussian state and western Europe. Therefore, the Oder (Odra) was made navigable from Racibórz to its estuary, where it meets the Baltic, and the Klodnitz (Kłodnica) Canal was constructed (1792-1812) in order to connect the Oder with the Upper Silesian industrial basin (Kamusella 1999: 44). Despite the international border, Austrian Silesia retained certain administrative and cooperative links with Prussian Silesia (Kamusella 1999, Wódz and Wódz 2006). For example, the town of Opava, belonging to Austrian Silesia, and the town of Racibórz, belonging to Prussian Silesia, have been cooperating closely since the thirteenth century, long before and long after the partition.

After World War I, most of Austrian Silesia was granted to the newly created Czechoslovakia, a successor state to the Bohemian Crown Lands (Žáček 2005). Yet the situation in the remaining seventh-eighths of the region was much more complicated. The north-western corner of Prussian Silesia, known as Lower Silesia, with Wrocław as its capital, continued to be part of Germany. However, the position of the south-east territory, known as Upper Silesia, was contested (Blanke 1993: 26-31, Tooley 1997). All the interested parties, the League of Nations, Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, as well as Silesian autonomy movements, valued this disputed territory not only for reasons of national affiliation and strategic location, but for its economic importance as well.¹⁵ Following the problematic Upper Silesian plebiscite and violent Silesian uprisings, the former Prussian Upper Silesia was eventually divided between Weimar Germany and Poland (Blanke: 1993, Tooley: 1997). However, the newly formed Czechoslovakia also took part in the post-WWI retailoring of Prussian Silesia. The territory annexed by Czechoslovakia was a southern strip of the Duchy of Racibórz, later named ‘the Hlučín area’ (Hultschiner Ländchen), and before WWI an integral part of the German Empire (Plaček: 2000).

Polish Silesia (former Prussian Silesia) was among the first regions to be invaded by Nazi Germany. Czech Silesia, with the noticeable exception of the Hlučín area, was considered to be part of the Sudetenland, and following the Munich Agreement it was also annexed by Germany. Following the German defeat, German-speaking populations who until that point had constituted a linguistic majority in most of parts of Silesia were forcibly expelled to Germany (Arburg and Staněk 2011). Approximately three and a half million German-speaking Silesians had to leave their homes immediately, and according to the

¹⁵ For example, the Union of Upper Silesians (*Bund der Oberschlesier/Związek Górnoślązaków*) or Silesian People’s Party (*Śląsko Partyjo Ludowo*).

gravest estimates over a tenth of them perished during the chaotic and poorly administrated transfer (ibid.). People in mixed marriages were exempted from the forced exodus (ibid.). Without its German- and Yiddish-¹⁶speaking populations, Silesia was re-populated by Czechs and Poles from other parts of the two countries. With the rise of the socialist regime(s), the borderland was divided by an impassable and closely watched border, preventing the two sides from interacting. A process of Polonization began on the Polish side of the border (Misztal 1990, Linek 2000), whilst similar assimilation processes occurred in Czech Silesia, promoting an official Czech language, history and national identity (Siwek and Bogdová 2007). After World War II the Hlučín area was given back to Czechoslovakia, being retained as part of the Czech Republic following the split between Czech and Slovak territories in 1993. Because of these unique historical circumstances, the Hlučín area does not share the same historical experiences as the rest of the Czech Republic's borderlands. As I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, this uniqueness and complexity of the Hlučín area inhabitants' pasts have been treated as problematic by Czech officials and authorities, as it directly challenges the dominant national discourse.

Silesian Language

In the Central European context, a central means of categorizing ethnicity and nationality has been on the basis of language, or 'ethnolects'. Writing on the political aspects of language, in his paper 'The Szlonzoks and their Language: Between Germany, Poland and Szlonzokian Nationalism', Tomasz Kamusella notes that, 'when language functions as an instrument of differentiation between people it is termed an "ethnolect"' (2003: 9).

¹⁶ Yiddish refers in this case only to Polish Silesia. In the Czech lands, the Jewish minority mainly spoke German.

According to Kamusella, the politicization of languages has been most pronounced in Central Europe because language is the very foundation of the region's various national identities (ibid.: 3). Here, the collective national identity of the individual is determined by the language he or she speaks. In other words, language is understood to be the ostensibly objective indicator of membership in an ostensibly primordial nationality (ibid.: 3-4, Hobsbawm 1999: 100). In short, 'those speaking [a particular] language are considered to be a nation, and the geographical range of their settlement is considered the territory of this nation's "true" nation-state' (Hobsbawm 1999: 3).

Both the Czech Republic and Poland, the two states in which Silesia is located, are today commonly perceived as linguistically and thus ethnically homogenous (GUS 2012, SLDB 2011). However, until approximately 1948, both territories on which modern-day Poland and the Czech Republic exist today, were linguistically and ethnically diverse (Kamusella 2003). The Silesian region, with its frequent border changes, was an exemplar of this diversity. Because Silesia's borders and national affiliations have changed frequently in the course of history, it was a cultural melting pot where, until the mid-twentieth century, one could hear variations and combinations of German, Czech, Polish, Yiddish, and arguably a distinct Silesian language. During the last two thousand years, Silesia has successively formed part of the Great Moravian Empire, Bohemia (Czech Kingdom), Hungary; Austria, Prussia, Germany; Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic; and the Czech Republic (Kamusella 1999). Accordingly, Silesia has been, and to a limited degree still remains, linguistically and/or ethnically heterogeneous, despite the ethnic cleansing of the twentieth century and the assimilationist policies of the Czechoslovak, Polish, and German states.

Over the course of its tumultuous history, the frequent border changes have exposed the local population to different state bureaucracies as well as cultural influences (Kamusella

1999). Throughout its long history of shifting geopolitical borders, multilingual Silesians have frequently managed to blend into the ethnic identity of whichever nation was dominant at the time, thus avoiding ethnic persecution and purges (ibid.: 5, Karch 2010: 8, Wódz and Wódz 2006). Generally, the group of Silesians that aligned themselves with the dominant nationality were given special advantages through legislation or by the authorities, often leading to an uneasy and distrustful relationship with the more underprivileged Silesians (Kamusella 1999: 3-4). The underprivileged section of the population tended to change their national orientation in order to adjust to the new environment. However, they hardly ever improved their status as second-class citizens, and the more successful they were the more they suffered in times of political upheaval that brought Silesia under the rule of a different nation state (Kamusella 1999: 3).

According to Hobsbawm, before the ‘production’ of the national languages of today, the European rarity of extensive travel prior to the early modern period meant linguistic differences existed not only among various regions but even among various villages within the same region (1999; also Gellner 1965, 1983). Such zones of graded linguistic change are known as ‘dialect continua’, and areas of sharp linguistic change only existed at the border between such continua (Kamusella 2003: 4-5). Silesia can be understood as a linguistic zone of encounter between North Slavic and West Germanic continua.

In order to communicate, speakers of different continua bridge its gap of understanding in different ways. First, a power hierarchy is typical, with a subjugated group or groups learning the language of a dominant group. Secondly, bilingualism is a common strategy if groups speaking different dialect continua are of equal social status. Thirdly, elements of different dialect continua can be combined and incorporated into a contact language (Kamusella: 2003: 5). A contact language can be conceptually divided into ‘pidgin languages’, meaning that the contact language is of temporary use only. If a contact

language is passed on to new generations, and if what originally was a pidgin language becomes the first language of a new generation, the mixture of different dialect continua becomes a 'creole' (ibid.: Holm 2000).

Pidgins and creoles are often regarded as impure because they are seen as a corruption of 'higher' languages (Holm 2000: 1). The same goes for pidgin and creole speakers who are seen as 'uncultured' or even as 'semi-savages' (ibid.). If they speak it at school, speakers of creole languages are often told that their language is wrong, and they are forced to make their speech adhere to the standardised language. This hierarchy has been further reified by historical and even contemporary linguistic models. Even linguists have treated contact languages as somehow 'defective' (ibid.: 1). That creole languages are understood as something aberrant is also clear from their non-native names: Broken English, Bastard Portuguese, Isikula (coolie language), or Kombuistaaltje (cookhouse lingo) (ibid.: 1).

The idea that there can be only one correct form of a language, and that a language needs to be decontextualised into a standard language imposed throughout a territory, seems to be particularly strong in Central Europe (Hobsbawm 1990: 97, 100, Holm 2000: 2, Kamusella 2003: 4). According to Holm (2000), the rise of modern European states reinforced the idea of language existing in opposition to dialect. In the view of nationalist modernism, a language is 'a relatively uniform variety used by the educated and ruling classes in speaking and writing', while a dialect is 'the uncultivated speech of the masses, changing from one locality to another' (ibid.: 2). Developing a language that is accepted by both the ruling class and ordinary people and that is an exclusive means of verbal human communication dramatically increases the internal cohesion of the nation state (ibid.: 8).

The process of standardisation starts with writing. In Central Europe, the very first written chancery¹⁷ language was Latin, chancery German emerging only in the thirteenth century and not becoming standardised until the eighteenth century. Chancery Bohemian (Czech) and Polish emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively (Kamusella 2003: 6-15). Early chancery languages were used only in the power centres (usually the capitals) by the ruling class. The standardised language, defining the acceptable usage of written and oral communication, spread only later with the emergence of large-scale state bureaucracies, mass printing technology, military conscription, and universal elementary education (ibid.).

As with the Revivalist movements of the nineteenth century, which sought to ‘restore’ the Polish and Czech languages, in the 1870s and 1880s the Upper Silesian clergy and revivalists attempted to establish the ‘Silesian dialect’ or ‘creole language’ as an independent Upper Silesian language (Kamusella 2003: 14). However, Silesian revivalists failed to secure themselves any official support, and thus their attempts to create a standardised ‘high’ language ceased (ibid.). Furthermore, under the influence of Czech and Polish revivalist teachers and intellectuals who came to Upper Silesia from the capitals in the second half of the nineteenth century, many locals were persuaded that their vernacular was ‘uncultured’ and unworthy of writing or publishing (Kamusella 2003: 16).

Bearing in mind how closely language is connected with nationality in the region, it is no surprise that the relationship between language and dialect has been highly politicised. Kamusella argues that the reason for this is quite simple:

¹⁷ A chancery language was a language used for rudimentary administration and diplomatic contacts. Its name is derived from Ruler’s chancellery, which shaped and controlled the written form and usage of a chancery language.

[In] Central Europe if a dialect is a language or forms part of a language, the speakers of the dialect per definitionem form a nation or its constituent part. In 1918 the region split into numerous self-proclaimed and ethnolinguistically defined nation-states. Thus the capitals perceive the declaration of the existence of a new language as a direct danger to the integrity of their nations and nation-states (Kamusella 2003: 8)

In presenting Silesian language and identity as an ‘ethnolect’, Kamusella further offers an Anglicization of the Silesian ethnonym ‘Szlonzok’ (Polish Ślązak), meaning ‘Silesian’.

According to numerous scholars (e.g. Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012; Kamusella 2003), in the Polish Silesian context, standard Polish was a language of religious communication, while standard German was used in state administration and secular public spaces. Local Slavonic dialects were used at home and in private communication.¹⁸ As Kamusella argues, ‘The sustained intensive interaction between workers and, then, spouses speaking dialects stemming from the Germanic and Slavic dialect continua, gave rise to the Upper Silesian Slavic-Germanic creole in the last decades of the nineteenth century’ (2003: 12). Buchowski and Chlewińska argue that this Silesian vernacular ‘is Slavic, but is permeated with many German words and often structured according to German grammar’ (2012: 12). However, the authors are unsure whether they should regard it as a dialect or a language. Another name for the way Silesians speak is the German-sounding Wasserpolnisch. Referring to their dialect or creole language, Upper Silesians often say that they speak in our own way, i.e. in *po našymu*¹⁹ [standard Czech spelling] or *Po Naszymu* (Kamusella 2003).

Interestingly, the writer Kornel Makuszyński ‘wrote that he could not communicate with the [Slavic-speaking] youth from Upper Silesia prior to 1914 but [in the 1930s] they speak

¹⁸ And I assume also standard Czech in Austrian Silesia.

¹⁹ Polish spelling *po naszymu*, German spelling *po naschimu*.

pure Polish' (Kamusella 2003: 20). The processes of 'Czechisation' (*počešťování*) and of 'Polonisation' and 'Germanisation' as controlled from the respective national capitals intensified especially after the First World War. These processes often legitimised the renaming of places and the destruction of monuments reminiscent of other nationalities, and forced Silesians to either Germanise, Polonise or Czechise their names and surnames.

In 1918, partly as a reaction to German/Polish assimilationist policies in former Prussian Silesia, a Silesian (proto-) national movement called the Union of the Upper Silesians (Der Bund-Związek)²⁰ declared a Free State of Upper Silesia (Freistaat Oberschlesien). This was intended as a Silesian nation state where its inhabitants could speak German, Polish, Czech, and the Silesian dialect or creole (Kamusella 2003: 10-19).

In the context of Austrian Silesia, the leading figure of the Silesian independence movement of the first half of the 20th century was Zefel Koždōń (Zefel Koždōń in Silesian, Josef Koždoň in Czech, Józef Koźdoń in Polish, Josef Koždon in German) (Jerczyński 2011: 1). Koždōń was a member of the Silesian Parliament in Opava, a founder of the Silesian journal *Ślęzak* (est. 1923) as well as a founder and a leader of the *Śląska Partia Ludowa* (Silesian People's Party) (Jerczyński 2011). He was intensively campaigning for Czechoslovakian government's permission to allow Silesian inhabitants to be able to declare only Silesian identity (instead of German Silesian, Czech Silesian or Polish Silesian) and thus officially recognise it as a national identity (Jerczyński 2011: 180).²¹ However, the Silesian national movements on both sides of the border (Der Bund-

²⁰ Związek Górnoślązakow in Polish, Bund der Oberschlesier in German.

²¹ It is not by an accident that the first scholarly texts written in Silesian 'language' is an abstract of a monograph about the political life of Józef Koźdoń written by Dariusz Jerczyński (2011):

Polish - Józef Koźdoń (1873-1949) – przywódca Śląskiej Partii Ludowej, a kwestia narodowości śląskiej na Śląsku Cieszyńskim i Opawskim w XIX i XX w. Zabrze.

Po Naszymu - Zefel Koždōń (1873-1949) - reskirok Ślōnskij Ludowyj Partyje a kwestyjo ślōnskij nacyje we Cieszińskim a Ôpawskim Ślōnsku bez XIX a XX stolecie

Związek and Silesian People's Party) did not manage to enforce their claims and agendas at that time (Kamusella 2003: 19).

After each World War, the ideological quest for ethnolinguistic 'purifications' of Poland and Czechoslovakia was prominent. The instruments of ethnolinguistic homogenisation were variously described as verification, expulsion, ennationalisation (national rehabilitation), de-germanisation, polonisation, and czechisation (ibid.). Today, the Czech Republic and Poland are both regarded as among the most ethnically homogeneous countries across the globe (SLDB 2011, GUS 2012). As such, the strong emphasis on a unique cultural and ethnic identity among Polish Silesians came as a surprise after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Silesian-ness: Nationality, Ethnicity, or Regional Identity?

The relationship between a language and a dialect is parallel to the relationship between a nation and an ethnic group. To paraphrase a popular saying attributed to the American linguist Max Weinreich, 'a language is a dialect with an army and navy' (Anderson 1991: 146). It could equally be said that a nation is an ethnic group with the necessary means to enforce its demands. A language is as much imagined as a nation (ibid.: 196).

Fredrik Barth's work is particularly useful for theorizing 'the social organisation of cultural differences' that constitutes a central concern of my ethnographic inquiry. Especially relevant is his understanding that ethnic groups are both socially constructed and subject to constraints, and further, that such groups should not be investigated in isolation, but rather in terms of their interactions and of the boundaries between them (Barth 1969: 14-15; also Banks 1996: 12-13). There is no doubt that both the town of

Opava and the Hlučín area could stand alone as independent research subjects in a social-science enquiry. Indeed, several monographs on the Hlučín area are available. However, in attempting to provide an ethnographic account of how Silesian identity is negotiated in the Silesian borderlands, concentrating on the interactive dynamics between Hlučín and Opavians is highly informative and fruitful.

Aside from Barth, another important approach to ethnicity was worked out by Abner Cohen, who asserted that ethnicity is instrumental, meaning that the relational process of asserting, maintaining, or rejecting an ethnic identity is influenced primarily by questions of economic and political utility (Cohen 1969, 1974; also Banks 1996). In terms of its theoretical relevance to my work, Cohen's notion of 'political ethnicity' – which, instead of psychological identity, stresses the feature of ethnicity as a strategy for corporate action – is particularly important (1969). In his study of Hausa migrants in Ibadan, powerful players in the highly profitable 'forest trade', Cohen demonstrates that Hausa identity is easily manipulated according to individual aims (ibid.). Anybody who can speak the Hausa language, is a Muslim, can state his place of origin in Hausaland, and has no external features understood as non-Hausa can become Hausa (ibid.; Banks 1996).

When discussing language and ethnicity, the role which state and nationalism play in constructing identity is equally crucial. In his famous book *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as 'the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previous low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority... of the population' (1983: 57). In other words, nationalism is about 'entry to, participation in, and identification with a literate high culture which is co-extensive with an entire political unit and its total population' (ibid.: 94-5). According to Gellner, nationalism is a modern phenomenon that can arise only under three conditions. First, high culture needs to be established or reified. Secondly, a significant degree of cultural homogeneity needs to be

achieved. Finally, an effective education system enabling access to the high culture must be available. Those who do not identify with the high culture, Gellner continues, have the options to assimilate, emigrate, gain disagreeable minority status, turn towards irredentist efforts, or, in the ultimate case, face physical liquidation (ibid.: 94).

Contributing to and reviewing Gellner's work on nationalism, Benedict Anderson provides the popular anthropological understanding of nations as 'imagined communities'. They are imagined because the nation's members will never have 'face to face' contact with the majority of those in their nation, 'yet in the minds of each lives the image of their community' (1991: 49). Anderson recognises that his point is comparable to Gellner's comment that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (Gellner 1965: 169, in Anderson 1991: 49). As 'the origin of national consciousness', he identifies the development of the capitalist economy and the emergence of mass printing and establishment of booksellers throughout Europe (Anderson 1991).

Even though I conducted my ethnographic research predominantly in and between Opava and Hlučín, I also travelled to Racibórz and Katowice a number of times in order to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the 'other side' of the Upper Silesian border. While Racibórz seemed to be rather reserved and hesitant regarding its Silesian heritage, the situation in Katowice was diametrically different.

From the moment I arrived in Katowice train station, it was apparent that the idea of Silesian-ness is constructed in a very different way in Katowice than in Opava. Already, in the railway station vestibule, the souvenir store advertised itself in three languages: *Gyszynki* in Po Naszymu, *Gift Store* in English, and *Upominki* in Polish, something that would not be impossible to find in Opava. When I entered the store, I realised that its

assortment was organised into two sections. Shelves on the right side of the store offered only ‘Silesian items’, such as T-shirts with the Silesian coat of arms, textile bags with Po Naszymu inscriptions on them, mugs, ashtrays and toys in Upper Silesian blue and yellow ‘national’ colours, car window stickers indicating that the driver is Silesian, and so on.

Opposite the Silesian items, Polish items were arranged. Either stylised into the Polish national colours of red and white or decorated by various Polish folkloric motifs, the Polish sections also offered textile bags, mugs, and water bottles proclaiming I ♥ Poland, porcelain thimbles and so on.



Picture 2. Train station gift shop, Katowice 2016



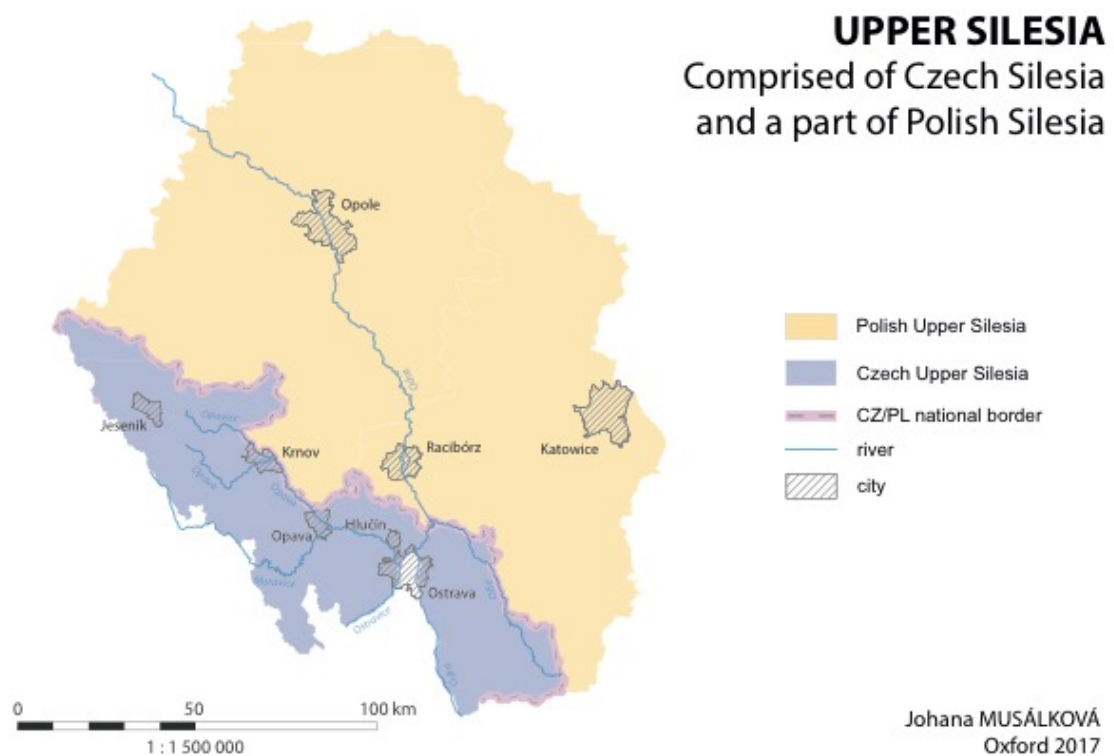
Picture 3. Silesian side: a gift shop, Katowice 2016



Picture 4. Polish side: a gift shop, Katowice 2016

Polish ‘Śląsk’ was not on the T-shirt. That was indeed the case for all of the items I saw, which were either in (Upper) Silesian or Polish: there were no items on offer encompassing both symbols.

Among Polish Silesians, Silesian national identity as separate from Polish identity is seen as relatively common according to the National Census 2011. According to the 2002 and 2011 Polish National Census, Silesians are numerically the largest self-declared minority in Poland (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012: 2; GUS 2012). In the late 1990s, Ruch Autonomii Śląska (RAŚ), the Silesian Autonomy Movement, sought to restore Upper Silesia’s regional autonomy based on its specific borderland status and short periods of autonomy granted to Silesia in the past. In particular, the movement of educational, cultural and political profile promotes regionalism, as well as the idea of a Silesian nation and Silesian-identity building (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012).



Map 2. Upper Silesia

Whether Silesians (in Poland) should be seen as ethnic or national minorities is a highly politicised question because the scope of minority protection works in favour of national minorities over ethnic minorities (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012: 7, Kamusella 2003: 28). The Act on Minorities from 2005 makes the distinction between ethnic and national minorities rather significant (Buchowski and Chlewińska *ibid.*). A national minority, according to the Act, is a group:

- a) less numerous than the rest of the state's inhabitants;
- b) differentiated by language, culture or tradition and aiming to maintain the differentiation;
- c) possessing the consciousness of a historical national community;
- d) inhabiting Polish territory longer than a hundred years;
- e) and identifying with the nation organised in a state

(Buchowski and Chlewińska *ibid.*)

Ethnic minorities share all of these features but the last one. This definition has been criticised and challenged by several minority-group representatives such as the Polish Tatar Association or the Federation of Roma in Poland as discriminatory (Buchowski and Chlewińska *ibid.*). According to Michał Buchowski and Katarzyna Chlewińska's report, in Poland 'there is a lack of tolerance at the state level and partial tolerance at the local level towards the identity-based activity of Silesians and its political manifestations' (2012: 3). Nevertheless, after several unsuccessful attempts, the Association of People of Silesian Nationality was formally registered in 2011, which in Poland triggered a nation-wide heated discussion about Silesian identity (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012).

Probably the most vocal opponents of the Silesian movement on the national level in Poland are the prominent Polish right-wing party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) or PiS, which is currently in power in Poland and under the influence

of Jarosław Kaczyński (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012). According to a report prepared by PiS, Silesian identity is a ‘camouflaged German’ (*ukryta opcja niemiecka* or *krypto-Niemcy*) identity oppressing the Polish majority and threatening Polish national identity. In particular, in the Report it is stated that, ‘historically speaking, there is no Silesian nation. One might add that Silesian-ness [*ślaskość*], which rejects Polish nationality, is simply a way to distance oneself from Polishness and, presumably, simply to adopt the camouflaged German option’ (RSR 2011: 36; Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012: 17).

The President of RAŚ, Jerzy Gorzelik, replied to PiS, stating that some people in Upper Silesia identify themselves as both Silesians and Poles, some see themselves as Germans, and some identify only with the Silesian identity. He also asserted that if he felt like a German, he would declare it right away instead of camouflaging it as being Silesian, simply because there is nothing wrong in being a German, or a Czech for that matter (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2012). At the present, the Stowarzyszenie Osób Narodowości Śląskiej was de-registered in 2016 by the Office of Prosecutor in Opole, and nowadays the matter is under review in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

According to the Polish National census of 2011, 809,000 people claimed Silesian as one of their two national identities (GUS 2012). Estimating that about five million people live in the historical Silesian region of Poland, this means that approximately 16% of people living in Silesia claim Silesian identity. However, it is also possible that people from outside the Silesian region declared a Silesian identity in the national census. Therefore, the estimate of 16% is only very approximate. On the other hand, according to the Czech National Census of 2011, 33,770 people, or approximately only 4.2% of those living in the historical Silesian region, claimed Silesian as one of their national identities (SLDB

2011). However, as those claiming a Silesian identity do not necessarily live in Silesia, this figure gives us only a very vague idea of the proportion of people in Czech Silesia who might feel Silesian.

Even though there is a vast and continuously expanding body of literature examining the Silesian national movement in Poland, the nature and dynamics of Silesian identity among Czech populations remains largely unexamined for reasons that are not entirely clear (Kamusella 2016: 26-27). First, there is an element I term ‘symbolic’ in nature. After World War II, Central Europe experienced strong anti-German sentiment. To be associated with something German was not only inconvenient but also dangerous. As stated earlier, Silesians labelled as Germans were brutally expelled from their homes, and those who were permitted to stay had to go to a ‘lager’ (*lágr*) or work camp and were forced to perform heavy labour (Arburg and Staněk 2011). However, bearing in mind Silesian multilingualism and the fact that Germanic settlers started to engage in mutual assimilation with Slavs in Silesia as early as the twelfth century, the question of who is and who is not ‘German’ has been highly problematic. After World War II, Silesians had to craft their ethnic and national identities once again and renounce every association with whatever was seen as German. Very often, the easiest way to do that was to renounce their Silesian identity altogether (Kamusella 2016: 8-52).

The second factor emerges from the dynamics of human geography. I hypothesise that one of the reasons why Czech Silesian identity is so much weaker than Moravian or Bohemian identity is because, after WWII, the Moravian and Bohemian Sudetenland was repopulated by Moravians and Bohemians from the interiors of their respective districts. Due to its small size, Czech Silesia lacked an interior population and was thus repopulated by Moravians and Bohemians from elsewhere, who rarely adopted Silesian identity and customs.

The third reason is administrative. For most of the second half of the twentieth century, Silesia was officially recognised only as a historical, not a contemporaneous region and thus not as a distinct administrative unit. In fact, Silesia was renamed North Moravia (*Severní Morava*), while the North-Moravian Region (*Severomoravský Kraj*) was established in 1960 as an administrative unit with Ostrava as its capital (Šrajerová 2015). One of the reasons why Opava lost its role as the capital in the socialist period might be its Silesian/German bourgeois character as opposed to Ostrava's more working-class image as a city central to mining and heavy industry. Only in 1997 was Silesia officially recognised, and then only to the limited degree of being a historical region of Czech Silesia. It was subsequently divided administratively between the Moravian-Silesian Region and the Olomouc Region (Šrajerová 2015).

Silesia as a Borderland

Borders as a subject of academic inquiry have drawn scholars in both the social sciences and humanities to a mutual interest in what happens at, across, and because of borders (Wilson and Donnan 2012). Borders are a complex social phenomenon that 'brings people together as much as they divide them' (Parkin 2013: 47). The issue of the function, symbolism, and changing character of state borders has become a focus of interdisciplinary border studies and of emerging border theory (Paasi 2003, 2011; Wilson and Donnan 2012). The scholarly turn towards border studies and border theory has been inspired by relatively recent socio-political events causing changes to international borders (Paasi: 2003, 2011, Wilson and Donnan 2012). The principal macro-level events relevant to my own research are the fall of the Iron Curtain, the expansion of the European Union, the European Union's policies of a 'Europe without borders' and a 'Europe of regions', and post-Cold War ethnonationalism. Despite the ostensible lack of borders

within the European Union, which will be discussed in further detail below, national borders remain a major socio-political organizing force due to their capacity to protect group interests (Scott 2012). They should be understood not only as formal political markers of sovereignty but also as contested zones of culture and power, where state centralisation and national homogenisation are constantly being challenged by the cultural diversity of the borderlands (Wilson and Donnan 1998). Generally speaking, it can be argued that there are two distinct ways of approaching the complex phenomenon of borders, both reminiscent of the binary opposition between structure and agency.

First, ‘borders themselves can be seen as products of the social and political negotiation of space; they frame social and political action and are constructed through institutional and discursive practice at different levels and by different actors’ (Scott 2012: 83). In other words, borders can be treated as social structures that are communicatively reproduced or challenged. On the other hand, and secondly, borders can be seen not only as a product but also as a process or even as social actors that affect people’s lives, both individually and collectively, on the micro-level, as well as on the (nation-) state or macro-level. To treat borders not only as products or processes of social transactions – that is, to conceptualise them theoretically as agents that directly influence the social, cultural and political realms – opens a new line of inquiry in anthropological research.

Border studies have been profoundly influenced by the pioneering work of the Norwegian social anthropologist Fredrik Barth, already mentioned above. In his acclaimed Introduction to his edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Barth outlined an approach to the study of ethnicity which focuses on the on-going negotiations of boundaries between peoples (Barth 1969). He challenged the notions of culture as a bounded entity and ethnicity as an innate and unchangeable essential quality, instead focusing on the interconnectedness of ethnic identities (ibid.). According to Barth, ethnic

identities are social products dependent on the continuous interactional processes of ascription and self-ascription (ibid.).

Another influential study focusing on borders and drawing significantly on Barth's work is John Cole and Eric Wolf's *The Hidden Frontier* (1974). This study examines two villages on a provincial border in Italy. The successive historical partition of the borderland between the Romance-speaking Trentino and the German-speaking South Tyrol allowed the authors to explore the transformation of local identities. Cole and Wolf's work has been praised for its methodological innovation, which called for local communities to be situated within larger political contexts (Bacas and Kavanagh 2013; Wilson and Donnan 1999, 2012). Further, they argued that the study of small populations that form components of complex societies must take account of this complexity before any interpretation of what happens 'on the ground' can be meaningful (Cole and Wolf 1974).

Since these pioneering studies, anthropologists interested in border studies have primarily examined the cultural and social dimensions of boundaries, scrutinizing how these socio-cultural boundaries affect the identities of communities and border citizens (Paasi 2011, Donnan and Wilson 1999). Furthermore, scholars from other disciplines have also contributed to the growing corpus of border study literature. For example, literary and cultural theory scholars have been drawn to the study of border crossings in multicultural locations, adopting concepts such as cultural essentialism or, at the other end of the spectrum, multiculturalism (Paasi 2011).

Geographers initially tended to focus on the spatial dimension of borders, but have recently started to investigate the notion of border landscapes and the relationship between the physical environment and the socio-political conditions of nations and states

(Wilson and Donnan 2012). Meanwhile, historians have begun to question not only how states deal with borderlands but also how borderlands react to their states (ibid.). Many historians have recognised the active role that borderlands have played in the formation and consolidation of a (nation-)state, and they have begun to analyse borderlands as the state's periphery.

Political scientists have often treated boundaries as the tools that separate and stabilise a system of states. Conversely, many sociologists attempt to identify characteristics that are specific to border societies (Wilson and Donnan 2012). In an effort to study and understand boundaries, borders, and borderlands further, a great number of scholars from the social sciences and humanities have adopted approaches that draw upon post-structuralism, such as Étienne Balibar, as well as ethnographic methods (Paasi 2011, Donnan and Wilson 1999, Wilson and Donnan 2012).

Another major context and laboratory for border studies has been Europe, and the European Union in particular. Over the past century, Europe has been 'a factory of state borders' (O'Dowd 2001: 95). As the great multinational empires fragmented, the remarkable processes of European de-bordering and re-bordering began. Not surprisingly, the most dynamic periods of border-restructuring in the first half of the twentieth century occurred following the two World Wars, while in the latter half they occurred following the complete collapse of the Warsaw Pact alliance in 1991 (ibid.). However, as suggested above, borders are on-going processes, not static institutions, and even at the moment, European borders are radically changing (e.g. Russia's annexation of Crimea from the Ukraine). I will examine European borders, regions, and cross-border cooperation in the following sections.

To conclude this section, I find border studies and border theory especially beneficial, as

they bring the notion of the nation state back into the focus of anthropological inquiry. According to Wilson and Donnan (2012), in the 1990s numerous scholars assumed that, given the compression of time and space caused by globalisation, the nation state was an institution in inevitable and irreversible decline. It was predicted that not only would the nation state vanish, but also that national identities would become obsolete (ibid.). However, together with the new politics of identity and transnationalism, concrete manifestations of government and politics at both the local and state level remain real and significant (ibid.). The nation state has managed to retain the dominant role it plays in the everyday life of its citizens (ibid.). Border studies and border theory attempt to explore and theorise the intersections of borderlands, boundaries, power, identity, and the state, and as such are highly relevant to my research.

Borders and the European Union

Over the past quarter of a century, Europe has experienced tremendous changes within its borders. The complex processes involved in European border reconfigurations entail close control of the external borders of the EU while opening its internal borders (Paasi 2011). Rumford (2006), for example, sees the EU as a ‘fortress’ with a high degree of inner mobility and an ideally impermeable external shell. The idea that European citizens should be allowed to move freely was a core part of the original Treaty of Rome, establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and signed in March 1957 by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany (Walsch 2008).

The Schengen Agreement, signed in June 1985 by five of the ten member states of the then European Economic Community, led, through its expansion, to the creation of Europe’s ‘borderless’ Schengen Area. Since its incorporation into the Treaty of

Amsterdam, the Schengen agreement can be perceived as the realisation of the European Community's Single Market (ibid.). According to the agreement, fixed checkpoints at international borders should be gradually abolished, and citizens, goods, capital and services should be allowed to freely cross the borders of the Schengen member states. The Schengen Agreement came into effect in March 1995 and has been in force ever since, there are now 26 Schengen member countries that have collectively decided to eliminate passport and immigration controls at their joint borders.

Consequently, the citizens of these 26 European countries are free to travel from one country to another within the Schengen area as though it were one single country and share equal international travel rights (ibid.). Importantly, the Schengen countries made the deliberate decision to weaken the sovereign power of national governments for the sake of European institutions, also expressing their willingness to seek and work towards unified European solutions for European problems (ibid.). However, not all Schengen members are also EU members or vice versa (ibid.). In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam allowed non-EU members to join the Schengen area (ibid.). Together with other countries, the Czech Republic and Poland joined Schengen in 2007 (ibid.).

Europe is presently divided between EU countries and non-EU countries, as well being divided by the Schengen and non-Schengen areas. The creation of the Schengen area led to the removal of regular border controls between participating countries and nowadays is defined as an area 'without international borders' (Bacas and Kavanagh 2013). Simultaneously, the external borders of the Schengen area have been rigidly reinforced. However, even though the member countries of Schengen area abolished systematic border controls among themselves, the member states' national borders continue to exist as geopolitical boundaries (ibid.). Despite the fact that the European Union's internal and highly permeable borders facilitate the flow of peoples, ideas, and goods, as well as risks

and threats, the borders themselves remain an important symbol of power and identity.

As Scott points out:

Collective representations of borders have been constructed through various means, including limes, fortifications, monuments and maps. These representations of space continue to influence popular imagination and political discourse; together with various other factors, they give sustenance to notions of shared European history but also serve as powerful markers of national and local identity. This is particularly visible in the post-Cold War context of European interstate relations. With the collapse of ideological borders and geopolitical categories of European space based on bloc confrontation, historical and cultural notions have remerged as important elements of regional identity and are captured by the renewal of concepts such as 'Norden', 'Central Europe', the 'Balkans', and so on. (Scott 2012: 85).

The notion of Central Europe is conceptualised as a rival to both Western/Eastern Europe and the EU (ibid.). Even though the term 'Central Europe' had already been widely used in countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia before the fall of the Iron Curtain, it was employed very little outside the region. A strong aversion to being classified as 'East European' exists among many Central Europeans: for example, the Czech-French writer Milan Kundera has denounced 'the lazy and narrow-minded' practice of classifying his work as 'Eastern Europe' and reading it 'politically' as an account of life under communism (ibid.). As Havelková writes, 'Kundera told the Western readership that Eastern Europe is merely a military concept and has no historical legitimacy... Kundera makes an attempt to give a vivid picture of this term, and to assert a political and intellectual alternative to the 'grey' Soviet Eastern Europe by placing emphasis on its uniqueness, difference and ambivalence' (ibid.: 13-14).

On the other hand, Gerard Delanty, in his book *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, argues that the 'invention' of Central Europe is a defence based on the demand that They (Westerners) should take Us (Easterners) seriously (ibid.: 13). In his view, the notion of Central Europe is 'a mere utopia for the future, a nostalgia for an imagined past' (ibid.). Either way, the existence of the Visegrad Group ('Visegrad Four' or simply V4) is

evident. The Visegrad Group, as stated on the Group's official website:

reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central Europe region to work together in a number of fields of common interests within the all-European integration. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have always been part of a single civilization sharing cultural and intellectual values and common roots in diverse religious traditions, which they wish to preserve and further strengthen. (Visegrad Group: 2015)

European Regions

Together with the process of strengthening the borders around the EU and reducing the significance of borders within it, the EU has also accorded special political and economic importance to the rise of European regions, and regionalism in general (Paasi 2011). In the burgeoning academic literature devoted to regions and regionalism, the two concepts are often ambiguously defined. The Latin root of the word 'region' is *rego* (*regere*), meaning to 'direct', 'rule' or 'lead' (Bitušíková 2009). Historically speaking, a region was a section of territory controlled by a specific political authority, often by a regent and his regiment (Bitušíková 2009, Fioramonti 2004). In contemporary academic analysis, a region can refer to a geographical area, an administrative unit or economic interaction, or to social, cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic characteristics (Langenhove 2003). Not surprisingly, social anthropology conceptualises regions as social and cultural constructs and pays particular attention to regional cultures and regional identities (Bitušíková 2009, Langenhove 2003).

Further, as with the broad meaning of the term 'region', the concept of 'regionalism' covers a variety of distinct phenomena and is used and understood in various ways. It can refer to regional awareness of identity and regional interstate cooperation, as well as to the tension between a territorially concentrated group and the state(s) (Fioramonti 2004). Regionalism, in a broader sense, can be understood as 'a political or cultural movement

which seeks to politicise the territorial predicaments of its region with the aim of protecting or furthering regional interests' (Smith 2000: 686).

O'Dowd (2001) points out that, since 1989, European space has been witnessing the growth of both sub-national regionalism and trans-frontier regionalism. As discussed above, supra-national regionalism has to be added into the list as well. Examples of supra-national regions are the notions of Central Europe, the Balkans or Scandinavia in the European context, while examples of sub-national regions are Galicia, Aragón or Andalucía in the Spanish context, and examples of transnational (or trans-frontier / cross-border) regions are Silesia or Pomerania in the Central European context. Thus, regions and regionalism can be approached as 'rubbery concepts stretching above and below the administrative boundaries of the state' (Fioramonti 2004: 7).

Euroregions

Cross-border cooperation, often embodied in the existence of Euroregions, is also significant when examining European integration (Parkin 2013). Euroregions are institutional and organisational structures serving, often as NGOs, to facilitate cross-border cooperation between neighbouring countries (Bitušíková 2009, Dołzbłasz 2013, O'Dowd 2001, Parkin 2002). Their general objective is to overcome the barrier effect of borders, especially in developmental and economic terms (Dołzbłasz 2013).

As previously discussed, borderlands are often seen by the state as a peripheral concern, and thus are commonly underdeveloped. In the name of European integration, the EU has invested a significant amount of resources and effort into promoting cross-border cooperation and regional economies. Many argue that, together with the aim of overcoming the peripherality of border areas, Euroregions are also designed to challenge the centralised nation-states' influence and promote a so-called 'Europe of regions' and

‘Europe without borders’ (O’Down 2001, Bacas and Kavanagh 2013, Wilson and Donnan 2012). As Parkin (2013: 47) points out, ‘any attempt to make a border more permeable reduces its significance’.

There are a number of reasons for the seemingly popular trend to form Euroregions in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Parkin 2002). The formation of cross-border Euroregions can be perceived as a means to reconstitute socio-economic ties (Bitušíková 2009) and historical regional identities. Furthermore, there are also significant economic interests behind the constitution of Euroregions and institutionalised cross-border cooperation (O’Dowd 2001). O’Dowd states that ‘most trans-frontier regions are created for pragmatic or instrumental reasons to access EU funding as a means of addressing shared environmental, planning or economic development problems...’ (O’Dowd 2001: 103).

Cross-border cooperation has become a ‘trademark’ of integration and Europeanisation, and it is now firmly established in many border regions within the EU (Scott 2012). Most European cross-border regions are funded by the EU’s PHARE and INTERREG programmes (Bitušíková 2009). The PHARE program (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) is one of the EU’s instruments used to assist Central and Eastern European countries in their European integration. INTERREG – also known as European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) – is a financial instrument of European regional development. The EU funding programs represent ‘multilevel institutionalisation’ involving a complex network of social actors such as the European Commission, member states, and regional and local authorities (Kramsch 2001).

Both Poland and the Czech Republic have only been able to participate fully in the INTERREG program since 2004; however, both countries had participated in the

preparatory PHARE programme, creating the trilateral Euroregion Neisse-Nysa-Nisa on the Polish-Czech-German border area (the so-called Drei Länder Eck) in 1991 (Dołzbłasz 2013). Other Euroregions on the Czech-Polish border are Glacensis (1996), Praděd – Pradziad (1997), Cieszyn Silesia (1998), Silesia (1998), and Beskydy – Beskidy (2000). The last named is actually a trilateral Euroregion on the Polish–Czech–Slovak borders.

EUROREGION SILESIA

member villages at 1. 9. 2017



Johana MUSÁLKOVÁ
Oxford 2017

Map 3. Euroregion Silesia

Together with the bigger projects concerning the regional economic development of Euroregions, the EU also funds so-called Small Projects from the Small Project Fund that is part of the larger INTERREG programme. Small Projects are intended to support cross-border cooperation in the fields of culture, education, tourism, and civil society empowerment (Dołzbłasz 2013). Even though financially less significant, Small Projects funding help to create interpersonal cross-border bonds and connections, as they directly involve local communities and institutions in the borderland (ibid.). These projects are important in terms of identity formation and negotiation, as I will discuss in the next chapter on identities.

There are six areas for which the Small Projects Funds can be used (Dołzbłasz 2013). The first category, 'Economic and tourist development', entails making activities such as joint fairs, trading events, and even mapping out and marking tourist trails and tourist attractions eligible for financial support and sponsorship. The second area is labelled 'Cultural exchange' and involves events such as theatre, folk and film festivals, sports competitions, rallies, and music celebrations, among other celebrations. 'Development of local democracies' is the third area; typical projects under this umbrella are meetings and exchange programmes of local representatives, seminars, conferences, self-government training sessions, and similar congresses. The fourth and fifth areas entail very similar elements. The fourth area, 'Development of human resources', involves seminars, training, and conferences, while the fifth area, 'Trans-border studies and development concepts', focuses on the same domains, but with a greater focus on conducting scholarly research. Finally, the sixth area, 'Environmental protection', promotes pro-ecological activities such as cleaning, afforestation campaigns, and ecological education.

Opava and Racibórz are the joint capitals of the Silesian Euroregion. As explained elsewhere in this dissertation, before 1920 the Hlučín area only existed as an unnamed

part of Racibórz district and as such was administratively, socially and culturally dependent on the town of Racibórz. Historically, Opava and Racibórz have long been in close contact due to their geographical proximity and, until the closure of the main railway in the socialist period, had regular and dependable transportation between them. That changed radically after the fall of the Iron Curtain. As stated in the *Bulletin of Euroregion Silesia* (2013), it has been over fifteen years since the Polish Metropolitan Association of the Upper Odra River Basin District and the Association of Euroregion Silesia-CZ agreed on cooperation and thus formed the Euroregion Silesia. Since its creation in 1999, the Euroregion has received over € 7.7 million from EU funds and has realised nearly seven hundred joint projects (Bulletin 2013). Various types of multilevel cross-border cooperation can be identified within the Euroregion.

Chapter 2. Natives and Newcomers

After the brief introduction to Silesian history and the discussion of the idea of Silesian-ness in relation to language, ethnicity/nationality, and border scholarship in the previous chapter, this chapter addresses the relationship between history, collective memory, and collective identity. First, I also briefly address the recent debate regarding the assumed dichotomy between the so-called ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ European mnemonic regimes to explain why my research does not relate to this framework, and how it even challenges it to some extent. Secondly, I provide the ethnographic and historical background to my field site, comparing and contrasting Opavians and Hlučíns and contextualising their relationship in terms of the *Cíсарáci* vs. *Prajzáci* dichotomy. Finally, I summarise the intellectual development of the term ‘collective memory’, which I use frequently throughout the following chapters, and also discuss in detail Gerd Baumann’s theoretical framework of dominant vs. demotic discourse, which I am using as the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

Western and Eastern Mnemonic Regimes

This dissertation can be situated broadly within the part of Europe that was, until the fall of the Iron Curtain, called Eastern Europe, and which is nowadays often given the more nuanced and encompassing pre-war term of Central Europe (German *Mitteleuropa*).²³ As a central zone, Central Europe is a borderland situated ‘in between’ the historical events and socio-political processes of the ‘century of extremes’ (Schlögel 2008 in Törnquist-Plewa 2016). Central Europe found itself on the front line between nationalism and

²³ I consider Germany and Austria to be part of Central Europe, together with the countries of the Visegrád Four.

communism, bloody battlefields and military deployments, systematic social and ethnic cleansing policies, population movements and forced displacements, as well as West/East differences in ideology (ibid.). The complexity of the region, existing ‘in between’ the main socio-political forces of the twentieth century, is reflected in a multitude of challenging and often contradictory historical narratives, variably addressed in academic writing as ‘Disputed Memories’ (Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa 2016), ‘Difficult Heritage’ (Macdonald 2009), ‘Contested Memories’ (Mink and Neumayer 2013), ‘Twilight Memories’ (Huyssen 1995) and even ‘Memory Wars’.²⁴

In his seminal essay published 25 years ago, Judt differentiates between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ memories, which refer to two distinct and opposing ways of remembering the events of the twentieth century, especially the Second World War (Judt 1992). These two mnemonic regimes are characteristic respectively of each side of the Iron Curtain, of Western and Eastern Europe and their different historical experiences. The countries west of the Iron Curtain, Judt argues, generated simplified narratives of indisputable and exclusive ‘German guilt’, leaving little room to address other matters such as the presence of concentration and labour camps in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and France, or the involvement of the respective countries and the Allied Powers in pre-war, wartime and post-war atrocities (Judt 1992). However, ‘if the problem in Western Europe has been a shortage of memory, in the continent’s other half the problem is reversed. Here there is too much memory, too many pasts on which people can draw, usually as a weapon against the past of someone else’ (Judt 1992: 99). Many recent studies and edited volumes

²⁴ ‘Memory at War’ (2010–2013) was a research project conducted by Cambridge University investigating the cultural dynamics of the ‘memory wars’ raging in Poland, Russia and the Ukraine. It resulted in a number of publications, some of which are referenced in this dissertation (e.g. Etkind 2013, Mink and Neumayer 2013).

published within the last decade discuss and demonstrate the particularity and complexity of the historical experiences of the former Eastern bloc using an array of examples (e.g. Luthar 2017, Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2016, Bernhard and Kubik 2014, Mink and Neumayer 2013, Miller and Lipman 2012, Kopeček 2008). Many of these authors, however, argue that the specific and complex character of the ‘Eastern European’ historical experience has not been ‘generally recognised and understood, neither among EU elites, who in the name of integration want to unify European memory, nor by the broad Western European public, whose understanding of Europe’s different war and Cold War experiences are very limited’ (Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa 2016: 1; but cf. Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2016, Mink and Neumayer 2013, Miller and Lipman 2012, Kopeček 2008).

Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa point out that ‘categories such as victims, perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders, often used in the Western discourse about WWII, are very difficult to apply in discussing the memories of those from central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe’ (Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa 2016: 2). While I agree to some extent with this statement, I challenge the binary opposition between the ‘simplicity’ and ‘complexity’ of historical representations of the twentieth century, which Judt and others (1992, Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2016, Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa 2016) view as the outcome of the dichotomy between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ memory regimes (the oversimplified Western historical narrative of German guilt vs. the complex, conflicting, and somewhat unprocessed narratives of East Europeans). According to this perspective, as my fieldsite is situated in the former ‘Eastern Europe’, what I should have found was ‘too much memory, too many pasts’. However, instead of an either/or scenario, I actually found not only a plethora of ‘too much, too many’, but also a unitary and simplified overarching narrative (which, according to Judt as well as current literature, is

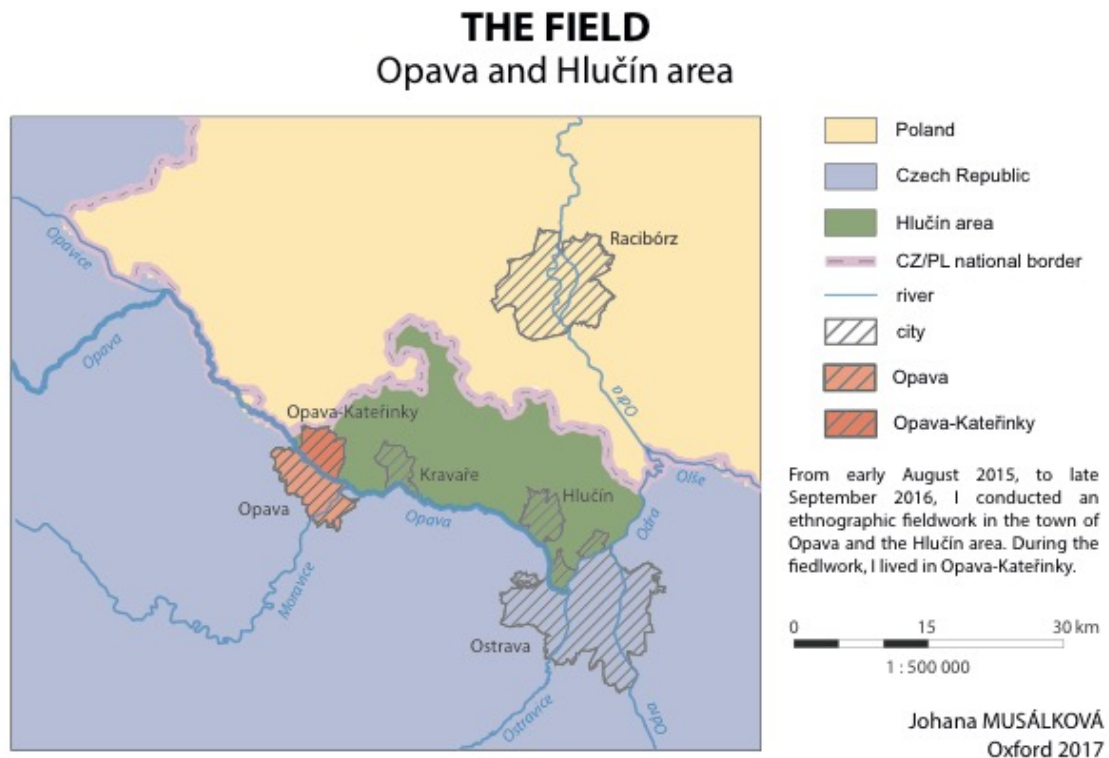
symptomatic of Western Europe), which I portray and treat as the dominant discourse of Silesian identity. In the context of my field site, there is rather an asymmetry that manifests itself vertically, very clearly following the patterns of power dynamics, and tensions between dominant and demotic discourses (Baumann 1997).

Two Kinds of Silesians: *Prajáci* and *Císařáci*

As already discussed, Silesia was divided between Prussia and the Habsburg Monarchy in the middle of the eighteenth century. After the First World War, the former Prussian Silesia was eventually divided between Weimar Germany and re-emerging Poland (Blanke 1993, Tooley 1997). However, the newly formed Czechoslovakia also took part in the post-First World War retailoring of Prussian Silesia by annexing the southern strip of the Duchy of Racibórz that was later called ‘the Hlučín area’. In other words, before the First World War, the so-called Hlučín area was an integral part of the Prussian/German Empire and not of Habsburg Monarchy (Plaček 2000).

Despite the international Austrian-Prussian (later Czechoslovak-German) boundary, however, Austrian/Czech Silesia retained several cultural, administrative, and cooperative links with Prussian/German Silesia until the late 1940s (Kamusella 1999, Wódz and Wódz 2006). For example, the town of Opava, belonging to Austrian Silesia, and the town of Racibórz, belonging to Prussian Silesia, were connected by a railway that was frequently used by the local populations despite the international boundary. The Austrian-Prussian (later the Czechoslovak-German, Czechoslovak-Polish and Czech-Polish) border, which had existed since the 1740s, was only closed permanently in the late 1940s following a change in political regime, preventing locals from moving legally across it and interacting with their neighbours and extended families. The border

reopened in the early 1990s, but a number of family and neighbourly ties that had existed before the border was permanently sealed had by then been broken. However, in between the dichotomy of Czech-Austrian-Silesia and Polish-Prussian-Silesia are ‘Czech-Prussian-Silesians’, often referred to as *Prajzáci*, living in the Hlučín area.



Map 4. The field: Opava and Hlučín

According to Vilém Plaček, a Hlučín-born historian and self-declared *Prajzák* (*1928), *Prajzáci*, a Slavonic group lived in the Hlučín area, nestled between Ostrava and Opava and within the borders of the land claimed by the Czechoslovak government of 1918–1920, and speaking an old Moravian dialect mixed with German (Plaček 2000). In this rustic landscape, the population did not exceed 5,000, even in the largest town of Hultschin/Hlučín (Plaček 2000). Before 1918, the territory did not exist as either a geographical or an administrative unit, as it was only the southern part of the Duchy of

Racibórz (Plaček 2000). According to Article 83 of the Treaty of Versailles, the Hlučín area – approximately 300 square kilometres – was to be annexed by Czechoslovakia.

Germany renounces in favour of the Czecho-Slovak State all rights and title over the portion of Silesian territory defined as follows:

starting from a point about 2 kilometres south-east of Katscher, on the boundary between the Kreise of Leobschiitz and Ratibor:

the boundary between the two Kreise;

then, the former boundary between Germany and Austria-Hungary up to a point on the Oder immediately to the south of the Ratibor-Oderberg railway;

thence, towards the north-west and up to a point about 2 kilometres to the south-east of Katscher:

a line to be fixed on the spot passing to the west of Kranowitz.

A Commission composed of seven members, five nominated by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, one by Poland and one by the Czecho-Slovak State, will be appointed fifteen days after the coming into force of the present Treaty to trace on the spot the frontier line between Poland and the Czecho-Slovak State.

The decisions of this Commission will be taken by a majority and shall be binding on the parties concerned.

ARTICLE 83 of the Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)

German nationals habitually resident in any of the territories recognised as forming part of the Czecho-Slovak State will obtain Czecho-Slovak nationality ipso facto and lose their German nationality.

ARTICLE 84. of the Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)

On 4 February 1920, the Czech army entered the Hlučín area. According to a variety of archival resources and the oral histories I have collected, the local population interpreted the event as an invasion and subsequent occupation perpetrated by a foreign army (in contrast with the shower of flowers usually bestowed on liberators). Due to poorly defined border demarcations, the relevant national governments prevaricated, and the German-Czech border was not officially determined until 1924.

The inclusion (or annexation) of the Hlučín into the new state did not go smoothly. The Czechoslovak authorities shut down the German schools and dismissed the teachers

(Plaček 2000). The parents who protested against the school closures by withholding their children from the new Czech schools were fined. Prison sentences were also common due to the ongoing protests, so that the Hlučín jail was nicknamed ‘the German House’ by local inhabitants. In the first elections held under Czechoslovak sovereignty, the German parties obtained a majority of the vote. In 1935, by which time the troubled waters should have been calmed, the Sudeten German Party led by Heinlein won an overwhelming majority (Plaček 2000). In light of this, it is easy to understand why, when the area was annexed by Germany in 1938, the Hlučíns received the German soldiers as liberators with a shower of flowers.

When Nazi Germany seized the Sudetenland, it annexed the Hlučín area, not as part of the Sudetenland but directly to the Reich, providing the Hlučíns with a much higher hierarchical rank. During the Second World War, according to the Deutsche Volksliste (German People’s List), Hlučíns were considered to be Germans of the first category (i.e. by race) and automatically received German citizenship (Gawrecká 2002, Frommer 2010).²⁵ After the war, the Czechoslovak government decided to overlook the alleged treachery of the Hlučíns and by and large reinstated their pre-war citizenship (Plaček 2000). Members of the Nazi party and other fascist organisations, however, remained under the threat of arrest and punishment (Frommer 2010: 246). Only the inhabitants of the two towns of Sudice and Třebom were expelled; the rest were allowed to stay (Plaček 2000). In Opava, on the other hand, most of its native German-speaking population was expelled. A large number lost their lives during the first phase of the transfer, later dubbed

²⁵ The Deutsche Volksliste was used to classify different levels of Germanness in occupied populations. It was divided into four categories:

Category I: **Volksdeutsche** (ethnic Germans living outside Germany)

Category II: **Deutschstämmige** (of German descent)

Category III: **Eingedeutsche** (voluntarily Germanised)

Category IV: **Rückgedeutsche** (forcibly Germanised)

the ‘Wild Expulsion’ (Arburg and Staněk 2011).

The imposition of a communist regime in post-war Czechoslovakia in 1948 and the geographical division of Europe by the Iron Curtain produced multiple and often contradictory ways of remembering the past among both the new and former inhabitants of Opava. The unique historical experience of the Hlučín area, in comparison with the rest of the Czech Republic (having been part of Prussia and Germany, serving in the German army in the First World War and in the Wehrmacht in the Second World War, etc.), contributed to the creation of two different historical narratives and to the process of ‘othering’. It can thus be understood within the theoretical framework of coping with Macdonald’s ‘difficult heritage’ (Macdonald 2009).

Nowadays, the town of Opava and the Hlučín area fall under the administrative control of the Moravian–Silesian Region, which, due to the decline of the mining industry, has the highest rate of long-term unemployment in the country (Löster and Langhamrová 2011).²⁶ Opava and the Hlučín area are also part of the cross-border cooperation partnership within the Silesia Euroregion. At the smaller end of the scale, they are part of the so-called Opavian Silesia [*Opavské Slezsko*], a touristic and cultural region without a separate administrative or governing authority.

From 1742 to 1927, the town of Opava was the administrative and cultural capital of Austrian/Czech Silesia (*zemské hlavní město*). As such, it enjoyed relative social, political and economic significance. However, when compared with other towns such as Prague, Brno, Pilsen, Ostrava or Olomouc, Opava nowadays dwells on the periphery of

²⁶ The Moravian–Silesian Region (*Moravskoslezský kraj*) is one of the fourteen administrative regions of the Czech Republic. The region encompasses the north-eastern part of Moravia and most of Czech Silesia. It borders Poland (Opole and Silesian Voivodeships) to the north and Slovakia (Žilina Region) to the east. The capital of the Moravian–Silesian region is Ostrava.

socioeconomic and political events in the Czech Republic. The town is approximately 90 km² in area and has approximately 59,000 inhabitants, making it the 16th largest town in the Czech Republic.

Even though exact numbers are not available, given the drastic demographic changes that occurred in Opava and the whole Sudetenland throughout the twentieth century, a significant percentage of Opava's population is not 'native' to the town.²⁷ The majority of Opava's population virtually disappeared during and shortly after the end of the Second World War. Opava was then repopulated, mostly by Czechs and Moravians from the inlands, but also by Slovaks and Slovakian Roma. The new settlers, who either came to Opava independently or were forcibly relocated within the framework of the governmental initiative to re-populate the Sudetenland, are often referred to (and refer to themselves) as *náplava*.²⁸ The biggest three employers in Opava are the Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva Czech Industries, the Brano Group, an automotive supplier, and the Silesian Hospital in Opava. Each employs over a thousand Opavians (ÚPČR 2014). Other important employers are Mondelez Biscuit Production, a Czech biscuit factory, and Ostroj, a producer of mining machinery and equipment. As of 2014, the unemployment rate for Opava was 7.8 %, slightly higher than the average for the Czech Republic (ÚPČR 2014).

²⁷ According to a survey of 548 inhabitants of Czech Silesia (from 64 municipalities) conducted by Šrajerová and AUGUR Consulting LLC, 79.7% of respondents born and raised in Silesia. Of their parents, about 60% were born in Silesia (Šrajerová 2015). Comparing Opava's recent history to the rest of Silesia, with particular attention being paid to small towns and villages where forced transfers were not as common as in the Czech Silesian capital, there is evidence to suggest that the percentage of second- and third-generation Opavian inhabitants would be significantly lower than that of those born and raised in the rest of Silesia.

²⁸ *Náplava* can be roughly translated as 'silt', or more metaphorically 'flotsam and jetsam'. *Náplava* in its literal sense refers to any material (branches, mud, litter etc.) carried by a river and deposited on the river banks. Even though *náplava* is used very commonly in everyday life in Opava to refer to those Opavians without roots in the town (like branches brought by the river), because of its pejorative undertone I use the neutral terms 'new settlers' or 'newcomers' in my dissertation.

In the Hlučín area, the biggest employers are MSA, a manufacturer of industrial valves, the ARMATURY Group, also a valve, tubes and pipe equipment manufacturer, and the RKL Foundry, which produces grey and ductile iron castings (ÚPČR 2014). As of 2014, the unemployment rate for the Hlučín area was 7.5 % (ÚPČR 2014). Compared to the town of Opava, which has an undeniably urban character, the Hlučín area is predominantly composed of rural settlements and landscapes (Kubátová 2015). The area has 27 municipalities, of which only three are referred to as towns, the remaining 24 being classified as villages.²⁹ Two thirds of the municipalities have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants (Kubátová 2016). Despite strong social, cultural, and political cohesion within the Hlučín area, it does not exist as an administratively recognised entity. However, in the late 1990s, all towns and villages in the Hlučín area were officially united under the ‘Association of the Hlučín Area Municipalities’ (*Sdružení obcí Hlučínska*), and its aim since then has been the facilitation and coordination of political activities and to lobby jointly for the region.

The Hlučín area covers approximately 316 km² and is situated between the Oder and Opava rivers. The area is also defined by the eastern border of the town of Opava and the western border of the town of Ostrava. The population of Hlučín is about 70,000, or 0.6% of all the inhabitants of the Czech Republic and 5.4% of the Moravian–Silesian Region’s population (Kubátová 2015). Unlike Opava, the Hlučín area did not experience any significant displacements or replacements of its inhabitants before, during or after the end of the Second World War.³⁰ It is neither a region from which residents migrate in

²⁹ The three towns in the Hlučín area are Hlučín (4,972 inhabitants), Dolní Benešov (4,225 inhabitants) and Kravaře (6,734 inhabitants).

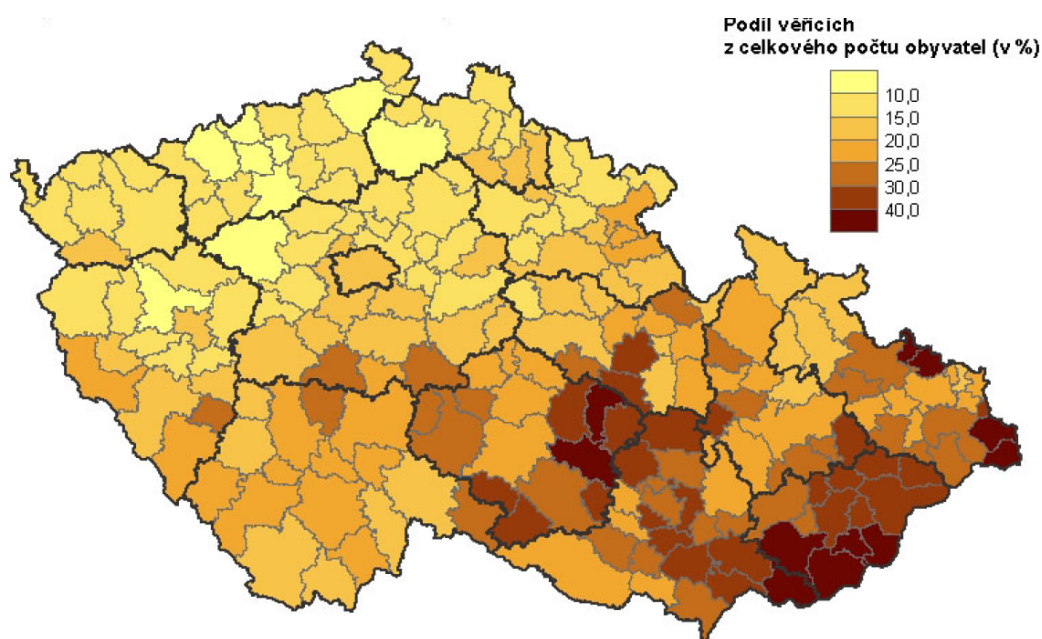
³⁰ With the noticeable exception of two municipalities, Třebom and Sudice.

large numbers, nor one to which many people move. The majority of the Hlučín Region's population still consists of native inhabitants (Kubátová 2016: 12).

The majority of Opavians have Czech citizenship only, while it seems that a considerable number of Hlučíns have dual Czech–German citizenship. A number of Hlučíns applied for German passports shortly after the Velvet Revolution, and even though nearly none of them spoke German, their applications were successful based on the German principle of *jus sanguinis*, that is, their *right of blood*, as their parents or grandparents had had German citizenship during the Second World War or before 1920. Acquiring a German passport was attractive to many Hlučíns in the 1990s, as it enabled them not only to travel more easily, but also to work legally in Germany and other western countries. However, with the Czech Republic's entry to the EU and subsequent legal permission to work in other EU countries, acquiring dual citizenship became less attractive.

Other notable characteristics that differentiate Hlučíns from Opavians are minimal migration, the practices of regional endogamy within the Hlučín area and multi-generational co-residence, which in combination create a relatively cohesive and homogenous community. Regional endogamy in the Hlučín area is explicitly promoted by family members, as well as being implicitly promoted through various folk stories, proverbs, and jokes. The penalties for transgressions can range from mild disapproval to a refusal to accommodate the spouse in the family house and disrespecting their parental rights. Because of multi-generational co-residence, cross-generational dependency and strong family ties, the family's approval of a partner is deemed essential. Kubatová provides a number of case studies in this area demonstrating the desirability of endogamy in general, and within the same village in particular (2015: 166, 175, 198-9, 202-3, 242, 278).

A final feature distinguishing Opavians and Hlučíns is their respective degrees of religiosity. The Czech Republic is considered one of the least religious countries in Europe (OSO 2014). In the national census of 2011, of 10.5 million inhabitants, approximately 21% stated that they are religious and 10.4% stated affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church (OSO 2014). A further 7% of respondents asserted that, although



Map 5. Proportions of believers in the Czech Republic (OSO 2014)

they are religious, they do not belong to any organised religious group (OSO 2014).³¹ Therefore, the dominant religious organisation in the Czech Republic is the Roman Catholic Church.

As illustrated by the map above, when compared to the rest of the country, Opavian Silesia is a region with relatively strong religious affiliations. However, even within Opavian Silesia, the degree of religiosity between Opavians and Hlučíns differs significantly, both quantitatively and qualitatively. From a quantitative point of view, a smaller percentage of people describe themselves as religious in Opava than in the Hlučín

³¹ According to the Czech national census of 2011, out of 10,436,560 inhabitants of the Czech Republic (100%), 2,168,952 (20.8%) are religious, 3,604,095 (34.5%) are non-believers, and 4,662,455 (44.7%) did not answer the question.

area (SLDB 2011, OSO 2014). Similarly, considering the affiliation to religious organisations, 23.8% of Opavians belong to the Roman Catholic Church, while in the Hlučín area that proportion is as high as 31.6%, making it one of the highest in the Republic (SLDB 2011, OSO 2014). From a qualitative scholarship point of view, Opavians live in an urban setting and enjoy a higher degree of anonymity and lower social pressure to be practising Catholics. On the other hand, as many scholars point out, Hlučín's strong religious affiliations are characteristic of the community; according to the self-stereotype, a good Hlučín is a good Catholic (Plaček 2000, Mečiar 2008, Binar and Jirásek 2009, Kubátová 2016).

History and Memory

The work of Maurice Halbwachs and the famous Annales School, pioneered in the late 1920s by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, inspired scholars to differentiate between grand historical narratives and the collective memories of groups. The Annales School's approach combined geography, history, and sociology and focused on long-term historical structures rather than on significant events (*longue durée* over *histoire événementielle*) (Iggers 2012). In opposition to the Rankean doctrine advocating 'objective' historical scholarship focusing on important events and great individuals, the Annales School introduced an analytical problem-oriented interdisciplinary approach broadening the scope of history to include all aspects of society and culture (ibid.).³²

Halbwachs engaged intensively with the pioneers of the Annales School at Strasbourg University (especially with Marc Bloch); his work consequently needs to be understood

³² Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) was a German historian and a founder of modern source-based history. Ranke set the standards for 'scientific' historical writing. In terms of methodology, he enhanced reliance on primary sources (empiricism) and an emphasis on narrative history and international politics.

within the broader French historiographical context. In theorizing the various representations of the past and the political and the social dimensions of memory, Halbwachs' notion of *collective memory* appears to be especially useful for the purposes of my research.³³ Halbwachs' work profoundly affected the development of modern historiography, and his concept of collective memory was a firm part of the basic lexicon of the *Annalistes* (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). However, Halbwachs himself drew heavily on the work of his two mentors, Henri Bergson and Émile Durkheim (ibid.). Before discussing Halbwachs' insights in more detail, I wish to highlight briefly the influential contributions of Bergson and Durkheim to historiography and to what we today call memory studies.

Bergson was one of the many who problematised the process of rationalisation and the unifying force of science (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). He rejected the objectivist paradigm behind the scientific recording and record-keeping of past historical events, arguing that our past loses its meaningfulness through such an account (ibid.). Only subjectivity, he argued, was the 'true' source of knowledge (ibid.). He focused his attention on the experience of the time, highlighting memory as its central feature (ibid.). Consequently, he identified variability as a characteristic feature of memory. The variability of memory is derived from the variability of individual experience (ibid.). In his essay *Matter and Memory*, Bergson sharply rejected the simplified belief that, because memory is localised within the brain, it is ultimately of a material nature (reduction of spirit to matter); while adopting an anti-reductionist position, he highlighted the spirituality of memory (1988 [1896]).

³³ Together with the term 'collective memory' attributed to Halbwachs, there are cognates like 'public memory' used by Michel Foucault or John Bodnar and 'cultural memory' associated with Aby (Abraham Moritz) Warburg, Jan Assmann or Paul Connerton. Even though I am aware that there are subtle nuances in their meanings, for the purposes of this paper I will treat them as synonymous.

Durkheim, in contrast, argued that the understanding of time is a social fact which does not vary with subjective experience, but with changing forms of social structure (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim highlighted the importance of commemorative activities on the existence of social solidarity. Collective representations, he posited, were the result of an immense co-operation stretching not only into space but also into time (1915). 'In order to be created, a multitude of minds have associated, united and combined their ideas and sentiments, and many generations have accumulated their experience and knowledge' (ibid.: 17). Collective representations were an essential means of expressing collective realities (ibid.).

Drawing on the Durkheimian theoretical framework of collective representations and the Bergsonian notion of the variability of memory, Halbwachs maintained that remembering is ultimately a social activity dependent on the social framework of the social organisation to which one belongs (1992). 'It is in society where people normally require their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories' (ibid.: 38). An individual can only remember in a coherent and persistent fashion due to the social framework of the individual's group context, such as individual social identity, language, and the existing symbolic repertoire (ibid.; also 1960, 1980).

Halbwachs understood memory as a social phenomenon, but he made a distinction between autobiographical memory and historical memory (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011: 19). The former refers to the memories of events experienced directly by an individual. At first, autobiographical memories might seem ultimately individual and private (as opposed to collective), but Halbwachs argued that they were part of a broader context which included references to other events that the individual did not experience directly, but around which their memory was oriented and structured (ibid.).

By contrast, 'historical memory' concerns the residue of events that all or most of the group's members do not experience directly, but by virtue of which groups claim a continuous identity through time (ibid.). These 'collective representations', as Durkheim would have it, are 'symbols or meanings that are properties of the group whether or not any particular individual or even a particular number of individuals share them' (ibid.: 19). According to both Durkheim and Halbwachs, group identity is derived from collective memory, but unlike Durkheim, Halbwachs characterised collective memory as plural (composed of multiple social frameworks), thus showing that shared memories can be just as effective markers of social differentiation as social unity (ibid.).

The progressive historiographical movement fundamentally challenged the Rankean traditional understanding of the relationship between history and memory as two modes of apprehending the past. The traditional view, as Peter Burke argues, is relatively straightforward; memory reflects what actually happened, and history reflects memory. 'The historian's function is to be a "remembrancer", the custodian of the memory of public events which are put down in writing for the benefit of the actors, to give them fame, and also for the benefit of posterity, to learn from their example' (1989: 97). However, this idealised understanding has been re-examined because both history and memory are increasingly fuzzy terms, and the acts of remembering and scientifically documenting the past are often seen as problematic. Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer, and in both cases the issues of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation, and distortion come to light (ibid.).

Paul Connerton asserts that, to understand the difference between memory and history, we need to differentiate between cultural memory and historical reconstruction (Connerton 2011: 1). Historical knowledge of human activities in the past is possible only through knowledge of their traces, such as graveyards or a word in a Greek inscription

which reveals a custom (ibid.). Historians, according to Connerton, examine and judge evidence – traces of the past – as either valid or invalid to ‘satisfy the historian’s criteria of historical truth’ (ibid.: 2). This means that historians, relying exclusively on their own authority, are able to reject certain evidence as misinformed or even misleading, while acknowledging other evidence as credible (ibid.). Because of this degree of autonomy, historical reconstructions are not dependent on social memory but on historians’ critical authority and ability to distinguish between fact and fiction (ibid.).

Under the relativist interpretation of the history of history, to which I also subscribe, scholars such as Michel Foucault (1970), Pierre Nora (1989), and Peter Burke (1989) argue that, in different places and times, historians have perceived, studied, and presented various aspects of the past in different ways. However, this does not mean that I subscribe to radical relativism and claim that every representation of the past is qualitatively equal, or that all accounts are equally compatible (or incompatible) with ‘traces of history’. The point, rather, is to acknowledge that our ability to access and interpret the past depends on our culture’s categories and schemas (cf. Durkheimian collective representations, or Halbwachs’ frames of reference).

Remembering

According to Jan Assmann, remembering depends on the capacity to reconstruct (1995). Memory itself cannot preserve the past; what remains from the past is only what society in each era reconstructs within its contemporary frame of reference (ibid.). Therefore, remembering (the reconstruction of the past) always relates to an actual and contemporary situation. Cultural memory exists in two modes: potentiality and actuality (ibid.). In the first mode, the traces of the past are stored in archives, libraries, and museums, whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon. In the latter mode,

those Durkheimian collective representations are adopted and given new objectivised meanings and relevance in the contemporary context (ibid.: 130). Every contemporary context relates differently to ‘stores of knowledge and figures of memory’ (ibid.). Those stored traces of the past can be appropriated, criticised, neglected, preserved or transformed (ibid.).

In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton argues that, during commemorative ceremonies, the remembering community is being reminded of its identity as it is represented by a master narrative (1989: 70–76). The master narrative of the past is conveyed and sustained by ritual performances and bodily social memory (ibid.). Versions of the past are preserved by its representations in words and images, as well as by its bodily re-enactments (ibid.). This phenomenological approach to remembering, pioneered by Bergson (1988 [1896]) and taken forward by Connerton, Edward Casey, and many others, highlights the participatory and bodily aspect of memory. Casey demonstrates that commemoration is not a derivative mode of memory but an integral part of it. In other words, to remember means to commemorate (1987: 248).

Through participation in commemorative activities, a group’s members are able to overcome individual separation and manifest group unity and identity. During commemoration, the commemorators are deeply conjoined and bound at the most profound level (ibid.). However, collective cohesion can be triggered by collective remembering as much as by collective forgetting. Both Burke (1989: 108) and Connerton (2011: 3) point out that the word ‘amnesia’ is related to ‘amnesty’ (formerly ‘the act of oblivion’), which officially erases memories of conflict in the interests of social cohesion.

Forgetting

I have argued that discrepancies can easily be found when comparing the image of the

past shared by members of particular social groups and the preserved records of the past. I have also argued that what is being remembered is defined by the contemporary context and present-day purposes. If groups can reconstruct their past in a convenient fashion, can they not also suppress what it is inconvenient to remember? To deepen our understanding of how collective memory operates, it is fruitful to investigate the social organisation of forgetting and the politics of memory exclusion, suppression or repression (Burke 1989).

In his article 'Seven types of forgetting', Connerton argues that the generally shared opinion about memory processes is that remembering and commemorating is a virtue, while forgetting is always a failure. However, such assumptions are not self-evidently true, especially as forgetting is not a unitary phenomenon (2008). Forgetting, according to Connerton, can be distinguished into seven types (2008):

- 1) Repressive erasure;
- 2) Prescriptive forgetting;
- 3) Forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity;
- 4) Structural amnesia;
- 5) Forgetting as annulment;
- 6) Forgetting as planned obsolescence; and
- 7) Forgetting as humiliated silence.

I believe these conceptual types of forgetting, as identified by Connerton, provide a constructive and fruitful theoretical framework with which to analyse the politics of forgetting within the Silesian borderlands generally and Opavian Silesia in particular. Rather than solely examining what is being remembered and commemorated, in my research I also focus on what is being 'forgotten'; in other words, I pay special attention

to ‘silenced memories’ throughout this dissertation. This approach allows me to conceptualise both remembering and forgetting as a single dialectical process that plays a crucial part in negotiating Silesian identity in Opava and Hlučín.

Both the first and second forms of forgetting, prescriptive forgetting and repressive erasure, are precipitated by an act of state. The difference is that the former, because of its brutality associated with totalitarian or authoritarian regime, cannot be acknowledged publicly, while the latter type is believed to be in the interests of all parties (Connerton 2008). In the context of Opavian Silesia, both forms of forgetting appear to have taken place since the end of the Second World War. Various German inscriptions, German names of places, monuments, heritage sites, and prints and paintings were either erased and/or re-attributed to Czechness. These measures have been taken with the explicit purpose of casting all of the ‘German’ features of Silesia into oblivion (see especially Chapter 2, 5–7).

Remarkably, many of the erased and forgotten traces of Silesian Germanness are reappearing in Opava. For example, in close proximity to the house where I stayed during my fieldwork is a hotel and restaurant called Katharein. When I asked the owner what the word ‘Katharein’ meant to him, I was told ‘it’s here’; it is how Kateřinky was referred to in Po Naszymu, but after the Second World War the autochthonous name was ‘Czechised’. I also found out that the owner’s grandparents on his mother’s side were a so-called ‘mixed couple’; his grandfather, even though verified as a German, was therefore not expelled in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, according to his grandson, he was repeatedly mistreated for being ‘German’. If prescriptive forgetting and repressive erasure is the official state strategy, remembering in such a manner can have the quality of countermovement or retrieval.

The third type of forgetting is triggered by the need to manage one's current identity. Sometimes it is necessary, according to Connerton, to discard certain memories to maintain a new identity and avoid potential cognitive dissonance (2008). The author understands this type of forgetting in his schema as operating at the level of the individual. He gives the example of a person undergoing a transition towards a new sexual identity, and argues that it would be deleterious for the individual to think too closely about their previous attachments (ibid.). Analogously, I believe that the forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity does not merely operate at an individual level, but also at a collective one. For example, the majority of inhabitants living in Czech Silesia had to 'forget' the German aspect of the township's cultural heritage and identity to acquire their new form of collective identity (Czech national identity).

The fourth form of forgetting, originally identified by John Barnes, is called 'structural amnesia' and refers to the tendency to remember only what is socially relevant (Connerton 2008). Barnes presented the example of patrilineal Nuer and Tallensi genealogies, where ascending male lines are more memorable than the female lines because patrilineal connections are socially more important. Members of the matrilineal Lamba, on the other hand, tend to remember ascending female lines better than male lines (ibid.). The fifth form, forgetting as annulment, results from the surfeit of information available to us. Because of the possibility of storing information in archives and on the internet, even though in principle the information is retrievable, we can forget it; in fact, we need to, as the burden imposed on memory becomes unbearable (ibid.).

The sixth form of forgetting, as planned obsolescence, reflects the capitalist system of consumption. Connerton argues that the contemporary shift from the production of goods to the production of services has caused our experience of time to speed up. This brings about situations where forgetting is enhanced because it is absolutely basic to the

functioning of the market (Connerton 2008, 2011).

The seventh and final form of forgetting, as humiliated silence, might seem counter-intuitive; it is arguably easier to forget physical pain than to forget humiliation (Connerton 2008, 2011). Connerton argues that, after the Second World War, memories of destructive bombing and the annexation of Germany were constant reminders of the taboo question of whether they, as German survivors, were guilty of bringing all that misery on themselves (ibid. 2008, 2011). Confronted with the tacit imposition of a taboo, people can fall silent out of terror or panic or because they can find no appropriate words. Even though the acts of forgetting and silence are not exactly the same, some acts of silence may be an attempt to bury things beyond the expression and the reach of memory (ibid., 2008, 2011). It may even be that this desire to forget was most effective in the determination and hectic pace with which the reconstruction of German cities was undertaken in the 'German economic miracle' (ibid., 2008, 2011). The ruins the Germans saw all around them were not just a devastation of their habitat, but also visible signs of their emotional destruction.

Remembering and Forgetting as Constitutive Processes of Identity Formation

Collective memory, as a constitutive feature of collective identities, can also be fruitfully examined using an instrumentalist approach, which I wholeheartedly adopt in this dissertation. Collective memory is continually 'made and remade in the present from present perspectives and for present purposes' (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011: 249) and can thus be examined as an extraordinarily useful tool of politics. Various social actors struggle to advance their views of the past and its meaning, and thus collective memory is essentially contested. The struggle over memory control can be conceptualised as a struggle between official memory and counter-memory. This approach, however,

needs to disregard the ‘myth of belonging’ expressed by the Durkheimian notion and commonly adopted by national politicians, which holds that collective representations are unitary (i.e. there are deep structures of cultural heritage that bind a group together) (ibid.).

In his influential book *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (1993), John Bodnar examines anniversaries, monument dedications, centennials, and other practices to argue that commemoration involves competing groups and ideas vying for supremacy. During the process of commemoration, history, rather than simply being preserved, is often rewritten for the purpose of providing a new narrative of the past to serve the present ends of the dominant group (ibid.). ‘Public memory emerges from the intersection of official memory and vernacular cultural expressions’ (ibid.: 14). Vernacular culture consists of a diverse and changing ‘array of specialised interests’, which might clash with one another (ibid.). Vernacular culture stems from local social actors’ first-hand experiences rather than from national ‘imagined’ communities. Official culture consists largely of cultural leaders and authorities concerned with social unity, promoting the continuity of existing institutions, and maintaining the status quo (ibid.). ‘Official culture relies on “dogmatic formalism” and the restatement of reality in ideal rather than complex or ambiguous terms’ (ibid.: 15). Both cultures express their pasts and positions through a symbolic discourse of metaphors, signs, and rituals, and attempt to promote and control their version of public memory. Sometimes certain social actors can support aspects of both cultures at once (ibid.),³⁴ their ability to do so clearly being related to what Gerd Baumann calls double or

³⁴ This notion is also fruitfully addressed by Gerd Baumann in his distinction between dominant and demotic discourses, which I am utilising in Chapter 2.

dual discursive competence (1996, 1999).

In his monograph *Contesting Cultures*, Bauman challenges the common reductionist practice of focusing on a single ethnic group and portrays Southall – a suburban area to the west of London – as a self-consciously diverse social field composed of a variety of ideas of group identities (1996). As Baumann demonstrates with reference to this localised British example, there are many ways and practices to ‘categorize’ Southall’s inhabitants. The densely populated area of Southall, which Baumann surveys as a cultivated space’, is often considered to be largely South Asian (1996: 37). Based on the results and classification system of the 1991 population census, Southall residents of ‘Indian’ origin constitute 50% of the population, ‘Pakistani’ 7%, ‘White’ 30%, ‘Other Asian’ 3%, ‘Black-Caribbean’ 5%, and ‘Other’ (Black-African, Black-Other, Bangladeshi, Chinese) 5% in total (Baumann 1996: 48). However, the Asian category can be broken down further by caste, nationality, and religion. For example, Sikhs are the dominant group in Southall, but there are also significant numbers of Hindus and Muslims within the same ‘Asian’ category. By the same token, the Sikh community is again split by caste, history, and religious belief and practices. As Bauman aptly demonstrates, the closer one examines Southall, the harder it becomes to define it in terms of straightforward categories of Southall’s cultures and communities.

Rather than studying one particular group in isolation, therefore, Baumann examines the interplay of cross-cutting varieties of identity discourses in Southall. Consequently, *Contesting Culture* is not a book about Southallian culture(s) but about the dynamic interaction between the dominant and demotic discourses of culture and identity. The dominant discourse links ethnic categories to social groups and identifies each community with a reified culture, reflecting an understanding of culture as something

fixed, static, and stable. In contrast, the demotic discourse disentangles the dominant one by creating communities within and across cultures by means of cross-cutting cleavages, reflecting an understanding of culture as something that is constantly changing or constantly being created. But the two discourses were not found to be contradictory in the Southallian ethnographic study. Baumann's argument is that Southallians have developed a double discursive competence, engaging the two discourses in different contexts and situations:

The demotic discourse, which allows Southallians to create new *communities* as well as to subdivide or fuse existing ones, is not an autonomous opposite, or independent alternative, to the dominant one. It is used to undermine the dominant one whenever Southallians, pursuing their aims as they see them, judge it useful in any one context. Yet, it does not make the dominant discourse lose its salience: it would hardly be dominant, after all, if Southallians could 'switch it off' all together.

The very existence of a demotic discourse which separates *culture* and *community* and reconsiders their meaning, is a reaction, arising in a plethora of different contexts, to the dominant one. It represents an alternative discourse, but not an independent one.

(Baumann 1996: 195–6, italics in the original)

In his later book, *The Multicultural Riddle*, Baumann develops this theoretical argument further towards a theory of culture as a dual discursive competence. Instead of choosing between the essentialist theory of culture and the processual theory of culture, Baumann suggests reframing and fusing the two seemingly opposing understandings into two simultaneously existing discourses about (and of) culture (Baumann 1999: 93). For him, discourse is a way of talking in speech, as well as a means of social action. Culture, then, consists of two discourses: an essentialist discourse of culture, and a processual discourse of culture. 'By viewing culture as the object of two discursive competences, one essentialist and one processual, we can study and appreciate the culture-making sophistication of exactly those people who are usually treated as the dupes of "their" reified cultures' (Baumann 1999: 94). By seeing culture as a double discursive

construction, Baumann opens up a space for studying contextual processes of national, religious, and ethnic identification. As a consequence, he argues that a ‘multicultural society is not a patchwork of five or ten fixed cultural identities, but an elastic web of crosscutting and always mutually situational identifications’ (Baumann 1999: 119, see also Okamura 1981).

The question of ‘How is it possible that the same social *agents* can reaffirm putatively ancient *ethnic* or *cultural cleavages* in some situations, but can construct new identities and alternative or hybrid cultural forms in others?’ (Baumann 2002: 189, italics in the original) remains central for Baumann in his article ‘Collective Identity as a Dual Discursive Construction: Dominant vs. Demotic Discourses of Culture and the Negotiation of Historical Memory’ (2002). As in the two previously mentioned publications, he argues that cultural identities should be understood as discursive constructs, combining the dominant and demotic discourses of identity. At this point in his intellectual trajectory, however, he fully recognises the significant role of the historical reinterpretation and social negotiation of memory in the process of collective identity formation. Returning again to his Southall case study, he provides an account of how this London suburb’s communities of Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Africans, and the emerging ‘Asian’ community renegotiate history and historical memory in their respective attempts to articulate their collective identities.

For instance, Baumann shows that, to negotiate intergroup difference, Southall’s Sikhs selectively employ some historical narratives while discarding others in their efforts to reconstruct the difference between newer and older communities within the same ‘Southallian Sikh culture’ (2002: 191). While *Jat* Sikhs (the farming caste) migrated to

England in the 1950s from rural Punjab, where they owned land, the landless craft castes (*Tharkan* carpenters, *Lohar* blacksmiths and *Raj* bricklayers) arrived from the 1970s after being expelled from East Africa, where they had formed an African–Asian middle class. This different migration trajectory is highlighted in the East Africa Sikhs’ historical narrative, as it supports their desired self-representation. While within the centuries-old subcontinental tradition of caste the craft castes were subordinate to the landed *Jat* Sikhs, in the British context of the early 1990s the East African Sikhs of craft caste heritage actively renegotiated and reformulated the historical narratives of the caste hierarchy and inequality. Rather than highlighting the memory of their forebears’ disadvantaged status on the Indian subcontinent, they stressed their more recent African–Asian middle-class historical experience, which the *Jat* Sikhs (who had migrated directly to England from the Punjab as unskilled labourers) did not have (2002). Despite their demotic discursive practice of emphasizing their social status during colonial rule, the East African Sikhs chose to challenge the dominant discourse to lift the stigma of their precolonial history of caste inferiority and to renegotiate their collective identity, self-representation, and intergroup differences.

In the case of Southall’s Hindus, instead of a tendency towards internal differentiation (as described in the Sikh case), Baumann notices a tendency to include others, which he frames in terms of Louis Dumont’s idea of encompassment. Referring to a highly selective reading of Sikh history, the historical narrative identified by Baumann maintains that ‘Sikhs are Hindus and that the Sikh community formed an integral part of Hindu culture’ (2002: 192). To legitimise the statement, the historical figure of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh tradition, is intensively commemorated, even though nearly ‘four hundred years of subsequent history had to be pushed aside as a series of aberrations

which violated the axiomatic participation of Sikhs in Hindu culture' (2002: 192). The historical construction of Sikhs as Hindus thus performs two tasks according to Baumann's analysis: first, it neutralizes intercommunal tensions; and secondly, it constructs the local Muslims as the 'other', who are historically to blame for the partition of India and Punjab (2002). In both cases, the Sikhs' internal differentiation and the Hindus' inclusion of others, the dominant equation between culture, community, and collective identity was dissolved to a significant degree, and various social actors could renegotiate their collective memories and collective identities through demotic discursive practice.

On the other hand, even though the disengaging of the dominant equation between community and culture is present in the case of Afro-Caribbean Southallians, the historical argument for it often lacks credibility compared to the historical arguments of South Asian 'communities of culture'. 'The Afro-Caribbean or African-Caribbean culture was still to be "made", "created", or "found"' (2002: 193). In consciously creating this identity, three approaches in particular seem to be at play: a religious one, which emphasises Rastafarian beliefs; a political one, based on pan-Africanist ideas; and a cultural one, focusing on music. All these approaches rely heavily on a crucial historical revalidation, which emphasises the historical unity of all people of African descent. However, in the Southallian case, creating African-Caribbean culture justifies a conscious rejection of national or ethnic boundaries and histories, which are often manifested through observable tensions between Africans from Africa and from the Caribbean or other diasporas. This demotic fusion of different narratives into one monolithic representation of a new African collective identity and cultural heritage was demonstrated by the celebration of Marcus Garvey's centenary, at which it was perfectly

possible and acceptable for 'two groups of Afro-Caribbean Londoners performing African-derived music and a Zulu War Dance' to claim that this validated their 'African roots' (2002: 1993). However, this does not mean that the dominant discourse has dissolved, or that the difference between the different African communities has disappeared. Because of their dual discursive competence, Southallians can and do choose, depending upon their judgements of context and purpose, to engage in both discourses – the existing dominant one, as well as the demotic one – which allows them to create, subdivide or fuse them.

Finally, and perhaps most convincingly, Baumann illustrates the crucial role of historical narrative reconstructions in the interplay between dominant and demotic discourses by using the example of the construction of a new collective identity: the newly emerging and more comprehensive Asian identity (2002, see also 1996). Baumann explains that, at the time of his fieldwork, instead of relating to separate Hindu, Muslim or Sikh heritages, the young British South Asian Southallians were constructing a shared 'Asian' collective identity with its own Asian cultural heritage. However, the conscious creation of a new collective Asian identity involves a significant rearticulation of the past and related historical narratives. The project of collective Asian identity formation requires rewriting the history of divisions and conflicts between previously irreconcilable religions, castes, and regional community heritages. An example of the refocusing and rewriting of the historical narrative is the pan-Asian anticolonial hero Uddam Singh, who survived the infamous Amritsar massacre of 1919 committed by British troops responsible to Michael O'Dwyer, then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab. Interpreted as a stage in the struggle for freedom, Uddam Singh decided to assassinate O'Dwyer in public at Westminster and 'use' his own public trial to alert the British public to the injustices and atrocities of

British rule. Baumann argues that Uddam Singh's story, which was later recast as Ram Mohammed Singh Azaad to reflect the joint Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh aspirations for freedom (*azaad*), provides 'legitimacy of the past and tradition' and 'legitimacy of future purpose' in the effort to form a comprehensive Asian collective identity (2002):

This commitment to a comprehensively 'Asian culture' marked a new point of convergence. This novel discourse of culture and community came to include a secular, cross-religious, cross-caste, and sometimes political, discourse of comprehensively Asian identity.

(Baumann 2002: 194)

Using these examples, Baumann shows that renegotiating histories and historical memories is an important aspect of re-shaping and redefining collective identities. As the main research question of this study is 'How Silesian identity is being negotiated by various social actors in and between the town of Opava and the neighbouring area of Hlučín?', I pay special attention to the dynamic relationship between history, collective memory, and collective identity in Opavian Silesia. In the following ethnographic chapters, I further elaborate on the notion that in order to understand the dynamic identity negotiations between *Císaráci* and *Prajzáci*, and by extension the dynamic interactions between dominant and demotic discourses, it is most beneficial to focus on the ways in which people construct, deconstruct and reconstruct their collective past.

Chapter 3. Dominant Discourse: Silencing German Memories

This chapter provides an ethnographic example of the ongoing struggle of a minority group to incorporate and institutionalise its narratives in the dominant discourse. The minority group, composed predominantly of elderly Opavian inhabitants of German descent, is organised around and represented by the Silesian German Association. Their primary motivation is to reach post-expulsion reconciliation through public acknowledgment of their belonging to the Opavian community. However, I argue that, in incorporating the silenced German memories into Opava's official historical narrative, the positive self-perception of the majority population might be threatened. Therefore, some Opavians and the town hall have tried actively to suppress and discard any memories of the displaced native inhabitants, considering the German past to be irrelevant and redundant. Associated with this fact is the ease with which a Jewish memorial was accepted by the authorities, but not a German one. Opava's official representatives and a number of the town's inhabitants have continuously opposed any efforts made by the Association to commemorate, or even acknowledge, the expelled 'German' population.

'German' and 'Jewish' Memorials

Respondent: *I see... So you're calling regarding the German memorial...It's some time ago. I barely remember it. Are you from the press?*, asked the voice at the other end of the line suspiciously.

JM:³⁵ *No, I'm not. I am a PhD student conducting research about Silesia...*, I replied.

Respondent: *Alright, I thought you worked for a newspaper*, said the noticeably calmer voice, just to burst into anger a few seconds later. *Have you heard about the horrendous article published in Germany about it? They claimed that we are Germanophobes and that we deny what indisputably happened; that we deny history! What nonsense!*

JM: *I see. Would it be possible to arrange a meeting with you? I would be happy to come to see you in your office in the town hall, or we could meet outside your working hours if you prefer?* An unusually long silence follows my request.

³⁵ Johana Musálková.

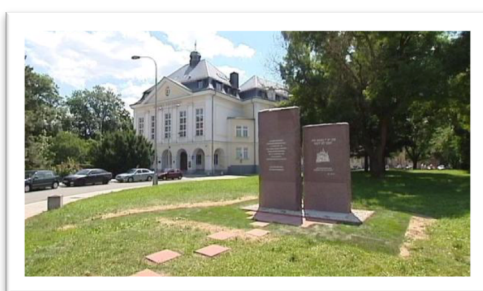
Respondent: *I don't think a meeting would be necessary. The whole thing is unnecessarily exaggerated already... but I tell you this... I am not from this region originally, but my partner is. In fact, s/he is from a German family. The last bit of the sentence sounds as if I am being told a secret. Before the town council took the vote whether to permit the erection of the German memorial, I talked with my spouse to ask their opinion. S/he was against it. The memorial, should it be erected, would not have contributed to the peaceful cohabitation of Opava's citizens. After all, the Germans concerned here are long gone anyway.*

One example of how collective memory and collective identity are being negotiated by various social actors in Opavian Silesia can be seen in the recent commemoration of a realised 'Jewish' memorial and the unrealised plans for a 'German' memorial in Opava. The displaced Opavian Germans and those who came after them – predominantly Slavic-speaking inhabitants of the Czechoslovak hinterlands³⁶ – shared a history of political as well as neighbourly conflicts and animosity stemming not only from physical proximity, but also from the former political, social, and economic importance of the displaced over the newcomers. In post-war Opava, the place of the Opavian Germans was taken by those who had previously been considered minority groups, who had often felt oppressed by Germans in their previous homes, and who were, in some cases, forced to migrate by the Czechoslovak authorities themselves. While there is a vast body of literature considering the forced displacement from the perspective of those who were displaced, in this chapter I focus heavily on the relatively neglected question of how the new settlers make sense of their likewise problematic position. How, if at all, are the old inhabitants, the 'others', remembered today by those who settled in Opava after its native German-speaking inhabitants were displaced based on the collective sentence of guilt that followed the Second World War?

³⁶ By inlanders, I mean the Czechoslovak interior as opposed to the Czechoslovak borderlands.

This case study is anchored in the controversy surrounding the proposed German memorial and the negotiations between the Association and Opava town hall. This chapter explores the personal narrative accounts and ethnographic portraits of the individuals directly involved in the negotiations.

In contrast to the ongoing cultural and social difficulties surrounding the German memorial, the story of the Jewish memorial is relatively straightforward. Opava's synagogue was deliberately burnt down in 1938. In 2013 a memorial to the Jewish minority in Opava was erected on the site where the synagogue once stood. The commemoration of the synagogue and the former Jewish community was initiated by Dr Jaroslav Duda. The town council agreed to provide the land on which the memorial stands, and a local branch of the pharmaceutical company Teva provided the necessary financial aid. The event was covered by the local and national press without triggering any heated debates. The unveiling ceremony on 17 July 2013 also took place peacefully. Various speeches were given by politicians-academics and a rabbi, and a Teva representative from Teva's headquarters in Jerusalem, was also in attendance.



Picture 5. The Jewish memorial with the Silesian University's rectorate building in the background.



Picture 6. Detail of the Jewish memorial

A few years earlier, the Silesian German Association in Opava had applied to the city council for permission to rent a piece of land in a town park to erect a memorial commemorating the former German-speaking population that had lived in Opava for

centuries. However, the response of the town council, yielding to populist opinion within the region, was to refuse the request. The response of Opava's authorities and of some local residents to the request was one of annoyance and dismissal, once again relegating the prominently Germanic character of the pre-war Silesian language and culture to a silent memory.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the national census of the population conducted by the Czechoslovak government showed that, of the 33,000 inhabitants of Opava in 1930, about 22,000 were Germans (of which 800 were Jewish) and approximately 11,000 were considered to be of Czech origin (of which none were Jewish). According to the Association's internal statistics, today, of Opava's 60,000 inhabitants, only about eighty declare themselves as belonging to the German minority, 90% of them having been born before 1945. The Silesian German Association of Opava (hereafter the Association) currently has 105 members living in Opava and approximately forty in Germany. Many of the Association's members I interviewed do not consider themselves Germans, though they share a positive attitude towards German culture and/or Silesia's Germanic past.

Conrad Halfar, a retired electromechanical engineer and current chairman of the Association, told me during our interviews that the present-day Opavian residents rarely realise or acknowledge that *their* city has been associated with Germanic culture and language since the twelfth century. The city was built and inhabited mostly by German speakers, even though Slavic speakers lived there as well, though in significantly smaller numbers. Therefore, according to Halfar, the Association wishes to educate the contemporary local population regarding something that is *also* part of the city's history, namely the unrecognised Germanic *heritage*. Secondly, he argues that those who called Opava their home and who were forcibly removed from their homeland after 1945 as a result of their being German also deserve respect: 'Most of them did nothing wrong and

did not deserve the persecution and pain inflicted upon them'. Of course, he reasons, to commemorate Germans publicly might be problematic at first, but sooner or later people will accept it. To support his claim, he offers the following example:

In 1993, the Silesian German Association moved into this house, whose previous tenants were also expelled Germans. However, the difference is that the Association made a point of contacting the expelled owner's family, and they are glad the house is being used in a commemorative and supportive fashion. When we moved here, we put a small sign next to the door, so people could find us. Soon after that, we received threats that if the sign was not removed, our windows would be broken. Indeed, the sign was vandalised a few times, but now it has remained un-vandalised for the past couple of years ... And with the German memorial, the process will be much the same. Some people might be against it at first, and perhaps it might be vandalised, but emotions will calm down with time, and people will eventually become accustomed to it. After all, the text of the memorial plaque is neutral. We're not trying to incite drama or conflict. But we want it acknowledged that the German-speaking population lived here for centuries.



Picture 7. Logo and contact information of Silesian German Association



Picture 8. Silesian German Association building

When asked about the reasons for the resistance to the memorial, he explained that many people simply do not understand Opava's past, and more importantly, many let themselves be influenced by political agitators. According to Halfar, the most vocal opponents are politically motivated, using historically rooted anti-German sentiments to their advantage. 'People are scared, and they resent the Germans for more or less obvious reasons, and that makes them vulnerable and easily influenced.' To explain what he meant by 'more or less obvious reasons' as well as 'political motivation', he offered a local

example:

Not far from here, there is a lovely spa town called Karlova Studánka, or Bad Karlsbrunn, as it used to be known. This town, as with many other towns in the Sudetenland, was inhabited by relatively wealthy Germans. Those Germans were expelled, and their property was taken by newcomers who, let's face it, were often as poor as church mice. The newcomers and their descendants now see themselves as the rightful owners of the fine spa resort. They remain calm and confident until folks like Mr Lochner³⁷ and his people go around the spa town knocking on doors asking if the inhabitants really want 'the Germans to come' (*aby přišli Němci*) and take back their property. Mr Lochner and his gang went to all of the wealthier houses in Karlova Studánka and spoke to their Czech owners. Of course they got nervous! And it is through cases such as these that people like Mr Lochner can manipulate and intimidate citizens to vote for politicians who support the Beneš decrees or to make them actively opposed to Germans, [to] any talk of Czech reconciliation, or even inciting them to protest passionately about something as banal as a commemoration plaque for the expelled population.

After talking to the town-hall official by telephone, interviewing Mr Halfar at the Association's main office, and reading various articles and discussions regarding the topic, I decided to investigate the issue further. As my research objective is to provide a descriptive account of 'how Silesian identity is negotiated by various social actors (both individuals and institutions) in Opavian Silesia', the thorny dispute over the German memorial seemed to be an interesting case study of just such a negotiation. Therefore, I decided to focus on the ways in which local knowledge regarding the 'German expellees' is produced and to analyse the context, the groups' interests, and the contradictions concerning the current remembering/forgetting of Opava's controversial 'German past'.

³⁷ The name has been anonymised.

Conrad Halfar

During my fieldwork, I collected the life stories of several of the Association's members. I met the chair of the Association shortly before Christmas 2015, in a house rented by the Association. The house, which in its glory days was possibly one of the finest on that street, seemed grim and neglected, standing there as a forlorn tribute to days and times long forgotten. Yet somehow, Conrad Halfar defied the gloomy atmosphere with his vibrant and cheerful demeanour:

In 1945, when I was four years old, we were evacuated. In fact, the whole of Opava was evacuated, and when we returned, our flat had been occupied by a Soviet officer. When he saw my mom, without her husband and with two small children, he decided to move into a different flat and let us stay in our home. But when the ones with red arm bands [People's Militia] came, we were told to leave the flat anyway. All three of us moved into a small and very cold basement room in the same street, and there we stayed until 1949. I didn't speak a single word of Czech, and my mom only knew a few words. My father, on the other hand, could speak Czech fluently, but he wasn't with us. He returned from the front in 1948. In September 1945, my sister was in the first grade, but after three days the school director sent her home because he said 'Germans are not worth education'. So she stayed home with my mom and I. Both my sister and I joined elementary school two years later, when I was old enough, and she had picked up some Czech, but it was hell. For example, as Germans we were not allowed to play with toys. No, I don't want to complain. We were very lucky that we could stay, that we weren't expelled. We heard awful stories of what had happened to those who were transferred. Dreadful things were happening to 'our people' [našim], not only during the exodus, but also once they arrived in Germany or Austria. They were certainly not welcomed. Why? Because people there thought that our people did something wrong back home, and that is why they were expelled! If ours weren't bad people, Czechs wouldn't expel them, they thought.

Even though we were not a mixed-couple family – we were all Germans – we could stay because we were classified as anti-fascists – we were a communist family [Mr. Halfar burst into laughter]. My uncle worked for the communist party as a bureaucrat in the early 30's. He couldn't speak a word of Czech, but his German was perfect. It's not a very well-known fact, but prior to the Second World War, the administrative language of the international communist party was German, and its headquarters was in Berlin. That's why he worked for them. He knew German well, and they paid well, so he worked as a bureaucrat for the international communist movement, not because he was a committed communist, but because he needed the money. I don't think he cared for politics at all, actually. Yet it was his political affiliation with the Communist Party which saved us from the expulsion. My uncle fled to England from the Nazis in 1938, but he left my auntie behind in Czechoslovakia. As the wife of a communist, she was sent to a concentration camp, where she spent six years. After the war she stayed, and died in Germany. The rest of their side of family disappeared in Krnov.

Even though I was just a kid, I remember the hardships we had to endure, especially in the late 40's and early 50's. We were denied citizenship, education, and health care. We didn't have the right to get food-stamps, benefits, or any kind of support. But in a way I understand why it was like that. People were traumatised and vengeful after the war, but they were also scared. According to a public notice, 'Those helping Germans shall be treated as German citizens themselves'. Well, of course, they were scared to help us. However, a few people were kind and showed us mercy nevertheless. Opava was nasty back then.

Remembering the ‘Others’

What is a difficult past? When and how does history become inconvenient, troublesome or dangerous? And what makes it difficult? The notion of history as difficult is, in and of itself, a reflexive turn. As such, it acknowledges history as something that is active in the present, something in constant fluctuation, dependent on current moods, values and objectives; that is, history is not an independent, static, objective truth. Historical narratives are often diverse and multifaceted, emphasising certain qualities, morals, values, and identifiers over others. Equally, these reconstructions of the past are forward-looking, providing guidance and examples from the past, to reinforce future decisions and affiliations. Collective memory, as a concept, is distinguishable from biographical experience and cognitive memory. However, the individual does not ‘remember’ in a social vacuum, and collective and cognitive memories are constantly interacting with each other (Wylegała, 2015: 472). This dynamism and constant state of flux is essential in order to maintain group identity. This process draws on the past to create community solidarity, cope with collective trauma, and provide the future of the group with a positive outlook. A difficult past is part of the past that is (re)negotiated in the present. It is often subject to omissions of past wrongs or taboos, or else it is handled by claiming moral superiority through the ‘rhetoric of judge-penitence’; it might also involve institutional amnesia or the externalisation of guilt. Citing a series of case studies, I will examine how these strategies are used to cope with difficult pasts and ‘difficult heritage’ (Macdonald 2009).

For example, as Wylegała demonstrates in her paper focusing on memories of the post-war displacement of Poles and Ukrainians, empathy is all but absent in how contemporary Ukrainians remember the deportation of the previous Polish population from the town of Zhovkva (formerly in Poland, now in Ukraine) (2015, 2016). Due to the negative

biographical experience of the Ukrainian interviewees now living in Zhovkva and their problematic relations with Poles in the interwar period, as well as the negative experience of the Polish government and their Polish neighbours, their lack of empathy is rooted in a deeper sense of their own persecution (2015, 2016). Wylegała is interested in how Poles and Ukrainians cope with such a difficult past through the ‘tabooing of violence and the externalisation of guilt’ (2015: 470). In the tabooing of violence, the interplay and influence of collective memory and biographical experience on the more factual events is powerful. For example, in both Poland and Ukraine, forced German labour was used after the Second World War. However, the historical narratives regarding forced labour differ dramatically in Zhovkva, as well as in Krzyż, formerly in Germany but now in Poland. The post-war forced labour of female German servants in Ukrainian households is justified and interpreted not as forced labour, but as a protective measure against the brutality and sexual harassment of Soviet troops. In this way, the individual informants Wylegała interviewed had re-categorised their German servants as members of the family who had been forcibly uprooted from Germany. This example clearly indicates how heavily the social context and justification of past wrongs weighs upon the shaping of individual biographical memories (Wylegała 2015).

In contrast, while it is not always the case, in Krzyż, and in this particular social context, the incoming Polish inhabitants do not describe the Germans’ labour as ‘forced’, as that concept is restricted to those of Polish heritage and cannot be conferred upon the ‘perpetrators’ of wartime brutality (Wylegała 2015, 2016). Using these two towns, Wylegała discusses the externalisation of guilt that is present in both cases (Zhovkva and Krzyż) as a strategy for dealing with the morally unsavoury actions perpetrated by the respondents’ ancestors. In the case of Krzyż, when the respondent cannot or does not want to deny the role of Poles entirely in the brutal displacement of German civilians, the

respondents' strategy is to externalise the guilt and maintain the moral integrity of their community so as to exclude the perpetrators symbolically. When Poles are the guilty parties in stories of violence against Germans, they are usually not regarded as members of the speaker's community, but as Poles from other parts of the country, often referred to as 'looters, social scum or even false Poles', thus implying otherness and distance from the respondent's own group. In sum, to maintain community strength and integrity in the face of the displacement, a range of strategies may be employed by various actors and institutions. These include, but are not limited to, the tabooing of discussions of violence and the uncomfortable elements of the post-war context altogether, the externalisation of guilt, and the intermingling of biographical and cultural experience and memory (Wylegała 2015, 2016).

Selective remembering is only one way of working with a difficult past. Paul Connerton argues that 'forgetting' is a form of memory politics in and of itself, elevating certain versions of the past over others, which may be purposely forgotten in favour of the preferred alternative (2008). An alternative post-modern approach to difficult heritage also relies on distancing and externalizing guilt to past generations in order to capture the moral high ground in an 'age of apology' (Forchtner 2014: 420). Forchtner begins with a quote from Albert Camus: 'The more I accuse myself, the more I have a right to judge you' (2014: 409). This summarizes the rhetoric of judge-penitence: the claim to have learnt one's lessons and acknowledge past wrongdoings through self-critical admissions (2014). Through this strategy, the new generation 'thereby delegitimise (outright) denial of past wrongdoing while turning these admissions into a source of legitimacy' (2014: 410), being able accordingly to assume an identity that is purified, rational, moral, and appreciative of openness. This strategy has a self-congratulatory air for 'coming to terms' with the difficult past in the present, as it allows the social actors to maintain that the past

wrong is not ‘our’ wrong (2014: 411). This strategy for negotiating difficult heritage does not forcefully omit troublesome heritage or difficult pasts, nor create ethnic and national divides in promoting one version of history. Instead, it is the externalizing of guilt to past generations under the guise of self-reflection that provides the outcome of a positive and unifying group identity.

Barbora Spalová (2017), in her recent article ‘Remembering the German Past in the Czech Lands: A Key Moment Between Communicative and Cultural Memory’, argues that the Czech Republic, as a nation state, is entering a crucial period in its collective memory with regard to its commemorative practices of war and post-war events. This urgency is borne out of the fact that, at present, we are experiencing a shift from communicative memory to cultural memory in respect of the Second World War and the brutalities of the German expulsion. As she explains while paraphrasing Jan Assmann, communicative memory is the memory preserved in common parlance, and it is able to retain approximately eighty years of history, which is the average lifespan of a human (Spalová: 2017: 84-85). ‘The communicative memory of the German past has entered the public space and tries to become a permanent part of the Czech cultural memory, but it is not a straightforward process, mainly due to the continuously straightening nationalistic framing of memory within Central Europe’ (Spalová: 2017: 84).

Similarly, Inge Melchior and Oane Visser (2011) discuss how conflicting memories of the Soviet ‘occupation’ / ‘liberation’ of Estonia in 1944 collided in 2007 in the form of violent riots in Tallinn, when thousands of people took to the streets over the decision to move the so-called Bronze Soldier statue from its central location (ibid.). In their article ‘Voicing Past and Present Uncertainties’, the authors describe the resurgence of Estonian ethnic nationalism as one of the main reasons for the conflict between Estonians and Estonian Russians. When discussing World War II memorials, each side accuses the other

of having a false collective memory, asserting the accuracy of their own collective account. According to Melchior and Visser, conceptually speaking, identity politics and national collective narratives are reinforced by commemoration days, ceremonies, and monuments that provide the framework for interpretation and remembering, as well as both intended and unintended forgetting. For many people, linking their biographical memories to 'official' stories provides coherence and a broader meaning and sense of belonging (ibid.). Monuments are 'effective symbols for revising the past' (Verdery, cited in Melchior and Visser 2011: 35), and their destruction or removal devalues what was commemorated, as in the example of the Bronze Soldier (ibid.). The Bronze Soldier reveals the underlying and unspoken competition for victimhood, with the narrative of the 'Russian liberator' being seen as a threat to the Estonian majority, which subtly resists the continuity of 'former Soviet discourse' and the 'false' memory of present-day Russian Estonians. Here, one can see that there is intense Othering, as Estonian Russians are seen as the successors to the Soviets and are held responsible for any unpleasant behaviour linked to Soviet violence (ibid.). The removal of the statue, and the acceptance of its removal by West Europeans, indicates, on the whole, support for the Estonian majority and can be seen as a gesture of recognition and integration (ibid.). In this instance, the forgetting of places, perspectives, and monuments is brought about by their demolition or removal.

Through institutionalised commemorative practices, political institutions provide a common framework through which to interpret the world around them. This framework guides collective remembering, as well as both intended and unintended forgetting. As a result, those who 'write history' hold enormous power as the authors and purveyors of widely (and for the most part, uncritically) accepted social frameworks (ibid.). These frameworks, which are rife with political innuendo, are accepted by the population at

large because they long for their stories to be legitimised and propagated in a collectively recognised (national) narrative (ibid.). In an age of globalisation and multiculturalism, the need to identify with and belong to a distinct community seems inversely proportional to the perceived proximity and size of the world.

Spalová and Melchior & Visser highlight the contemporary rise of nationalism and the intensifying national sentiments throughout populations as a main source of tension during commemorative activities involving monuments. While I appreciate their line of reasoning and agree with it to a significant extent, throughout this chapter I demonstrate that the reluctance to incorporate ‘German memories’ into an official discourse in the Opavian case can be attributed not only to broader socio-political trends (i.e. straightening nationalistic framings of memory in Central and Eastern Europe), but also to issues relating to the formation of identity by the borderlands’ new settlers, namely preserving the group’s positive self-perceptions and avoiding potential cognitive dissonance. Through the documentation of detailed ethnographic accounts, I showed what and whose hopes and aspirations, as well as fears and anxieties, play a role in the negotiation of the community’s collective identity and Opavians’ collective representation of the town’s past.

The Anabasis of the German Memorial in Opava

The unrealised memorial dedicated to Opava’s German-speaking population is problematic in all of its temporalities. During my fieldwork, I found the memorial to be a sensitive issue regarding not only negotiating its possible future (if, where, and what to erect), but also uncovering and understanding past negotiations concerning the memorial. The town hall’s officials often insisted that there was no point in commemorating Opava’s

former German-speaking population and simultaneously struggled to recall or acknowledge that any previous negotiations regarding the commemoration of the German-speaking population had ever taken place.

Being denied access to most of the original materials, and especially to written communications between the town council and the Association's representatives, I felt that, without being provided with the full context, I could not really hope to understand the issue in its full breadth and depth. However, unexpected help arrived in the form of my former informant, Steffi Pospíšilová. I was introduced to her by her grandson in late winter 2013 when I was a master's student conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Opava, exploring how womanhood had been constructed and retrospectively experienced during the early socialist era in Czechoslovakia. During that period, she was one of my key informants in the field. I accidentally met her again in the spring of 2016 during one of the focus-group interviews with members of the Association organised on my behalf by Mr Halfar. After I had explained my struggles to reconstruct the chronology of events regarding the German memorial, starting from the inception of the idea to erect the memorial up to the present-day situation, she told me that she might be able to help me and suggested that I pay her a visit.

In January 2009, the Silesian German Association of Opava sent an official letter to the town municipality asking for permission to erect a memorial stone with a commemorative plaque dedicated to the German-speaking populations of Opava. As the letter read, the objective of the memorial was by no means to commemorate the expulsion. The Association's goal was, at the least, to mark the fact that the town had been inhabited by German speakers for centuries, who participated in and significantly contributed to its community. German cultural influence, as well as German speakers, were an integral part of the town's long existence. The town's future could not be peaceful and rightful unless

the topic was finally reopened. After all, the Association argued in its letter, most of the borderland towns in the Czech Republic already had such memorials, and Opava was the only one that had not addressed the issue so far or taken any steps towards reconciliation.

According to the *Troppauer Nachrichten*, as interpreted and translated by Mrs Pospíšilová, the city's reply was received only in May 2010, sixteen months after the initial letter was sent. In reply, the town municipality stated that the city agreed that the Germans had indeed participated in the life of the town for centuries. It was clear from *archival research* that, until 1945, German speakers constituted the majority population. The city could not and of course does not even want to deny this indisputable historical fact. Furthermore, the town regards and cherishes the history and the legacy of noteworthy individuals who lived in and worked for it. For years the town organised various events and commemorative activities which were nevertheless financially demanding. Maintaining more than twenty existing memorial plaques is rather heavy on the city budget, not to mention of the hundreds of valuable *tombstones* nobody is taking care of.³⁸ Therefore, the town's officials stated that they cannot support the Association's claim financially.³⁹

³⁸ a) The memorial plaques, to which the town hall's reply was referring, are dedicated to notable residents such as Johann Palisa (astronomer), Joy Adamson (naturalist and writer), Joseph Maria Olbrich (architect), and so on.

b) Valuable in their artistic and material quality, the tombstones of the departed German inhabitants are another thorny issue. The town hall often complains that it needs to cover the costs of taking care of and occasionally renovating the tombstones, which by common practice should be the responsibility of the deceased's family, not the town. On the other hand, the Association replies that, if the town wanted the descendants to take care of the tombstones, they should not have been expelled.

³⁹ This argument and its phrasing are identical to those of Dr. Pavel Šopák. When asked whether he wrote this particular letter, his answer was ambiguous. Dr Šopák has been a vocal opponent of both commemorating the German expulsion and realizing the German memorial.

Steffi Pospíšilová

The soothing feeling of familiarity encased me as I entered the flat, which hadn't changed at all since I last visited three years ago. The one-room flat in a concrete Soviet building shines from its bright, yellow painted walls and the flickering sunlight streaming in through an open window. 'Nanuk!?' Mrs Pospíšilová inquired in such a commanding voice, and with such an energy, that I barely managed to mumble something about not having a sweet tooth before an ice lolly is suddenly thrust into my hand. It is hard to believe that this vivacious woman, speaking quickly, in a sharp and somewhat authoritarian voice, was born almost one hundred years ago. Mrs Pospíšilová is not one to get sentimental or nostalgic. She expects nothing less than my full attention, and if I fail to react appropriately to her witty comments just once, she loses interest in talking to me. After all, as chief editor of *Troppauer Nachrichten: Mitteilungsblatt des Begegnungszentrum Troppau*, the only German-language magazine published in Opava, she is busy making sure that the upcoming issue goes to print on time. The *Troppauer Nachrichten* is actually why I decided to visit her again.

'We were liberated by the Germans in 1938' (*v osmatřicátém nás osvobodili Němci*), she said with a strong German accent, not giving me a chance even to catch my breath after such a provocative statement:

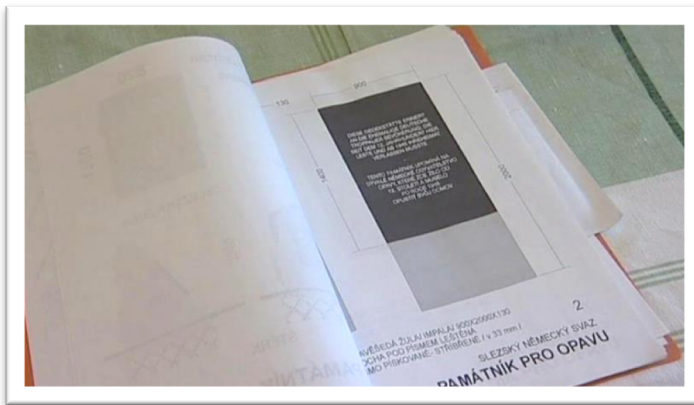
At the end of the War, I was twenty something...When we returned from evacuation, we found our family house destroyed, so we effectively had nothing. At first we went to Germany, to Munich, but returned on the first train. The train had only one wagon filled with people; the rest was for animals. We had to move into a small two-room flat with three other families. Can you imagine? But soon after, the two families were transferred, and we stayed in the flat alone. My mother was Czech, even though she spoke to us only in German, and my father was Austrian. Therefore, we were considered to be a mixed family. We were so glad that the war was finally over. Yet, we knew that the border to the west was about to close. We knew that we would not be able to see relatives and friends who were living abroad any more. My mother was one of nine siblings, and all of them had to go to Germany. My father had only one brother, he was the owner of Priessnitz medical spa resort, but he lost it when he was transferred. A few years ago my GP recommended that I go there for two weeks. The stay was covered by my health insurance, so I went there as a patient. Hysterical, isn't it? I could have been the legal heir of that resort.

After the war, I was sent to a forced labour camp, and my mother had to go to a lager (i.e. detention camp for Germans) even though she was Czech. My father, her husband, died a week after the war began, as he was terminally ill, and my mother was taking care of him and wasn't working, even though she was subject to forced labour as well. Therefore, she was arrested and sent to the detention camp. I was trained as a teacher, but I couldn't speak any Czech, which was a problem because all the German schools started to operate only in Czech. Luckily I was a gifted pianist, and in music it does not matter if you are Czech or German. Thus, I became a piano teacher. There you don't need to speak too much. It was a good thing because I had very little to do with politics.

The Silesian German Association took the reply as positive. In fact, in order to provide the necessary funding for the memorial, the Association, which had never hoped for the town's financial support, had announced a call for donations a long time before. As the city agreed to the idea of the memorial (at least, that is how the reply was interpreted), a number of donors decided to contribute towards the goal. All those I talked to strongly identified themselves with the cause. Consequently, the Association managed to collect a considerable amount of funding. The majority of donors were families and individuals who had previously lived in Opava and their descendants. The three biggest donations came from private individuals living in Prague, Munich, and Australia. Additionally, the Association of Sudetenland expellees based in Munich also became involved and offered its services, both financial and organisational.

In July 2010, two representatives of the Association went to a meeting with Opava's soon to be resigning mayor, Libor Štencel. He expressed his support for the idea, suggesting the city park as a potential location for the memorial to be erected. In his opinion, as the city park was about to undergo revitalisation, it would be a convenient and respectful place for the memorial. He further suggested that the city architect should be commissioned with the project. However, according to the two representatives' accounts provided to the *Troppauer Nachrichten*, the mayor also stressed that it had to be clear from the memorial plaque's inscription that it was referring only to the fact that Germans had lived in Opava, any mention of the expulsions themselves being most unwelcome.

The recently deceased architect Wosseipka, an Opava expellee living in Munich at that time, offered his services and designed one of the first visualisations of the memorial. The visualisation soon turned into a mammoth free-standing construction reminiscent of a mausoleum exclusively commemorating the expulsion. According to Steffi, 'it was gigantic, over-dramatic, and would have cost over a million Czech Korunas. We got



Picture 9. The German memorial's proposed design



Picture 10. Newspaper discussion regarding the memorial

scared,' she said, before looking back into the *Troppauer Nachrichten* in order to reconstruct the story of the unmaterialised memorial for me. Wosseipka's idea was to erect two huge stones split in two and looking like a Rubik cube cut in distinct pieces that nobody could put back together again. 'It would have been way too much', Steffi explained. 'The locals would go crazy. Of course, I understand him. He experienced the transfer first hand as a child, and I can imagine it was nothing pretty, but on the other hand we did not want to get in to trouble with the locals either. We decided to settle for a simple rectangular-shaped stone with an inscription plaque; nothing too big, too fancy, too pricy', she said pragmatically.

By 2012, three years after the negotiations started, it became clear that the Association had misunderstood the town's intentions. Several members of the Association referred to events retrospectively, saying that it felt as if a cat was playing with a mouse. The new mayor, Professor Dvořák, seemed approachable at first, but soon afterwards he asked the Association not to bother him with the issue any longer and to communicate only with his deputy, Jiří Beránek. Mr Beránek was not against the idea of the German memorial and was also willing to consider the city park as a possible place to erect it. He even publicly advocated the memorial in the press. However, the problem was now the

inscription on the memorial plaque. All the parties involved had different visions of what should be inscribed on it. Furthermore, the parties themselves were internally divided regarding the inscription. Even though not entirely united, the Association finally agreed on a text and suggested this version:

In memory of Opava's Germans who lived here
since the 13th Century and in the year 1945 had
to leave the town.

The text proved to be problematic for the city council. First of all, the members of the council had clearly expressed their desire that the expellees should not to be mentioned. The Association, on the other hand, argued that, if the Germans should be commemorated, one needs at least mention their departure, if not the expulsion. 'We wanted the truth or nothing. A stone without an inscription would be just a stone', said Steffi firmly. The town council asked the Association to change the text to this version:

In memory of Opava's Germans who lived here
for centuries and after the lost war had to leave
the town.

However, this variant was seen as unacceptable from the Association's point of view. None of its members I talked to felt that it was 'their war' which 'they lost'. In their view, the Germans who had been living in Opava for centuries were *Sudetendeutsche* (Sudeten Germans) or *Deutschböhmen* (Czech Germans), not *Reichsdeutsche* or even Nazis, and fundamentally had nothing to do with the atrocities of the war. 'Of course there were some Sudeten Germans who collaborated with the Nazis, but so did some ethnic Czechs',

said one member of the Association to me. Then she continued: ‘People need to be punished according to their deeds, not their blood’. However, the ideology of the rightfulness of the collective sentence of guilt over the Germans remains prominent in the dominant Czech national discourse.

The inscription had been changed several times, but no version was found that was satisfactory to all parties. Becoming more and more sceptical about the city’s good intentions, the Association decided to approach another authority in the city, the Christian Church. However, none of the priests in Opava agreed to allow the Association to put the memorial plaque on an outside church wall. The only possibility would be to place a commemoration plaque inside of one of the houses of worship, as the ‘Germans’ (including the Wehrmacht soldiers from the Hlučín area) were traditionally commemorated during the communist era. According to Steffi’s interpretation, the churches were persecuted during the socialist period, and at present they are fighting to get their properties returned. ‘Many of Opava’s priests refused even to arrange an appointment with us’, she said. When I carried out interviews with representatives of various churches in Opava regarding the issue, the general answer I was given was that ‘It is the most sensitive issue, and we cannot get involved’. Apart from the town’s parks and churches, another option that was considered in situating the memorial was the town cemetery, but the Association ruled out this possibility as morbid and demeaning.

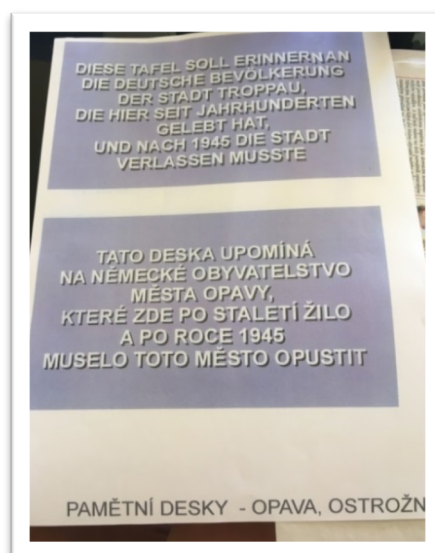
We did not know what to do anymore’, said Steffi, ‘therefore we decided to contact our headquarters in Prague, and Dr Richter [an Association member and an academic from the Silesian University’s Mathematical Institute] wrote an article about the issue in the national journal, the *Landeszeitung der Deutschen in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien*’. Several Czech newspapers, as well as Czech national TV, took up the story, and the unrealised German memorial in Opava was widely debated in the media. The city council

reacted negatively to the media coverage. Mr Beránek announced that, due to the content and form of the published article, he was refusing to communicate with the Association about the memorial any further.

Furthermore, the Sudeten German Homeland Association (Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft), based in Munich and ardently supportive of the memorial, decided to send a committee to Opava to negotiate with Mayor Libor Dvořák and the Opava town council themselves. However, their intervention did not bring about the desired results. On 24 October 2012, the town council voted to refuse to provide the land. Since then, the Association has appealed, but the town has repeated its ruling.

The council's decision brought about various reactions from opponents as well as supporters of the plaque and triggered new media coverage. Representatives of the Silesian University and the Silesian Museum in Opava praised the decision, with only a few noticeable exceptions such as Dr Richter dissenting. A businessman called Dr Bedrich Liška made an offer to put the plaque with an inscription commemorating Opava's Germans on his house on Opava's high street. However, the house was listed under the heritage protection regime, and thus the city's heritage protection committee has yet to approve it. The Association, Sudeten German Homeland Association and Dr Liška jointly agreed on the following inscription:

This plaque commemorates the German inhabitants of the town of Opava, who lived here for centuries and after the year 1945 had to leave the town.



Picture 11. Suggested inscription of the commemoration plaque

As of spring 2017, neither the memorial nor the commemoration plaque dedicated to Opava's German population have been erected.

From the perspective of the Association's members based in Opava, most of whom experienced the period of the expulsions as children, teenagers or young adults, the forced transfer of ethnic Germans involving atrocities such as humiliating, raping, and lynching committed by ethnic Czechs was an act of wickedness. For them, the expulsion can be *contextualised* but not *justified* through the prism of the post-Second World War atmosphere. Similarly, the ideology of national purity and the collective sentence of guilt do not justify the terror committed against Opavian citizens during both the Wild and Organised transfers.⁴⁰ The members generally see themselves as witnesses to the atrocities, and they are actively engaged in the testimonial struggle to impart the unsettling knowledge of what happened.

⁴⁰ Historians commonly differentiate between two phases of the transfer of Germans: first the 'wild phase of the transfer' (*divoký odsun*) right after the war, during which most of the atrocities and acts of personal revenge took place; and secondly the more 'organised' or 'administered' phase (*řízený odsun*) between late 1945 and 1948. Some historians also distinguish a third phase of 'internal transfer' (*vnitřní odsun*) from 1947 to 1953 (Spurný 2011, Dvořák 2003 and 2012).

According to Felman and Laub (1992), for traumatic events to lose their hold over the subjects who experienced them, traumatic memories need to be legitimised and narratively integrated. However, the members' attempts to transform the painful resurfacing of traumatic post-war events into the memorial presence of the past and Opava's official discourse were unsuccessful. The struggle arises from the fact that the town of Opava refuses to accept their testimonies and thus recognise the suffering of the victims and survivors of the ethnic displacement. In light of the above, in order to successfully incorporate the 'German memory' into official discourse and begin to heal a wound that has long laid open, the city would need to act as a confirmatory witness to a painfully elusive past.

Multifaceted Memories: Their Past, Present, and Future

After a number of unsuccessful attempts to set up a meeting with town-hall officials to discuss the commemoration issue, I finally managed to arrange several meetings with the former Mayor of Opava, Professor Libor Dvořák, who served from 2010 to 2014. As well as having a political career and being a renowned academic professor, Professor Dvořák also has also played an important role in the social and academic life of the Silesian University. For example, he was the University's chancellor from 2001 to 2007 and was Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Science from 1997 to 2001, and then again from 2007 to 2011. Currently, he is the Head of the Research Centre for Contemporary History, Historical Memory and Cultural Heritage (1800-2000).⁴¹ Not surprisingly, he is an

⁴¹ Výzkumné centrum pro současné dějiny, historickou paměť a kulturní dědictví (1800-2000). On the Research Centre for Silesian and Centre European Cultural history (1000-1800), see Chapter 6.

influential public figure, commenting frequently on past, present, and future issues that concern Opava, Silesia, the Czech Republic, and the European Union.

Libor Dvořák

Prof Dvořák's office is tidy and spacious. However, the seating layout works to my disadvantage. I feel slightly intimidated and uncomfortable looking at him from a little chair, most likely used by students during oral examination. From my lowered perspective he looks even larger than normally. I felt relieved when we changed the topic from talking about the German memorial - which he was clearly not pleased to talk about - to much lighter questions regarding his background and the origin of his interest in Silesia.

I was born in late 50's in Trutnov, northeast Bohemia... To be honest, I started to be interested in Silesia only because I moved here at the beginning of my academic career. When I was enrolled as a master's student of history at Palacký University in Olomouc I wrote two published papers on the topic of 'history of the textile industry' in the Trutnov area. The research topic was both popular and accessible at that time and I was familiar with the Trutnov context. As you know Trutnov was also a Sudetenland border town, torn between Austrian and Prussian influences.

A former director of the Silesian Institute based in Opava approached me after reading my articles and offered me a PhD position. I was familiar with the history of the textile industry as well as history of Czech-Polish relations after 1945 and I think they simply needed somebody with that background. That was in the mid 80s. Of course I was flattered and accepted the offer. My plan was to stay in Opava only for few years and then move to Prague. However, in the end I have spent here almost my whole life. My wife played an essential role in it. She was born here in Opava and very much wanted to stay in her home town.

Consequently, it just made sense to me to situate my research into Silesian context. Also I became active in the public sphere: I have been involved in the creation and operation of the Euro-region Silesia and I helped to launch the Silesian University. And as you know I have been politically active as well.

During one of my interviews, I asked Professor Dvořák why the town-hall officials had rejected the proposal to erect the memorial and what his view was of the memorial. After all, I pointed out, all versions of the inscriptions are correct statements, at least from a historical standpoint. Are there any discrepancies between his views as a politician and as a modern history scholar? He acknowledged that Opava had been inhabited by Germans, that its Germans had been expelled after the Second World War, and that, from

a historian's point of view, these were indisputable facts. However, he did not see the purpose of erecting a memorial stating this fact:

Yes, a memorial with such an inscription would be truthful. And an equally truthful statement would be that this territory used to be home to Celtic tribes who were pushed out by Slavic and Germanic tribes. That's also correct. But just because it's correct, does it mean that we need to erect a memorial? Probably not, right? We can't have memorials for everything [...] we discussed it, and of course there were proponents as well as opponents among the town-hall officials. I was indifferent. It is, after all, a complicated issue. Nevertheless, we agreed that the memorial would simply be redundant [...] to be honest, from my point of view, it is a marginal affair, and if you had not mentioned it, I would probably have forgotten that it ever happened.

In light of his arguments, I asked why in 2013 the town had decided to erect a commemorative stone with an inscription dedicated to Opava's Jewish population. In his position as mayor and as a prominent historian, Professor Dvořák supported the Jewish memorial and attended the unveiling ceremony. Why is Opava's Jewish population 'worth' remembering, while the German population is not? Furthermore, I pointed out that, like the rest of Czechoslovakia, the Jews living in the Czech lands predominantly spoke German, and, until the Second World War, were considered Germans themselves. In reply to my question, he stated that nobody had opposed the idea of erecting a memorial dedicated to the synagogue at the time, so why should he have been against it? I was perplexed by the ambiguities of my academic informants, including Professor Dvořák. On the one hand, as regional historians they were rigorously working on the expulsion, while as citizens they were simultaneously very reluctant even to admit that the expulsion had taken place.

Following the above discussion, I decided to approach the initiator of the Jewish memorial, Dr Jaroslav Duda, another influential public figure, who helped establish the Silesian University in Opava. He told me that, as a proud local patriot and a Rotarian (a

member of Rotary International),⁴² it was his duty to cultivate the region and educate people about their history. ‘The synagogue was an architectural gem which should be remembered’, he stated. On the other hand, he was staunchly opposed to the idea of commemorating the expelled Opavian Germans. When asked about his reasoning, he told me that it was still just ‘too alive’.

Jaroslav Duda

Jaroslav Duda, a tall charismatic man in his seventies. It was Introduced to him by his son Alexander who suggested that I ask him about the ‘Wehrmacht stories’ that Jaroslav had heard as a child in his uncle’s workshop. Alexander told me:

My grand-uncle was a blacksmith in the Hlučín area, and his smithy was the only place for men to talk frankly. He served in the Wehrmacht as well. There, they could speak openly about the front, what they’d done, and what they saw... after the war, it was a much safer place than a pub, where even the walls had ears. And my dad heard all those stories. You should ask him about that.

During our talks, Jaroslav Duda spoke mostly in standard Czech, but occasionally, phrases and words in Po Naszymu slipped out. When that happened, he quickly corrected himself, as it seemed that these slips invoked a feeling of shame. Jaroslav told me:

I was born in Opava, in 1944. I am from an old Opavian family. Some of my relatives live also in the Hlučín area, but we were not Germans. On the contrary, my mom was a Czech patriot. Yes, a few relatives served in the Wehrmacht, but who from the Hlučín area didn’t, right? Even though people took revenge on them for the war, and it is true that it was quite difficult for them to later find a job, for example. But they had it much easier than Sudeten Germans who were expelled, and yet they usually didn’t serve in any army.

In contrast to the commemoration of the former Jewish population and the Holocaust, therefore, commemorating Opava’s indigenous German population – especially their

⁴² ‘Rotary International is an international service organisation whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and to advance goodwill and peace around the world. It is a non-political and non-sectarian organisation open to all people regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, or political preference. There are 34,282 member clubs worldwide. 1.2 million individuals called Rotarians have joined these clubs.’ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotary_International#cite_note-1

ethnic displacement – is and has been problematic historically. Whether from first-hand experience or from transmitted memories, present-day Opavians know that German speakers used to live in the town, and in overwhelming numbers; nonetheless meaningful silence pervasively followed most of my questions and discussions relating to the expulsion. It would seem that the majority of the present-day population suffers from deliberate collective amnesia regarding the issue. As demonstrated by the vast number of memory studies scholars, the struggle over collective memory is especially intense in societies that are recovering from periods of civil war, state terrorism or ethnic conflict (Cairns and Roe 2003, Natzmer 20002, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). In a society where the past is highly contested, the objective of creating a unified historical narrative that can accommodate the memories of opposing groups presents a particular challenge (Natzmer 2002).

However, in the Opavian context, some memories of minority groups seem to be more challenging than others. Why is it socially acceptable, perhaps even desirable, to acknowledge and commemorate the former Jewish minority and its disappearance institutionally – that is, in the official collective memory of the town – while the same cannot be done when it comes to the former German-speaking majority? At the moment the expulsion is a thorny issue, sometimes ardently discussed and sometimes deliberately silenced. There is currently multi-level disagreement concerning how the previous German presence that was ended with the expulsion will be included in the official Czech national discourse (Spalová 2017).

In terms of facilitating more inclusive modes of assimilating collective memories into collective identities, I argue that the main difference between the ‘Jewish’ and the ‘German’ memorials relates to issues of public admissions of past wrongdoing. As discussed at length in the previous chapters, the ideological legitimization of the German

expulsion is based on the sentence of collective guilt. According to this ideology, all ethnic Germans – men, women and children – are guilty of initiating the war, as well as of the atrocities committed during it, such as the Holocaust. Furthermore, the Germans are seen as solely responsible for all wrongdoing committed against the Opavian Jewish community, despite the evidence suggesting that ethnic Czechs actively participated in the exploitation of the Jewish minority. As is the case with Czech Germanophobia, strong Czech antisemitism and its manifestations during the twentieth century have been a taboo subject in Czech official as well as public discourses (Čapková, 2005).

‘While narratives about the past in Germany have long centred on the script of the penitent sinner’ (Forchtner 2014: 411), the official narrative in the Czech Republic has traditionally blamed Germans for the war and the disappearance of the Jews, as well as the post-war atrocities committed against the Germans. However, the official narrative, which clearly differentiates between Germans, Jews, and Czechs, and portrays ‘Germans’ as the perpetrators, Jews as the ‘victims’, and Czechs as ‘passive bystanders/survivors’, has been increasingly challenged since 1989. Public admissions of Czechs’ past wrongdoing, such as the first official apology issued by the late president Václav Havel or the recent apology of the town of Brno for the violent expulsion of Germans, accompanied by a death march during which approximately 1700 of Brno’s expelled inhabitants died, cannot be ignored. As regards the official narrative, remembering the disappeared Jewish minority is not problematic for the current residents of Opava, as it does not pose any threat to their positive self-image. The ‘Jewish memories’ can be successfully assimilated into the collective identity, where social relations are narrated through notions of shared suffering and victimhood, while constructing the external other – the Germans – negatively. On the other hand, commemorating the expelled German-speaking population within the contemporary mnemonic landscape, in which silencing

the attempts to uncover past Czech wrongdoing committed against the Germans is increasingly seen as illegitimate, imposes a direct threat to the contemporary Opavian community's positive self-perception and desired collective identity.

Forgetting vs. Being Forgotten

As I have argued in earlier chapters, remembering and forgetting are constitutive processes of collective identity formation. Collective memory is continually 'made and remade in the present from present perspectives and for present purposes' (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011: 249) and thus can be examined as an extraordinarily useful tool of identity politics. Various social actors struggle to promote their views of the past and its meaning, and thus collective memory and collective identity are essentially contested. The struggle over memory control regarding the 'German past' can be conceptualised as the struggle between official memory and counter-memory over collective representations of the town of Opava, its heritage, and its inhabitants. As John Bodnar argues, commemoration involves competing groups and ideas vying for supremacy. During the process of commemoration, history, rather than simply being preserved, is often rewritten for the purpose of the new narrative of the past to serve the present ends of the dominant group (Bodnar: 1993). This instrumentalist approach allows me to conceptualise both remembering and forgetting as a single dialectical process that plays a crucial part in negotiating of Silesian identity.

I argue that the active effort to silence the German past in Opava is triggered by the need to manage Opavians' current collective identity. Remembering the previous inhabitants revives Opava residents' feelings of discomfort and anxiety. Those feelings, which occasionally come to the surface, are suppressed by committing the source of them to

oblivion. However, rather than simply forgetting the discomfiting past, talking about the ‘Germans’ is symptomatic of memory loss and collective amnesia in Opavian Silesia. According to Connerton, it is sometimes necessary to discard certain memories in order to maintain a new identity and avoid potential cognitive dissonance (Connerton 2008). Even though Connerton understands this type of forgetting in his schema as operating at the level of the individual, I believe that forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity does not operate only on the individual level, but collectively as well. Opavians had to ‘discard’ the German aspect of their culture and identity in order to acquire the new form of their collective identity, namely Czech national identity.

In the early summer of 2016, as my fieldwork in Opavian Silesia was drawing to a close, I decided to conduct a focus-group interview with the Association’s members to discuss and clarify with them particular aspects of the case of the German memorial. Every week, the Association organises several events for its members, one of which is a singing session on Tuesdays, which I occasionally attended. After one Tuesday afternoon’s singing session, the members and I agreed to stay on to discuss the memorial. Four men and seven women were present, though with the noticeable exception of Steffi, the men clearly dominated the discussion, especially Herbert Hora, the former chairman of the Association.

Herbert Hora,

I was really small so I don’t remember the war. I was born in 1940 in Breslau, Lower Silesian, nowadays Poland. My family and I were expelled because my mom was of German origin. We were transferred first to Brno and there she got really ill. I thought she was going to die. Because her father, my grandfather was Czech, somehow it got sorted out and we could stay in Czechoslovakia.

Hora: *The journey towards the memorial has been really difficult. The city has intentionally and consistently misled us. Just agreeing on the inscription was a nightmare. The inscription was changed four times. It was ridiculous. If you are interested in the topic, you surely know that, prior to the expulsion, about 70% of Opava's inhabitants spoke German, and only 30% spoke Czech. People lived together in peace (v dobré zhodě) and didn't really think about each other in terms of 'this person is Czech, or this person is German'. It was only at the beginning of 1938 that the community started to split apart... The main issue with the memorial inscription was that, using everyday language, we were expelled, we were refugees, but the city wanted us to say that 'we left'. But that's not true! We did not want to leave – we were kicked out. That's not the same! Basically, the town wanted us simply to state that there was a sizable German population in Opava, but they didn't want us to say anything about why Germans are conspicuously absent in the town's make-up today...*

Truparová: *I don't know why people are still refusing to acknowledge it. Did they [the Germans] live here? They did! Were they expelled? They were. They did not leave voluntarily...*

Hora: *As I said at the beginning, the German population had an overwhelming majority here, and they were forcefully expelled, that's a fact. And do you know what the consequence was? The newcomers who came to Opava didn't have any knowledge of our history or understanding of our culture. And the town council is now comprised of those newcomers. There is nobody within the town's representative council who is of indigenous Opavian descent. They don't show any compassion for our cause, because they didn't live or experience it.*

Halfar: *That's right. Look at the mayors as well. Can anybody name a mayor from the past who was originally from Opava?*

Kratochvilová: *They are all 'Johnny-come-latelies' (ganz naplava). They don't know the historical context of the town, and thus they have no understanding.*

Hora: *It's kind of a funny story. When you go to the mayor's office in city hall, the corridor leading towards their office is decorated with Opavian paintings. Of course, all of them say Troppau, not Opava. [laughter]*

Godulová: *But just to be clear, we wanted to reach a compromise. We wanted to find common ground. Which is why we changed the inscription so many times. Before, people lived peacefully here, but then history happened, and we can't lie about what the outcome was...*

Truparová: *A good example that illustrates the previously peaceful cohabitation was the large number of mixed marriages. Ja richtig. There really were so many mixed marriages. It was normal. And often, it was difficult to determine if someone was German or Czech. For example, I am from Bolatice [Hlučín area], and I remember one comical anecdote which really happened. Many years ago, a crew from Czech TV came to the Hlučín area. They were shooting a documentary or something, I don't know exactly what it was, but they asked one really old lady what it was like when the Soviet army came through this region. But because her husband was in the Wehrmacht, she said on camera, first 'ours went through', and the Russians came later. Of course, the Czechs wanted to hear about the liberation by the Soviet army, but instead, she spoke of the German army as 'ours'. Both her husband and her sons were in the Wehrmacht. After the TV crew left, she was afraid she might get into trouble for what she said on TV and the fact that she doesn't know which are 'ours'.*

JM: *How did you come up with the idea to erect the memorial?*

Steffi: *It came from Anna Broyer, from Munich. She was from Opava, but was expelled. Unfortunately, she passed away last year, in 2015. Also, the architect passed away around the same time. And Mr Ondraček, who was the chief negotiator of the matter, is in very poor health at the moment, both mentally and physically. When Anna suggested that Opavians deserve a memorial, we thought it was a good idea.*

JM: *Why do you think the town has been resisting so much?*

Richter: *It is not just Opava. It's the Republic's politics. Fear of the Germans is deep-seated, and the populists feed on it [he gives several examples of politicians who, by being an advocate for Sudeten Germans, jeopardised their careers].*

Halfar: *And also, people are scared that they would have to return the property they seized after the Germans were expelled. Why did they come here? They left wherever they were from and came to the borderland to make a quick profit with minimal work. They robbed the original owners, and they know it... and now they hope that we are going to die soon, so nobody will remember how it all happened.*

Godulová: *Nobody can take it from them anymore, everybody knows that, so why can't they just simply admit that the Germans were here, and by admitting it, create something new, something good.... I know that the issue is generational. In ten years it will be different. Just like it was very different ten years ago. With the new generation, there will come new acceptance.*

Kratochvilová: *But we won't be around to see it (ale to mi tady už nebudem').*

As Mrs Kratochvilová bluntly expressed it, we find ourselves in a situation where the number of surviving witnesses to the war and the post-war events in Opavian Silesia is falling rapidly. The theme of 'disappearance' is employed in narratives by both sides. However, it could not be employed more differently by each. For those who voted against the memorial, Opava's Germans vanished after 'they lost their war', and as such, they belong and have been relegated to the past, not belonging to the present. Furthermore, those opposing the memorial feel no need to revive the subject or to make any attempts at reconciliation. After all, 'the Germans we are talking about have been long gone'. On the other hand, members of the Association who are still living and breathing feel an increasingly urgent need to act, as for them time is the scarcest of resources.

This chapter has discussed the politics of memory regarding Opava town hall's decision not to support the erection of a memorial dedicated to expelled 'Germans'. It also has discussed the challenges faced by the Silesian German Association in their struggle to

obtain the town's official recognition for the German-speaking inhabitants of Opava and their post-war expulsion. Due to the nature and objectives of this chapter, I have focused primarily on those social actors who are directly involved in public negotiations. Obviously, a vast number of other social actors, whether real or imagined, also play an important role in the negotiations. However, it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to consider and explore them all. Instead, this chapter has aimed to provide a fine-grained ethnographic account of the negotiations over the collective representation of the past and present, and more specifically, negotiations regarding the official acknowledgement and acceptance of Opavian Germans and the construction of a memorial commemorating them in post-war Opava.

Chapter 4. Dominant vs. Demotic Discourses of Silesian Memory and Identity

By describing two different arrival stories, I depict two opposing discourses of Silesian identity that exist in Opavian Silesia. The first story describes my initial encounters with Opavian scholars and how I became involved with the Silesian University in Opava. The second story illustrates my first visit to the Museum of the Hlučín Area, and my first realisation that a community effectively and systematically challenging the dominant Czech national discourse resides only a few kilometres from Opava. In the first half of this ethnographic chapter, I illustrate how Opavian intellectuals, trapped in methodological nationalism, interpret Silesian history and identity in terms of Czech national grand narratives, enhancing a primordialist understanding of Silesian ‘Czechness’. In the second half of this chapter, I introduce Hlučín counter-narratives and interpretations of their past and present. Focusing on the creation and existence of the Hlučín museum, as well as on artistic expressions of narrative through visual art and poetry, I provide an account of the elements of the Hlučín demotic discourse. Finally, I argue that, despite their dual discursive competence, alternating between the dominant and demotic discourses proves challenging at times, causing what I call ‘consistency errors’. I demonstrate my argument using the example of how Hlučín representatives represent themselves in the Czech parliament.

The idea of Silesia as a Constitutive Czech Land

The role of the Silesian University in Opava in propagating and perpetuating essentialist ideas of identity arose as early as the pre-fieldwork preparatory stage of my research, when I contacted the University to discuss the possibility of working at the institution as

a visiting fellow during the 2015–2016 academic year. After finding several of the University's phone numbers online, I dialled the first number on the list. After talking to a number of the University's employees by telephone and being shuffled back and forth from one department to another, I was finally transferred to the secretary of the Institute of Central European Studies, who also happened to be an occasional lecturer. At first he was confused by my request to join the University for the upcoming academic year and asked me to elaborate briefly on the content, aims, and objectives of my research. I explained my initial research plan, which was to explore how Silesian identity is negotiated within the Euroregion Silesia, which includes Opava, the Hlučín area, and the Polish town of Racibórz. He replied flatly that my research would not be feasible because of the fact that Poles live in and around Racibórz, while Opava is inhabited by Czechs, and the territory in between, the Hlučín area, is inhabited by Germans. He also told me that I should pick one nationality for the purposes of my research, instead of comparing 'apples and oranges'.

Throughout my fieldwork, I spent a considerable amount of time with local scholars, the majority of whom were historians by training. On my arrival in the field, I officially introduced myself to several senior academics at the University, the Silesian Museum, and the Silesian Archive. My initial interaction with them was tenuous at best, as I was not cognisant of the implicit hierarchical protocols at play, according to which any students and junior scholars are required to approach senior scholars with the proper humility and reticence. Being a relatively young female doctoral candidate enrolled at a well-known 'Western' university complicated my position even further. Nevertheless, after successfully overcoming the initial difficulties and misunderstandings, I made a number of acquaintances across several departments and was able to interact with the University's academic employees (usually male) and administrative support staff (usually

female), both at and outside work. I was able to access the University's facilities, and at the end of the winter semester of 2015, I was allocated a desk in an open-plan office with three other scholars, a professor and two lecturers. I made a conscious effort to participate in the everyday life of the University by attending public lectures, departmental seminars, book launches, exhibitions, anniversary events, and annual festivities, as well as the less formal, more personal gatherings, such as birthday parties, quick lunch breaks, and after-work sessions in the pub.

During the summer semester of 2016, I was also the convenor for two fortnightly courses. I was invited to lecture on any relevant subject, so long as I was willing to conduct the courses in English. In accordance with my genuine research interests, I decided to call one course *Nations and Nationalism*, which I ran for the Faculty of Public Policies. The second I called *Introduction to Memory Studies*, which I convened for the history department. Being closely aligned with the University allowed me not only to become more acquainted with the research being undertaken by the Opavian intellectuals, but also to research Opavian intellectuals as a topic in its own right. During my fieldwork and everyday interactions, I was sure to be very clear and open about the nature of my research and my intention to treat the local academic sphere as a site of my ethnography.

As I have already mentioned in the methodology section in the Introduction, to be taken at least partly seriously, I was expected to familiarise myself with both the existing literature and the primary archival sources. This task, which I found enjoyable, soon proved to be most beneficial. One of the numerous public lectures I attended focused on the history of formal schooling in and around the town of Opava, which, to my delight, also included the Hlučín area. The lecture was clearly well prepared, and the erudition of the lecturer was unquestionable; but the linear historical narrative was suspiciously orderly and tidy, upheld by Czech national sentiment. He outlined and overviewed the

historical periods when students were ‘involuntarily subjected’ to learning German, which he portrayed as oppressive, and when he covered the periods when students were ‘allowed’ to learn Czech, it was conveyed almost like their returning to their ‘rightful’ tongue.

According to the lecturer’s narrative, as a consequence of their formal schooling, the students were able to speak either Czech or German, but never both. This was presented as if their ‘Czech-ness’ or ‘German-ness’ could not be ‘polluted’ by bilingualism, or (even worse) by an ethnolect, which would not fulfil the criteria for either standard Czech or High German. Generally speaking, the view accepted by many Opavians and enhanced by Opavian intellectuals is that Opava and its surrounding areas were inhabited for centuries by both ‘Czechs’ and ‘Germans’ living as two separate and essentialist categories, each of which could speak only one of the two distinct and mutually incomprehensible languages. It was as though Czechs and Germans had lived together in Opava for centuries, but separated by a glass wall. What was made abundantly clear during the lecture was the fact that the quality and style of education was not really worth exploring for the scholar, especially compared to the issues of nationality and the official school language. Even with an exclusive focus on language, however, there was no discussion of any period when Czech and German were taught simultaneously, nor of the possible overlaps between the official language of schooling and how people actually spoke.

Nonetheless, contrary to the popular belief that German speakers and Czech speakers did not interact other than to vie for supremacy, during my archival research I found several local chronicles recording that teaching was, at times, conducted *utrakvisticky* (‘in both

ways') – in other words, in both Czech and German.⁴³ However, this intriguing subject of research would require a reflexive and critical approach towards contemporary nationalist ideologies and the mechanisms by which ordinary people approach and work with such ideologies. Puzzled by the fact that the lecturer had paid no attention to this unknown but relatively common style of schooling, I asked him about it privately after the lecture. He told me that he had never actually examined this phenomenon: 'Now, as you are mentioning it, I recall seeing it [*ultrakvisticky*] here and there, but I never really thought about it as being important, or even something that would require my attention,' he told me. Interestingly, I believe that his answer was genuine, and that he had genuinely never considered the question of multilingualism and cultural hybridity to be a 'blank spot' in Czech Silesian historiography, despite the striking evidence for it.

For example, it is evident from the chronicles that the numbers of students who spoke both languages were often greater than the number of students who spoke only Czech. In this case, it would make far more sense for the lecturer to speak about children who spoke German and children who were bilingual than about those who spoke only Czech. To illustrate this point, a translated copy of the Sudice chronicle (Sudice is a small town or village in the Hlučín area) states that, in 1901, the local Catholic school had 183 pupils, 153 of whom spoke German, one spoke *Moravsky* (Czech), and 29 spoke both (Sudice 1995). Other local chronicles give similar information regarding the prevalence of bilingualism in the region, but the national 'impurity' expressed through multilingual competence is often omitted in the official historical narratives. From the perspective of the dominant Czech nationalist narrative, from the beginning of the nineteenth century Silesia

⁴³ The words *Utrakvismus* (noun) and *Utrakvisticky* (adjective) come from the Latin phrase *sub utraque specie*. From historiographical perspective is more commonly associated with Calixtinism, according to which both bread and wine should be administered during the Eucharist. In the context of the chronicles discussed above, it is most likely that the chroniclers used the word metaphorically as 'in both ways'.

belonged to the Great Moravian Empire and later became a constituent part of the Bohemian Crown Lands, although with ‘some interruptions’. Silesia is thus portrayed as a Czech land inhabited by Czechs who, for centuries, had to defend themselves against the German element (*bránili se německému živlu*).

Reflecting on my pre-fieldwork experience and the fieldwork itself, the majority of the employees at the Silesian University in Opava, the Silesian Museum in Opava, the Silesian Archive, and Opava’s town hall⁴⁴ were the main proponents and defenders of the dominant Czech nationalist discourse. Through their everyday practice, Opavian intellectual elites promote the implicit notion that Opava is and always has been part of Czech cultural heritage (as opposed to being Austrian/Silesian/German). Consequently, this notion of ‘Opavian Czechness’ derives from the dominant discourse and is deeply embedded in official Opavian commemoration practices and festivities, museum exhibitions, university syllabi, academic and non-academic publications and lectures, promotional tourism materials, and so on. In contrast to the dominant discourse, the demotic discourse adopted by the inhabitants of the Hlučín area promotes an understanding of Silesian identity as ambiguous and closely linked to processes of cultural hybridity and creolisation. Drawing on Wimmer’s (2013) definition of ethnic nomenclature, I argue that Opavian intellectuals operate with an understanding of ethno-nationalism that is essentialist (as opposed to situationalist) and primordialist (as opposed to instrumentalist). Repeated countless times by Opavian intellectuals during my fieldwork, the assertion that Opava ‘is and always has been Czech’ is far from being apolitical; it is a political account, a claim to legitimacy addressing the question of the

⁴⁴ Many of my correspondents held positions at all these institutions.

rightfulness of the German expulsion and of the presence of the newcomers in the context of the contested urban space (as I thoroughly demonstrate in Chapter 3, above).

The issue of ‘intellectuals being in the service of nationalist ideology’ is not an entirely novel topic of research. In their paper ‘Intellectuals and Nationalism: Anthropological Engagements’, Dominic Boyer and Claudio Lomnitz ask ‘to what extent are intellectuals artisans of nationalism? ... [What is] the agency of intellectuals in the process and operations of states and nations?’ (2005: 105). Even though anthropologists have traditionally coordinated their analyses of cultures and societies with the assistance of native intellectuals, intellectuals and their social role only emerged as an explicit field of research in anthropological writing in the 1990s (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005). In studies focusing on the place and role of intellectuals within the social dynamics of national identity formation and the politics of belonging, intellectuals appear as relatively privileged citizens in their capacity to articulate the multifaceted elements of cultural knowledge and difference (ibid.). The role and agency of intellectuals in shaping the semiotics and narratives of identity and belonging associated with particular ethnic, national, or regional polities has become an important focus in anthropological scholarship (ibid.).

For example, Herzfeld proposes that anthropologists should focus more on the agency of intellectuals behind nationalist imaginings and everyday national idioms, rather than solely on social institutions and structure (Herzfeld 1997b, in Boyer and Lomnitz 2005). Recognising the agency of intellectuals in nationalism furthers our understanding of how and why nationalist imaginations cultivate social reality (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005). Similarly, Verdery suggests studying intellectuals as a means of analysing the cultural politics of nationalist discourse itself: ‘Intellectuals engage in contests over different definitions of cultural value, competence and authority; they strive to impose their

definitions of value and to gain recognition for their versions of social reality' (Verdery 1991: 18, in Boyer and Lomnitz 2005: 109). Boyer and Lomnitz further discuss the role of intellectuals in nationalist discourse, stipulating that intellectuals are ideally (and, perhaps, uniquely) placed in a space where they appear to embody the epistemic contradictions and disparateness often associated with national identity and its social and political construction (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005: 113).

The fact that Opavian intellectuals articulate Opavian history within a Czech national framework and as a part of a Czech national history, rather than as part of a 'Silesian ethnohistory', can be theorised by applying Wimmer's explanation of methodological nationalism. According to Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), until the end of the 1990s modern history was largely written as the history of nation states and their relationship to each other, as opposed to regional or indigenous dynamics and histories. This was informed by the historians' underlying assumption of methodological nationalism, meaning that a particular nation would provide the constant unit of observation through all historical transformations (*ibid.*). In 'Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', Wimmer and Glick Schiller argue that scholars have tended to approach social phenomena around the boundaries of the nation state, which as a consequence creates a conceptual blind spot, making it difficult to capture certain crucially important forms of social interaction and structure (*ibid.*). The authors distinguish three modes of methodological nationalism that have characterised academic writing: ignorance, naturalisation, and territorial limitation (*ibid.*: 308).

First, the researcher's own experience of modern nation states becomes so integral to his/her world view that the principles of the nation state are subsumed and internalised to such a degree that they are taken for granted and become invisible as possible objects of

critical enquiry. The second mode of methodological nationalism takes ‘national discourses, agendas, loyalties and histories for granted, without problematizing them or making them an object of analysis in its own right. Instead, nationally bounded societies are taken to be the naturally given entities to study’ (ibid.: 304). Finally, the third mode of methodological nationalism deals with issues of scale and the territorialisation of the scientific imaginary. Wimmer and Glick Schiller argue that, because of methodological nationalism, academic research is often limited to the territory of the nation state. The authors suggest that the framework of methodological nationalism itself contributes to the shaping of the nation state. The main problem with this approach is that it reduces the ability of historians and social scientists to identify and study transnational or subnational social phenomena that are actually of great importance to understanding the contemporary world. As seen above, methodological nationalism, its implicit assumptions, the underlying framework, and its limitations and drawbacks form a common theme running throughout my research, both theoretically and methodologically. In the field, I found that much of the unwillingness to question the dynamics of the relationship between territories, regions, identities, and national boundaries stemmed from the conceptual framework and ideology of methodological nationalism.

Counter-Narratives of a Silesian Past

In contrast to the focus on the dominant discourse, this chapter and the one that follows explore cases in which versions of the past are considered inconvenient and difficult. Instead of being erased from memory, however, these versions are publicly acknowledged and embraced as a past that should nevertheless be remembered and commemorated. As such, I employ the concept of ‘difficult heritage’ (Macdonald 2009)

and focus on the joint efforts of the Hlučín area's representatives to make sense of, cope with, and institutionalise collective memory into the public memory while preserving a positive self-perception and collective identity. According to Macdonald's definition of 'difficult heritage', a particular heritage becomes difficult when it is recognised as meaningful in the present, but is also perceived as a potential contestation of the group's positive self-perception and consequent contemporary identity (Macdonald 2009).

The act of remembrance and commemoration involves competing groups and ideas vying for dominance and supremacy. During the process of commemoration, history, rather than simply being preserved, is often rewritten to serve the present needs of the dominant group (Bodnar 1993). Throughout most of the Hlučín area's nearly a hundred years of existence, its inhabitants have been severely marginalised culturally, socially, economically, and politically by Czechoslovaks and later by the government of the Czech Republic (see Plaček 2000, Mečiar 2008, Kubátová 2015). Hlučínians, who have a very different historical experience compared to the rest of the Czech Republic, were time and again ostracised as the 'Other', as 'Closet-Germans' or 'traitors'. In much the same way, their vernacular cultural expressions have been habitually disregarded or sneered at throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Experiencing systematic harassment and public humiliation everywhere outside the Hlučín area, the Hlučínians closed ranks and formed a cohesive, but secluded community with strong neighbourly and family bonds and a significantly robust tradition of oral history.

As I illustrate below, however, there have been several successful attempts over the last decade to incorporate the Hlučínians' collective memories into public discourse and public memory, challenging the official Czech national historical discourse. According to Bodnar, 'public memory emerges from the intersection of official memory and vernacular cultural expressions' (1993: 14). In this view, vernacular memories and other cultural

expressions stem from local social actors' first-hand experiences and their transmission to younger generations, rather than from national 'imagined' communities (ibid.). Vernacular memories, which are often ambiguous and conflicting, consist of a diverse and changing 'array of specialised interests' that might clash with one another (ibid.). The more systematised and teleological official historical narratives (put forward largely by leaders and authorities concerned with social unity and to promote the continuity of existing institutions and maintain the status quo) often relies on dogmatic formalism and the restatement of reality in ideal rather than complex or ambiguous terms (Bodnar 1993).

Over the last 28 years (1989–2017), the official historical narrative regarding the 'solution' to the 'German question' (the question of the identity and fate of *Deutshböhme*, ethnic Germans living in Czechoslovakia), which was based on notions of collective guilt and perceived the German expulsions as the rightful punishment and as the 'inescapable solution' to 'ethnic impurity', has been repeatedly challenged. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989, and following the fall of the socialist regime, the discussion and acknowledgement of the 'German question' and its 'solution', which materialised in the form of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing, re-emerged in the public discourse. A number of politicians, artists, intellectuals, and cultural leaders, as well as several institutions and municipalities, publicly expressed their dissatisfaction with the official stance of the Czech Republic and questioned the morality and justice of the expulsions. These expressions of penitence and regret are, in turn, often met with hostility by those who support and advocate the expulsions. Nevertheless, the very fact that the topic has been reopened for public debate after approximately forty years (1948–1989) of repressive erasure and prescriptive silence enables different social actors to negotiate their own understanding of (and position towards) the 'German question'.



Picture 12. Hlučín Museum, entrance to the permanent exhibition, 'Who are the people in the Hlučín area?' On the left-hand side of the picture is the 'wall of time', which represents the passage of history in the Hlučín area with milestones highlighted by inscriptions on silver plaques.

At the beginning of my research project, I intended to investigate how Silesian identity was conceptualised, negotiated and manifested in the Czech-Polish borderlands in relation to the Czech and Polish nation states and the rising national sentiment in both countries. Before I even arrived, however, I realised that the social dynamics were quite different to what I expected. What I had not expected, and what was immediately apparent, were the different discursive oppositions of native/newcomer and *Prajzák/Cíсарák* in the multi-layered identities of local social actors, which proved to be an important element of everyday reality lived by the local populations. I was told by many of my early fieldwork informants that, in the case of Opavian Silesia, the real tensions were not between Czechs and Poles (as is the case for Cieszyn Silesia) but between Slavs and Germans. I was also told that the *remaining* Germans live in *Prajská*

(the Hlučín area). Consequently, a few weeks after my arrival in Opava, I decided to explore the ‘land where Germans remain’. I drove to the nearby town of Hlučín, and the first thing I visited was the ethnographic Museum of the Hlučín Area. I was taken aback by its contents. Even though these towns are only twenty kilometres apart, the differences in and between how the local populations’ identities are interpreted and displayed in the Silesian Museum in Opava and the Museum of the Hlučín Area could not be more striking.

The Museum of the Hlučín Area (*Muzeum Hlučínska*) is the only museum within the town of Hlučín, hereafter simply referred to as the ‘Hlučín Museum’. The museum was established in 2005 as a public-benefit corporation. The Hlučín town hall and the Association of the Hlučín Area Municipalities are the main financial donors to the museum. In terms of its collections, the museum is dependent on the involvement and generosity of Hlučín residents. This economic and cooperative dependence significantly influences the relationship between the museum, Hlučín area’s municipalities, and the area’s inhabitants. Trust seems to be the most important aspect of the relationship: trust that the museum will fairly represent the people of the Hlučín area, that the people will in return support the museum, and that the municipalities’ mayors will use their political power to support the museum’s activities (which will in return support the Mayors’ political power).

Thirteen years ago, Hlučín town hall allocated a few empty rooms in Hlučín Castle to the museum, which is where it is based at present, together with the town’s public library and the tourist information centre. The Hlučín Museum cooperates closely with a number of local associations and initiatives, including the Local Action Group (LAG) of the Hlučín Area and Opavian Silesia’s Tourist Region. A number of the museum’s individual supporters and frequent visitors have also established the ‘Friends of the Museum of the

Hlučín Area Association'.⁴⁵ The members pay a nominal yearly fee and in return receive regular e-mail newsletter and a printed copy of the *Hlučín Area Ethnographic Journal*,⁴⁶ as well as personalised invitations to all of the museum's events, including a yearly sightseeing excursion to Polish Upper Silesia. The members gather at a semi-annual meeting, where association members and museum's representatives discuss suggestions publicly and vote about future plans for the museum.

Before the Hlučín Museum was established, the majority of collectible artefacts from the area had been acquired and housed in the Silesian Museum in Opava. These artefacts consisted mostly of various paintings, pieces of antique furniture, historical tools, and so on. As discussed earlier in this chapter, however, regarding collectible artefacts in private family collections such as photos, military uniforms, and Nazi memorabilia, there has been much hesitation among Hlučínians in donating artefacts of such emotional and cultural significance to the Silesian Museum, given the oscillations in the reception given to these sorts of collections, which depends largely on the cultural origins of the organisation in question). This is especially the case because many Hlučínians see the Silesian Museum as a Czech nationalistic institution that has purposefully misrepresented and demonised the Hlučín area's inhabitants and their past. As such, even though the Hlučín Museum began with no pre-existing collections and without sufficient financial means to purchase collectible items, it has managed to attract local support and material donations. As Cyril Fojtík, one of the museum's main backers, its founder and now its Director, puts it: 'In fact we started from scratch, having only pen and paper to sketch out the endless possibilities'. After nine years of rigorous research and systematic collecting, however, the gradually acquired collection of items ranging from historical artefacts, audio-visual

⁴⁵ *Společnost přátel muzea hlučínska*.

⁴⁶ *Hlučínsko: Vlastivědný časopis*.

recordings, photographs, and paintings to objects of everyday use was sufficient in volume to open a permanent ethnographic exhibition in 2014, using the core question the exhibition seeks to answer as its title: ‘Who Are the People in the Hlučín Area?’⁴⁷ In 2016, enough revenue was raised to print and display a large, descriptive exhibition catalogue for tourists and locals alike.

At present, the museum simultaneously runs its permanent exhibit alongside a temporary exhibit, which changes approximately every three months. Together with the running of the exhibitions, researching, educating, and collecting personal narratives, life histories, printed documents, photographs, and historical objects, the museum actively supports and encourages various publications. As a result, a number of monographs or edited volumes focusing thematically on the Hlučín area and its inhabitants have been printed and distributed over the past decade. In cooperation with the Friends of the Museum of the Hlučín Area Association, the museum also publishes the above-mentioned semi-annual *Hlučín Area Ethnographic Journal*, which focuses on the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The museum also organises a number of social events, such as book launches, public lectures, and discussions about the area and its inhabitants.

⁴⁷ *Kdo jsou lidé na Hlučínsku?*

Cyril Fojtík

Cyril, a historian by training, was born in neighbouring East Moravia in 1974. In 2000 he moved to the town of Hlučín for personal reasons and has lived there ever since. At present he is the Director of the Hlučín Museum in the town of Hlučín.

I've been living here in the Hlučín area for nearly sixteen years, enough time for many hatchets to be buried. People got used to me, and I got used to them. The fact that I am deeply religious, like many of the locals here, helped a lot in overcoming our differences. I moved to 'Prajžská' because of my wife, who is originally from here, and she wanted to live with her kinsfolk. Without her, and without the acceptance and patronage of her relatives, I would not have been able to make it here. Originally, I am a Wallach [a person from Moravian Wallachia, or 'Valašsko', a mountainous region located in the easternmost part of Moravia in the Czech Republic]. After I moved here, I took a job as an elementary schoolteacher in the village of Bohuslavice. It was kind of a sink or swim initiation, and I surely made a splash. In the Hlučín area, people really differentiate between the natives and the newcomers [mistní and náplava], and I was clearly a newcomer who was teaching their native children.

I mostly taught history, geography, and the catechism. I was surprised to learn that these kids, who were between twelve and fifteen at that time (they are nearly thirty now), knew quite a lot about the specificities of their region; they knew that they, Hlučín, were different from the people living beyond the river, and that their grandfathers had fought in the Wehrmacht. Even though it was on the syllabus, I could not teach them standardised Czech national history. First, they would not have had it, and secondly, it would have been morally wrong. Most of the core themes of Czech national history, such as the 'Czech National Revival' of the 18th and 19th centuries, simply does not relate to this area. The Hlučín area, which in fact did not even exist a century ago, was not part of Austria-Hungary, and as such, most of Czech modern history is simply not relevant. Therefore, while teaching, I focused on regional history, if you will. Throughout the broader socio-historical context, I tried to explain to them, for example, why their grandfathers fought in the Wehrmacht or why their grandparents spoke German and not Czech. My conscience would not allow me to teach them standardised Czech history, something that was not necessarily true for them. It would not have been fair to teach them historical clichés from the inlands without telling them that their past is different.

Unlike in the socialist days, when the teachers working in the Hlučín area were almost always exclusively from the 'Czech' inlands, many of my colleagues were Prajžáci themselves and they were glad that I kind of sorted it out for them [how to address the question of the Hlučín's past and identity]; I broached the subject without any guilt or shame, and I also provided general suggestions on how we could speak of the region's unique history in class. Sometimes it is easier for an outsider to break a taboo. This is how I got involved in the idea to establish a museum to reflect the distinct history of the Hlučín area's inhabitants. The former principal of the school where I was teaching came up to me and told me that the town hall was thinking about different ways to utilise the castle space in the middle of the town of Hlučín. To me it was clear that it should be turned into a museum. To be honest, I never really understood why there wasn't already an ethnographic museum about the Hlučín. Again, maybe it takes an outsider to do that. On the other hand, I am so grateful that I am surrounded and supported by my colleagues, who are Prajžáci by origin. No matter how many decades I've lived here, I will be always a newcomer (náplava); I would not typically have the legitimacy for doing what I am doing. The Hlučín area is strongly conservative; there are many taboos, and people still don't want to re-open some topics from the past, but since the well-respected locals back me and are working with me, it is possible.

According to Cyril, even though the Hlučín identity is a sub-identity of the Silesian identity, people from beyond the river⁴⁸ (*Cíсарáci*) are thought of as being very different from Hlučínians (*Prajzáci*): ‘I thought the fact that there was no institution to represent the Hlučín area’s unique cultural heritage and the specific identity of Hlučín area inhabitants was outrageous.’ He continued: ‘When I first began building and creating the museum, the first question we asked was “What should we be collecting?”’ The museum is surrounded by two colossal institutions on both sides, the Silesian Museum in Opava to the west, and the Ostrava Museum to the north-east. Both of them fill a number of impressive buildings, are centuries old, and have collections that include millions of items. At the beginning of the project, therefore, the newly emerging Hlučín Museum had to choose its strategy carefully to survive. ‘Yes’, says Cyril, ‘we could have had conceptualised the museum as a traditional ethnographic museum focusing on folklore, traditional craftsmanship in Silesia, local culture, and historical artefacts, but we would only have duplicated what other nearby, well-established museums were doing, or are at least trying to do.’ Instead, Cyril and his associate Josef Nichtmiller started to record and collect oral histories, life histories, and personal narratives.⁴⁹ Cyril told me:

The oral history in this area is different from that of any other part of the Republic. Our goal has been to audio-record the local population’s authentic narratives and accounts of their first-hand experiences. We felt this was important, as, over the past two decades, the generation that could remember the early days of the existence of the Hlučín area and the events of the Second World War has been vanishing rapidly. From the very beginning, we tried to collect as many stories as we could, but even then it was quite late; it was already sixty years after the war. At this very moment, as we speak [December 2015], a huge majority of our respondents are already gone. I deeply regret that we didn’t start earlier.

⁴⁸ The common expressions used in Opavian Silesia are *za řekou* (beyond the river) and *před řekou* (in front of the river). Cyril used the term *z pozavody*, which has the same meaning as ‘beyond the river’, but his word choice clearly indicates his Moravian affiliation.

⁴⁹ Josef Nichtmiller, one of my informants and now my friend, has often acted as a gatekeeper in the field, providing me with access and guidance. As he has been an important person in my fieldwork, he appears in several chapters of this dissertation.

The recordings that the museum has managed to collect are available in the museum's study room for visiting researchers and public visitors. During my part-time shifts at the museum, I met several visitors searching for their ancestors and narratives connected to their family trees. These visitors were mainly the grandchildren or other family members of the museum's elderly respondents who either had never met their grandparents at all, or had not met them at a time when they could have had meaningful conversations as two fully conscious adults. Through the audio and video recordings stored and available in the museum's study room, these visitors were able, to some extent, to reconnect with their forebears.

An important project in which the museum participated was *the Hlučín Century Comic*, financed and published by the LAG of the Hlučín Area, and consulted, co-created, and promoted by the museum.⁵⁰ As illustrated by the 'Hlučíns in the Parliament' (this chapter) and the 'Opening of the Tourist Season' (Chapter 6), the comics, together with the poem *How It Was for Us*, never lack for promotional events.

As a testament to the multicultural foundation and history of the region, the text of the comic employs five different languages. The primary language is standard, but there are also passages written in **standard Czech**, Po Naszymu, **German**, Polish, *French*. In order to make the comic accessible to the reader, I have translated the comic into standard English. Further, to help identify the original language of each panel, I have used different fonts (as seen in the previous sentence) to aid the reader in their understanding.⁵¹

⁵⁰ An initiative established by the European Commission through The European Network for Rural Development. LAGs are the mainstay of the implementation of the LEADER-CLLD approach. Their responsibilities include the development of local strategies, supporting stakeholder networking and the appraisal and approval of individual LEADER projects.

⁵¹ The original version of the comic is provided in Appendix 1

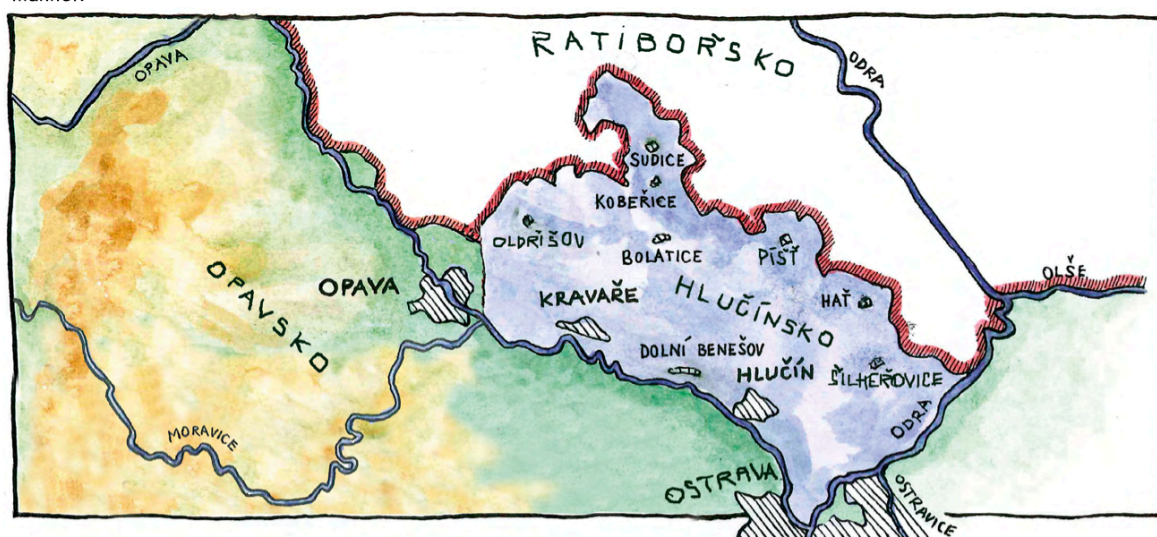
The Hlučín Century comic

What do slightly rolling farmlands, houses and churches built of red fire bricks, glacial erratics, pre-war Czechoslovakian fortifications, picturesque aristocratic residences, sparkling clean streets and hardworking people have in common? This is all we could find in the Hlučín area, located between the towns of Opava and Ostrava. In the south it is defined by the river Opava, and in the north, by the Polish border. Although it is not a large territory, given that it is only 1/250 of the entire Czech Republic, it offers a great number of eclectic and unique attractions. The reason and foundation behind everything that is distinct about the Hlučín area is primarily the area's unique history.

In fact, it is a relatively young area which will soon be enjoying its centennial celebration. It was established in the 1920s when the Central European monarchies fell after the First World War. Czechoslovakia then managed to get a piece of land from the defeated Germany. It was a remarkable event, as this area was the only part of Silesia that was lost in the 18th century and later returned to the Czech lands. And even though it was not that long ago and this region was not even called the Hlučín area yet, it is an old historical area which has been inhabited by its native population for centuries, despite the changes of State affiliations. Since the first half of the 18th century, Prajzáci, as the local people are called, have successively been citizens of Austria, Prussia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Czechoslovakia again, and finally of the Czech Republic. This odd and peculiar situation was solely experienced by the Prajzáci. The things like this just did not happen to the other inhabitants of this country.

Moreover, the lives of the local people were strongly influenced by the close presence of the State border. As the borders continuously moved, the inhabitants of the Hlučín area got to know the border from both sides. All of which has been imprinted into the local dialect, culture, traditions, mentality and identity.

Even though the old German neighbours disappeared after the Second World War, and at present the border is said to have lost its original purpose, the distinctive features of Hlučín culture have persisted. Whether the Hlučín area's identity will be able to maintain and sustain itself in the face of globalisation remains to be seen. It is not our goal to preserve these specific relics of the Hlučín's past. We only want to shed light on their roots and origins in a less traditional manner.

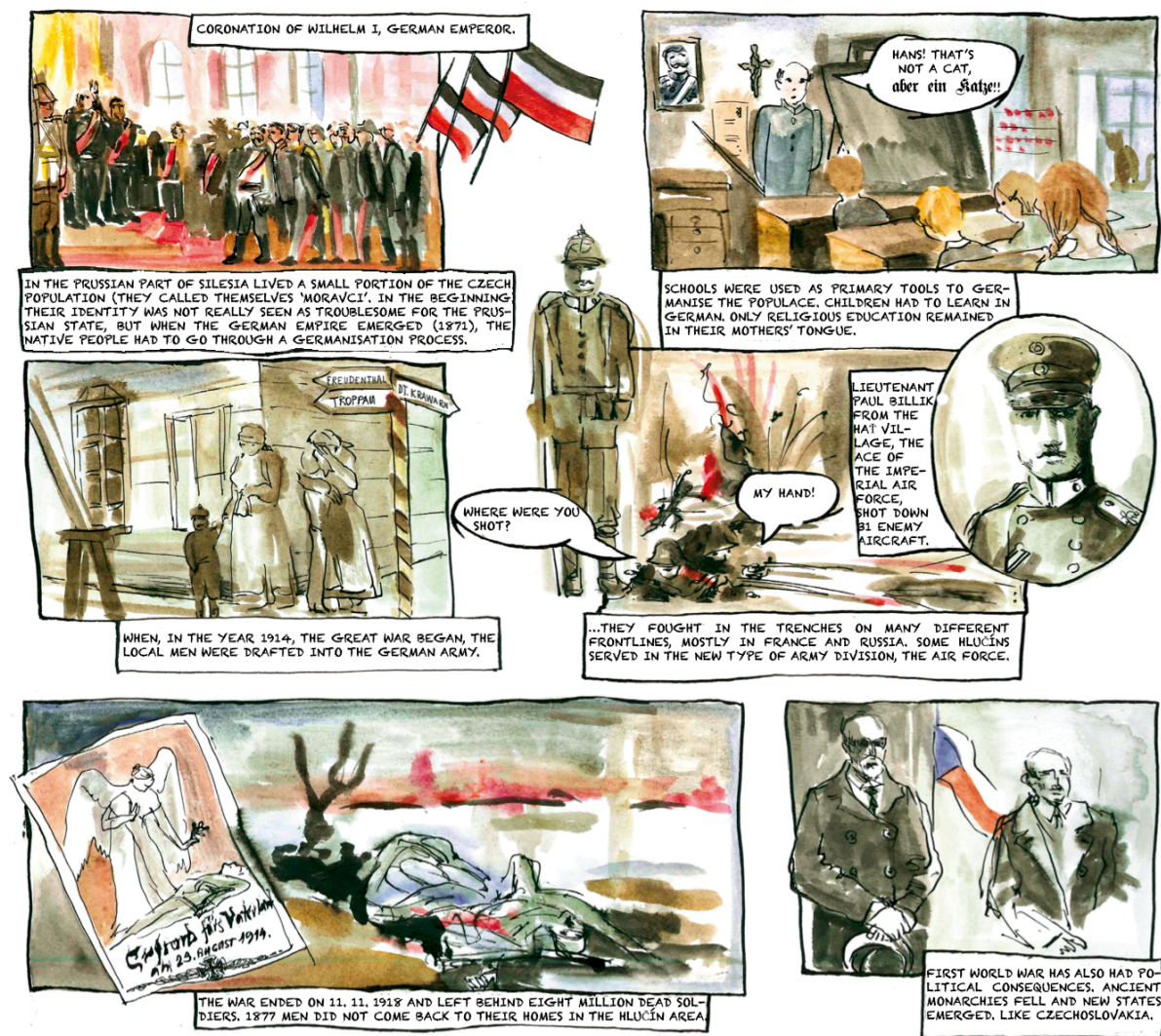


The first page of the comic provides an introduction to the Hlučín area and sets the scene.

It briefly highlights features and characteristics commonly associated with Hlučín identity (by the Hlučín themselves, as well as by those outside the area), such as the allusion to 'sparkling clean streets'.⁵² This small window provides the basic cultural, historical and geographical background for the reader, emphasising virtues such as 'hard work' and the region's pride in its 'unique history'.

⁵² Within the Hlučín area, a highly regimented cultural practice of communal 'street sweeping' occurs every Saturday morning.

The second page of the comic introduces the role and importance of Opava's river. It acts as a geographical and symbolical referential point that divides Austrian Silesia and Prussian Silesia. This very division underlies the historical circumstances behind the first partition of Silesia.



Interestingly, another page of the comic suggests that there was a sequestered population of 'Czech' people (as opposed to just Slavic speakers) living within Prussia who called themselves the Morawecs.⁵³ While they were generally left to their own devices, after the foundation of the German Empire in 1871, the Morawecs were forced to undergo

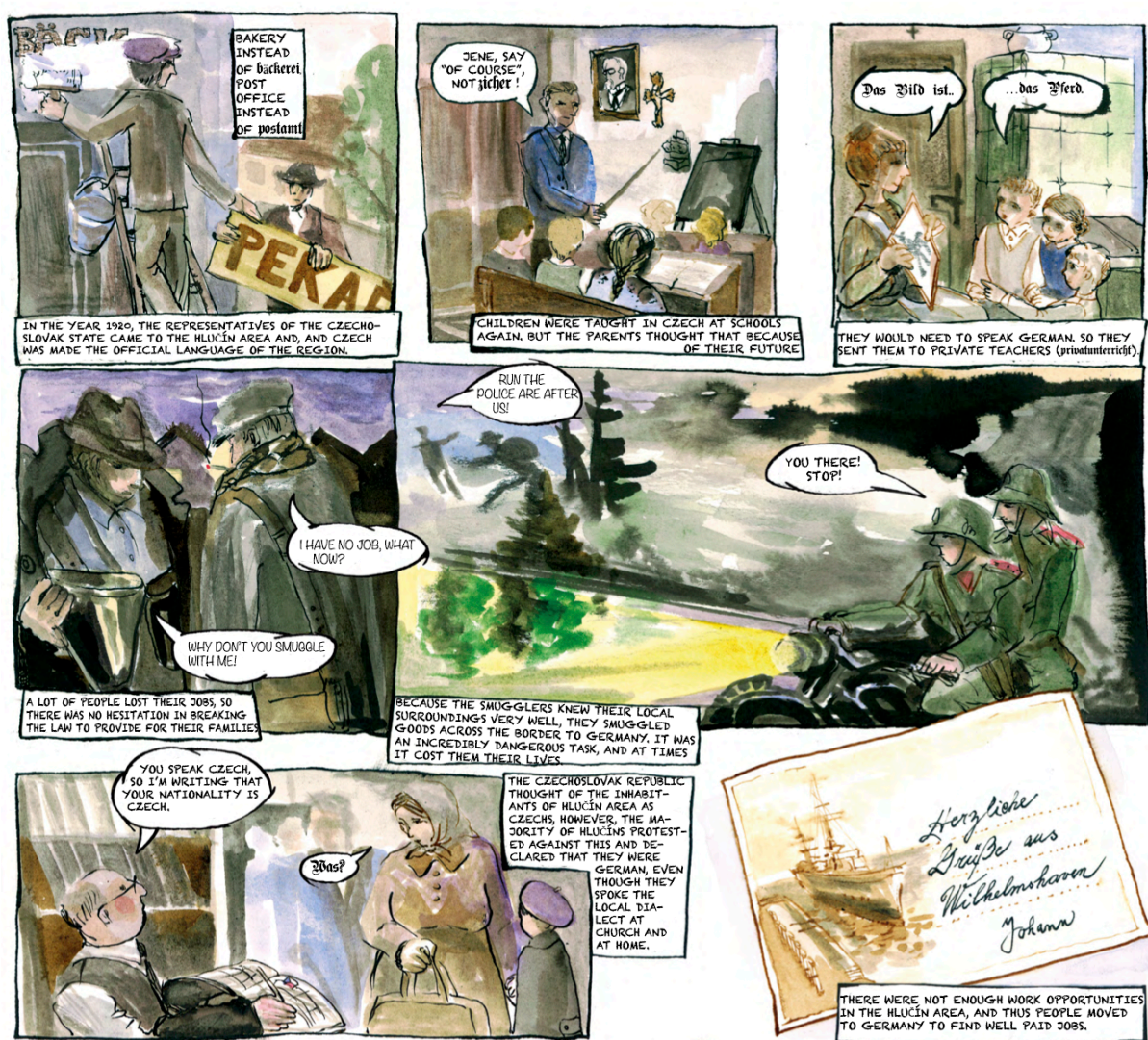
⁵³ See the Introduction for more on the concept of the Morawecs.

a process of 'Germanisation'. One of the consequences of this was that, with the exception of their catechism lessons, children were made to study in German at school. Furthermore, during the First World War, Hlučín men were conscripted into the German Imperial Army.

Under the ceasefire conditions and concessions of the First World War, as agreed by the Allied states, the country of Czechoslovakia was born. Shortly after its recognition, it began claiming and lobbying for strips of Prussian Silesia's land. Finally, it was decided that Czechoslovakia would be permitted to annexe the southern strip of the Racibórz area. At the centre of page four is depicted a French General Henri Le Rond drawing a straight line on the map. This highlights the fact that the new border was arbitrarily defined by a military man with very limited sensitivity towards the complex social relations and family ties of the native population. It also provides an explanation for why Hlučín's opposed the annexation by Czechoslovakian troops in February 1920.

As the fifth page (below) explains, after the annexation, standard Czech became the official language of public communication and education in the Hlučín area. However, many Hlučín's decided that their children would receive education in German through private schooling. With the inevitable loss of access to the German job market, many Hlučín's struggled economically. Smuggling was a quick but illegal solution to the problem of how to make a living.⁵⁴ Alternatively, some Hlučín's also temporarily moved to Germany as economic immigrants.

⁵⁴ Commonly smuggled items were alcohol, cigarettes, shoes, and other consumer goods.



The worrisome economic condition of many Hlučín improved due to new job opportunities related to the rapid fortification of the state border. Nevertheless, as the sixth pages of the comic suggests, many Czechoslovakian Germans wanted to join the increasingly powerful Germany, opting to directly support Adolf Hitler. With the Second World War looming, Czechoslovakia prepared to defend its borders; as a result of the Munich agreement, however, the country was instead forced to relinquish its borderlands, where the majority of inhabitants were Germans. With positive public sentiment and support behind it, the German army annexed the Hlučín area.

Seventh page explains that after the southern strip of Racibórz County was ceded to the Germans, the official language reverted back to German. When the Second World War broke out, Hlučín men were called up to join the Wehrmacht and fight on behalf of Nazi Germany. With the men away at war, the Hlučín women had to do the men's work for their families to survive, replacing their male family members in hard agricultural labour (interestingly, there is no mention of the work carried out by forced labour).). During the war, many soldiers from the Hlučín area lost their lives.

Pages eight and nine illustrate that at the end of the war, as the ever-moving front approached, the Hlučíns who managed to survive (mostly women, children, and elderly) were forced to flee. The journey to safety, however, and away from the repercussions of war, was just as dangerous as staying behind. A great number of people were killed, much of the land was razed, and many houses burned down. After the Second World War, the Hlučín area was handed back to Czechoslovakia, and the official language became Czech once again. In comparison with the rest of the Czechoslovakian borderlands, the German expulsions did not take place in the Hlučín area (with a few exceptions). After the 'Victorious February' of 1948, Hlučíns were forced to give up their small businesses and join the state-mandated cooperative farming scheme. Hlučíns were also persecuted for their open adherence to the Roman Catholic Church.

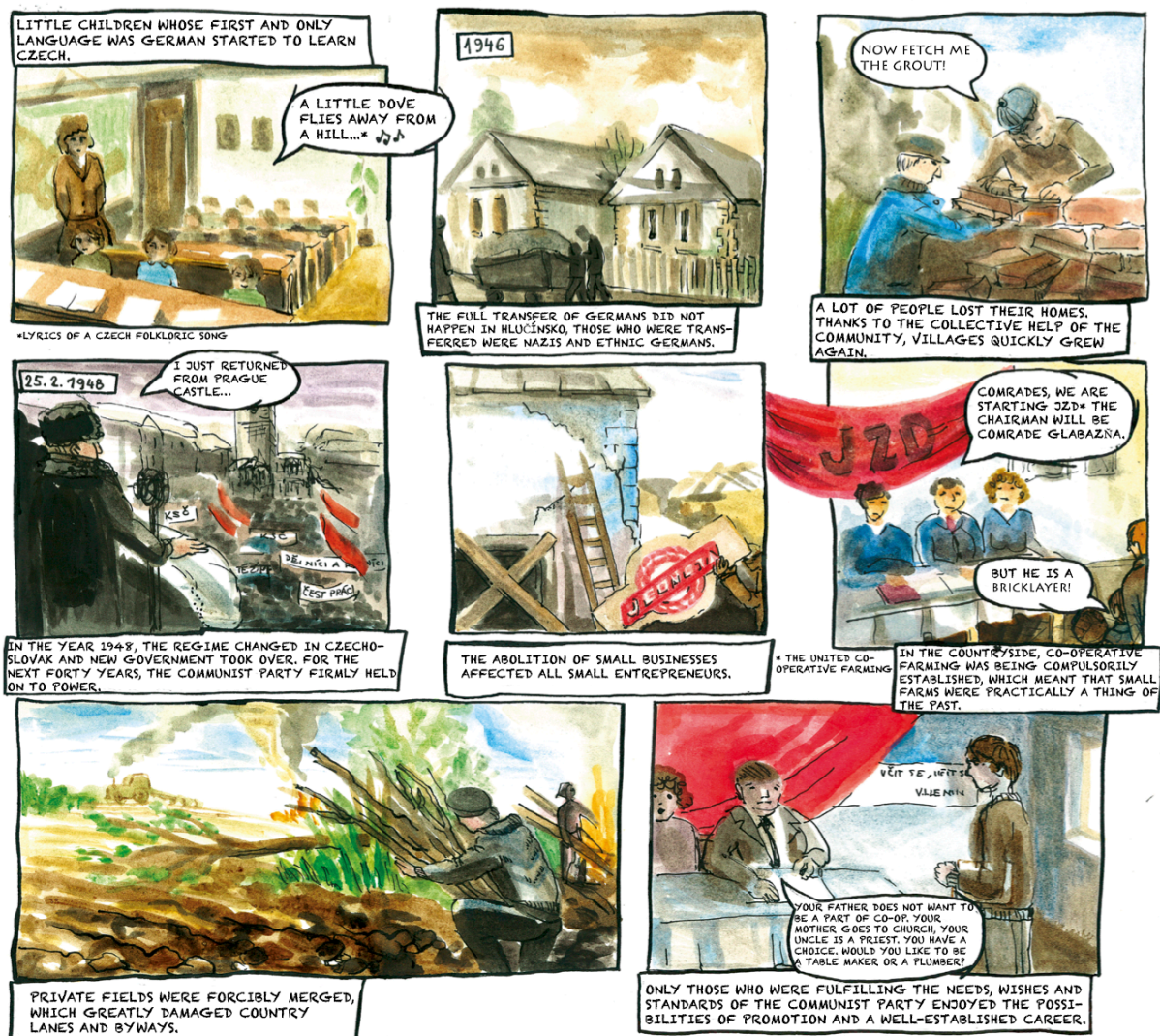


Figure 1. The Hlučín Century Comic

The last page suggests that despite mounting restrictions and persecution during the socialist era, Hlučín kept practising their faith. With the help of their neighbours and community, they managed to (re)build their houses with enough room to house several generations under one roof, cementing the importance of family ties and the feeling of ‘togetherness’ within the community. After the Velvet Revolution and the creation of the EU, the comic suggests that there was a vast improvement in the lives of the Hlučín people, intimating and even explicitly stating that there were no longer any obstacles in the way of Czech and Polish villages and villagers alike to share and come together in the spirit of cooperation.

‘Hlučín has never had it easy or light, but it has always survived, and withstood its lot,’ said Helena, my informant, sitting comfortably on the sofa in her living room. She lives in Bolatice in the Hlučín area, and her large house with its spacious garden is a gathering place for neighbours, family, and friends to come by for a chat, some schnapps, and some nibbles. I made a point to stop by every now and then. On this particular visit she stood up rather grandly and waited for everybody in the living room to give her their attention, then she said to me: ‘I will tell you how it was for us,’ and began to recite a well-known poem written in 2005 by Jana Schlossarková.⁵⁵ By that time, I almost knew the poem by heart, as numerous informants had recited it to me before. This poem is woven into the very fabric of the Hlučín area. It is almost ubiquitous; elementary school children perform it for their parents, it is recited at festivals and celebrations, and I even saw it printed on a page of a restaurant menu.

The poem, which many Hlučíns can recite by heart, is clearly important and considered by many to represent the history of the Hlučín area. It highlights and summarizes the area’s main historical events. It also addresses thorny issues often used against the Hlučíns, such as Hlučín men being drafted into the Wehrmacht, or the fact that the Wehrmacht soldiers’ widows received Deutschemarks as compensation. The poem functions as a narrative *apologia*, providing a rebuttal to the charges laid at the feet of the Hlučíns. It gives them a voice and allows them to tell their side of the story in a simplified and unified manner, with which many Hlučíns are able to identify

⁵⁵ *Jak to s námi bylo.*



Picture 13. Restaurant menu featuring 'How it was for us'

The poem, in my understanding, reflects and interprets Hlučín's 'difficult heritage'. As previously mentioned, according to Macdonald, 'difficult heritage' can be understood as

a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity. 'Difficult heritage' may also be troublesome because it threatens to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish futures. (Macdonald 2009: 1)

Velaj se mudralov včil vyrojilo,
co věďu, jak to s Hlučínkem bylo.
Roky po čichu za bukem byli,
kaj mohli, ešče se přisadili.

Jak to chodilo, nam řeknuč něchčeli,
tak abyšče hlupí něumřeli,
povím vám, jak pani s Hlučínkem
hráli, jak horký kobzol přehazovali:

1742
Jak císařovna vojnu přehrala,
tuž Frydrychovi Hlučínsko dala
a ludě ezli chčeli či něchčeli,
německy mluvič a chvalič mušeli.

1920
Razem dvěsta let, Čechy ich vzali,
hanlivo Pražakama nazvali
a ludě ezli chčeli či něchčeli,
po česky mluvič a chvalič mušeli.

1938
Hlučínsko zaš Němcovi vračili,
Čechy se zavčasu vytračili
a ludě ezli chčeli či něchčeli,
Gott mit uns, chlopi na frontu mušeli.

1945
Po vojně Hlučínsko zaš Čechum dali
a či se s žadnym moc něparali,
a ludě ezli chčeli či něchčeli,
česky i rusky se učič mušeli.

1948
Jak potem ku veslu přišli červení,
to pro Hlučínsko ledva nic něni
a ludě ezli chčeli či něchčeli
“Čest práci, soudruzi!” zdravič
mušeli.

Jak Němci vdovam marky poslali,
ty do ruk ich nikda nědostaly,
soudruzi v Praze z nich bony zrobili,
ubohe baby tak okminili.

Marky, kere za čepa pobrali,
paloni ve svěče utracali,
dyč Hlučiňaci im za vojnu dlužu
a žadne marky se nězaslužu.

V každym narodě su ludě všelijaci,
dobří, nědbalci i darebaci.
Jak gízd do pazuru veslo popadně
ten obyčejny do bahna spadně.

Cele roky, něch bylo jak bylo,
“po našemu” se doma mluvilo,
a choč to Hlučínsko lehce němělo,
všecko přežilo a vydrželo.

Mnoho chytrolínů se dnes objevilo
kteří ví, jak to s Hlučínkem bylo.
Léta mlčky za bukem byli,
Kde mohli, ještě si přisadili.

Jak to chodilo, nám řeknout nechtěli,
Tak abyste hloupí nezemřeli,
Povím vám, jak páni s Hlučínkem
hráli, Jako horký brambor si jej
přehazovali:

1742
Když císařovna válku prohrála,
tak Fridrichovi Hlučínsko dala
a lidé jestli chtěli či nechtěli,
německy mluvit a chválit museli.

1920
Najednou dvě stě let, Češi je zabrali,
hanlivě Pražákami je nazvali,
a lidé ač chtěli či nechtěli,
česky mluvit a chválit museli.

1938
Hlučínsko zase Němcům vrátili,
Češi se zavčasu vytrátili
a lidé ač chtěli či nechtěli,
Gott mit uns, muži na frontu
museli.

1945
Po válce Hlučínsko zase Čechům dali
a ti se s nikým moc něparali
a lidé ač chtěli či nechtěli,
česky i rusky se učit museli.

1948
Jak potom k veslu přišli červení,
to pro Hlučínsko už vůbec nebylo
a lidé ač chtěli či nechtěli,
„Čest práci soudruzi“ zdravit museli.

Když Němci vdovám marky poslali
ty je do rukou nikdy nedostali
soudruzi v Praze z nich bony udělali
ubohé ženy tak okradli.

Marky, které ještě za tepla sebrali,
náfukové ve světě utráceli,
vždyť Hlučiňané jim za volnu dluží
a žádné marky se nezaslouží

V každém národě jsou lidé všelijací
Dobří, nedbalové i darebáci.
Když hajzl do ruky veslo popadne
Ten obyčejný do bahna spadne.

Celé roky, ať bylo jak bylo,
„Po Naszymu“ se doma mluvilo,
a i když to Hlučínsko lehké nemělo,
všechno přežilo a vydrželo.

Behold all the wise-men that sprout up today
Who know all of how it was with Hlučín.
Heretofore they hid quiet past the beech trees,
And where they could, they ground their own
axes.

They did not wish to tell us how it was,
But so you may die not a fool,
I shall tell you how the Lords played Hlučín,
Throwing it to and fro, like a hot potato:

1742
When the empress lost her war,
She gave Hlučín away to Friedrich,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to speak and praise in German.

1920
Two hundred years by and the Czechs seized
them,
Called them Kraut and Fritz and Jerry,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to speak and praise in Czech.

1938
Again Hlučín was returned to the Germans,
The Czechs disappearing in good time,
And whether they wanted to or not,
Gott mit uns, the men had to march to the front.

1945
The war over, Hlučín was given again
To those Czechs, who did not fool about,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to learn both Russian and Czech.

1948
And when the reds took the wheel,
That was nothing for Hlučín at all,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to “Hail work, comrades!”

The German Marks sent to the widows
Never reached the widows' hands,
The Comrades in Prague made vouchers of them,
Robbing the poor, poor women blind.

The Marks they set aside in better times
Were spent abroad by pompous oafs,
Why, Hlučín still owed them for the war
And so deserved no Marks at all.

In each nation, there are people of all kinds,
The good, the careless and the swines
And when a nasty sod takes the wheel,
The common man is deep in mud.

All these years, however they might have been,
At home “Po Naszymu” was always spoken,
And though Hlučín never had it easy or light,
It always survived and withstood its lot.

Figure 2. The poem ‘How It Was For Us’

Behold all the wise men that sprout up today
Who know all of how it was with Hlučín.
Heretofore they hid quietly past the beech trees,
And where they could, they ground their own axes.

They did not wish to tell us how it was,
But so you may not die a fool,
I shall tell you how the Lords played Hlučín,
Throwing it to and fro, like a hot potato.

The first two stanzas of the poem serve as an introduction, explaining why the poem has been written and its general purpose. Jana Schlossarková warns against ‘the wise men’ who suddenly appear and claim expert knowledge regarding the Hlučín area and its history. Despite the wise men’s (alleged) knowledge, until recently those very same men (who may represent politicians, academics or other public figures) were the first to point fingers at and persecute the Hlučín people. These men are not advocates of the people, and do not even attempt to contextualise the actions of the Hlučín within the broader socio-historical context. In this way, the poem purports to provide a sincere account and explanation of the Hlučín area’s past, challenging and contradicting the dominant narrative of ‘the wise men’.

1742
When the empress lost her war,
She gave Hlučín away to Friedrich,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to speak and praise in German.

1920
Two hundred years passed, and the Czechs seized them,
Called them Kraut and Fritz and Jerry,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to speak and praise in Czech.

1938

Again Hlučín was returned to the Germans,
The Czechs disappearing in good time,
And whether they wanted to or not,
Gott mit uns, the men had to march to the front.

1945

The war over, Hlučín was given again
To those Czechs, who did not fool about,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to learn both Russian and Czech.

1948

And when the reds took the wheel,
That was nothing for Hlučín at all,
And whether they wanted to or not,
The people had to '*Hail work, comrades!*'

The middle of the poem consists of five stanzas, each representing a specific year. Each refers to a particular historical milestone: the division of Silesia between the Austrian and Prussian Empires in 1742; the annexation of the Southern Ratibór Duchy by Czechoslovak troops in 1920; the takeover of the Hlučín area by Germany in 1938; the ceding of the area to Czechoslovakia in 1945; and finally, the Czechoslovak *coup d'état* in 1948, signifying the beginning of the socialist era.

The German marks sent to the widows
Never reached the widows' hands,
The Comrades in Prague made vouchers of them,
Robbing the poor, poor women blind.

The marks they set aside in better times
Were spent abroad by pompous oafs,
Why, Hlučín still owed them for the war
And so deserved no marks at all.

The two following stanzas address the issue of the Hlučín war-widows' pensions, which the widows received from Germany to compensate for relatives who were drafted into the Wehrmacht and who died while on service or as a result of it. Discussion of this topic has been, and still is, seriously neglected outside the Hlučín area, as well as by the Hlučín men, whereas it is openly and frequently discussed by Hlučín women. These pensions and the resulting material wealth have been used as fodder for conflict, and the issue has been heavily drawn on by those residing outside the area, as well as by Czech officials and others who seek to malign Hlučín's natives.

In each nation, there are people of all kinds,
The good, the careless and the swines
And when a nasty sod takes the wheel,
The common man is deep in mud.

All these years, however they might have been,
At home *Po Naszymu* was always spoken,
And though Hlučín never had it easy or light,
It always survived and withstood its lot.

The concluding two stanzas state that, despite turbulent historical events, the Hlučín area has not only survived, but also maintained its local tongue (*Po Naszymu*). Given the profound importance of language in this socio-geographical context, this remark refers not only to the actual dialect/language, but to the very core of Hlučín identity. In other words, it speaks to the strength and fortitude of the Hlučín people, showing that, despite

the social, cultural, and political changes, they have managed to maintain and preserve their identity and cultural expressions.

Jana Schlossarková recalls that the main impulse for her to write books in *Po Naszymu* was that she wanted to prevent the local tongue and oral tradition from disappearing. She recalls seeing an interview on a local TV channel with a high-school teacher working in the town of Hlučín, in which the teacher complained that even students from small villages did not know how to speak *Po Naszymu* anymore because Hlučínians are switching to standard Czech and *Po Naszymu* is declining. The teacher on TV claimed that students in Hlučín preferred to communicate in standard Czech. ‘It was 1996, and it was my first year of retirement,’ Schlossarková recalls. ‘As I had a bit more time, I thought it would be a good idea to write down all the proverbs, sayings, and rhyming stories from Prajská in *Po Naszymu*, so they don’t die out’. At the beginning of her writing career, she drew inspiration from her memories, especially from recollections of Sunday family and neighbourly gathering at her *Oma und Opa*’s (grandmother and grandfather’s), which she attended weekly until her grandparents’ death. Later on, after publishing several books, she started to travel within the Hlučín area to collect stories and their variations in *Po Naszymu*. She declares that she visited every retirement home in the Hlučín area at least twice and was invited into countless homes to collect stories and learn more about Hlučínians’ oral traditions and *Po Naszymu*.

Jana Schlossarková

Jana was born in a small house in the town of Hlučín, and has been living in that same house ever since. Her house is simple, but as the *Praják* auto-stereotype demands, perfectly maintained. As soon as I entered into her neat and clean, but equally cosy living room, the sweet smell of freshly baked cake hit me by the door. Jana is a tall, elegant and good-natured woman in her mid-seventies. She appreciates good laughter, but never at someone else's expense. Her intelligence and remarkable linguistic propensities are evident as she expresses herself in complex and eloquent standard Czech, occasionally styling her talk in verses, as if the rhymes come effortlessly to her. She can imitate plenty of accents in *Po Naszymu*, always relating it to a specific Hlučín village and sometimes even to particular people. When I asked if she has received any formal education in linguistics, she just shyly smiled and told me that because of her 'political profile', she, in common with the majority of Hlučínians, was not allowed to receive higher education. *With father fighting in the Wehrmacht and mother going to church regularly, I am glad that the communists allowed me to train at least to be a nurse; it could have been much worse*, she told me later.

When I was born on a Sunday in June 1941, my father was already away from home fighting in the Wehrmacht. He saw me only once in his life. I was 11 months old and he came home for a short visit. As a result of that visit, my younger sister was born nine months after. I think he knew that my mother was expecting their second child, but I am quite sure that he never knew if it was a boy or a girl. My father went missing and my mum officially became a war widow, but I know that until her last moments, she was hoping that he would return. I think that every Hlučín family cherished a small spark of hope that the missing loved ones might still return. And it is true that some men managed to return home only as greybeards from the Soviet captivity, in their 70s and 80s. It often created extremely difficult situations for the families, as their widows had usually remarried by then. The last Wehrmacht soldier returned to the Hlučín area only in 1992, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Can you imagine?

My mother never remarried and a lot of my childhood and adult life was preoccupied by trying to find out what happened to my father. My mum and my paternal grandfather, who lost two out of three sons in the war, were really fixated on that, and they kept sending letters throughout Europe and beyond to find my father. Only during Perestroika, when Gorbachev opened the archives and the Red Cross Search Service in Munich apparently received heaps of letters written by prisoners of war who had been captured in the Soviet Union, did we learn that my father had died near Moscow.

*After elementary school, I was trained as a nurse and until my retirement I worked in a paediatric practice in Ludgeřovice in the Hlučín area. Poetry was always in my blood, but I dedicated my life to it only after my retirement. I think I inherited the talent from my father and his sister Marie, who helped my mum raise me. My father and my aunt Marie were writing in *Po Naszymu* as well as in German. Marie actually did not learn to speak Czech until the 1980s. She always told me: 'Für die Tschechen must du nicht lernen' [you don't need to learn for the Czechs].*



Picture 14. Jana Schlossarková

Schlossarková's work has been highly praised in the region, and her books are famously sold out (for her publications see bibliography). Of her fourteen publications, I was unable to buy a single one, but most of my informants had at least two or three of her books in their family libraries, and I was able to borrow a few. Two of the fourteen publications are written in standard Czech; the rest are in *Po Naszymu*. 'A few people were upset that I also published in standard Czech. They said that there are plenty of Czech books published, but books in *Po Naszymu* are rare, and I should not waste time writing in Czech,' she told me, seemingly not too bothered about such comments. At a more local level, she has also been criticised for not attacking *Cisaráci* in her witty poems. 'Why should I?', she asked me, rhetorically. 'I don't know them. I spent all my life in the Hlučín area and, apart from a few encounters – for example when I was in the hospital in Opava – I don't have any experience of them. I understand that our people are upset at them for

how they treat us, mocking us, bullying us, refusing to employ us and such; I know all that, but I don't want to write confrontational poems; I like fun and laughter.'

Through closer analyses of Schlossarková's work, however, it is evident that she does tackle several of the thorny issues between Opavians and Hlučín. One is the question of the Hlučín war-widows' pension, with which she engages in the poem *How It Was For Us*, but also in a number of other publications. As I discuss in several places in this dissertation, in 1939 Hlučín were automatically given Reich citizenship because, according to the Nuremberg Laws, Hlučín were considered to be *Deutschblütiger* ('of German blood'), which was not the case for the rest of Czechoslovakia, including the German-speaking Opavians who were expelled later (Plaček 2000). As a consequence, as Reich citizens, Hlučín men were drafted into the Wehrmacht, again unlike the rest of Czechoslovakia, including the German-speaking Opavians. The penalty for not enrolling or deserting was death, and several Hlučín were executed for evasion. During the Second World War, approximately 12,000 Hlučín men served in the Wehrmacht. Approximately 3,000 died during the war, and about 5,000 returned with permanent disabilities, many of whom died shortly after their return (Jung and Neminář 2017). After the war, those veterans who were injured during the war and the widows of Wehrmacht soldiers received regular compensation from Germany until the end of their lives. The financial compensation from Germany was paid in hard currency, the Deutschemerk, and it significantly improved the economic situation of Hlučín during socialism, though it also triggered severe animosity and envy towards them (Jung and Neminář 2017).

Indeed, during the socialist era, the Czechoslovak government confiscated the Deutschemarks and gave *Tuzex* vouchers to the widows instead. These vouchers were called *bony* (probably from German *der Bon*) and were valid for shopping in *Tuzex* stores,

the only places where foreign (mainly Western) goods were available. People were forced to exchange their foreign money to *Tuzex* vouchers at an inconvenient exchange rate.

I never understood the envy regarding the widows' pensions. People were pointing fingers, saying: 'Look! They have Mercedes for thirty pieces of silver.'⁵⁶ But you know what, what kind of mother would exchange the life of her son for money? What kind of person would exchange their child, husband, father, brother? Every Hlučín family lost somebody in the Wehrmacht. If we could, we would have given anything to have them back alive. My mother lost her husband; I never saw my father. We would gladly give up the pension for his life, to have him home. Our neighbour lost her husband and all five of her sons. That poor little thing went mad because of it. And when our men died, their mothers were not even allowed to grieve publicly over their lost sons, because they were fighting for the wrong army. But the only thing *Císaráci* can think about and talk about is money and the Western goods we had. Yes, we had, but at what price?

Hlučíns in the Parliament

So far in this chapter, I have discussed and explored the multi-layered relationship between the process of collective identity formation on the one hand, and the struggle to construct and maintain collective representations of the past on the other. For the sake of analytical clarity, however, it is necessary to differentiate clearly between these two processes, which happen simultaneously and are intrinsically interwoven to such a degree that they are often indistinguishable. Both processes can be understood as highly delicate political acts involving struggles over whose stories and interpretations will be acknowledged and preserved for posterity as the officially accepted history, and whose narratives will be silenced and/or forgotten. As such, it is not surprising that individuals and groups struggle over whose representation of the community's past (as well as the present and the future) will be accepted and institutionalised. 'Through the stories that people tell, the images they create, the social dramas they enact, and the institutions they

⁵⁶ In this context, the 'thirty pieces of silver' was a clear reference to the New Testament and the price for which Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus.

embrace or resist, the events of the past are interpreted and transformed into social reality' (Natzmer 2002: 161). But where does this struggle over community's self-identification and representation take place, and how can it be observed?

Subscribing to the notion that we construct ourselves in the narrative of the self and its performance, the remaining section of this chapter describes how Hlučín delegates went to Prague to represent their region before the Parliament of the Czech Republic. In late May 2016 at around 5 a.m., three buses left the town of Hlučín for the Parliament. The buses were loaded with most of the mayors of the Hlučín area's towns and villages, two folklore groups, representatives of the museum of Hlučínsko, and local artists, writers, and intellectuals, including myself. The objective of the journey was to depict the republic's periphery as a thriving land with a great potential for growth in both industry and tourism, should it be provided with much-needed investment. However, facing the political, historical, linguistic, and cultural complexities of the former Prussian Silesia, problematic issues arose regarding the question of how the Hlučín area should be represented to the Parliament.

It was clear from the beginning that such an important event could not be treated lightly and required adequate preparation. During the preparation stage, which started roughly six weeks before the journey, the organisers and future delegates often jokingly reflected on what they were doing as a preparation (rehearsal) for a theatre performance. Various organisers, however, coming from different backgrounds and articulating various narratives of the borderland region, often disagreed on what the most desirable image of the Hlučínsko should be and how it should be presented. I instinctively started to theorise the upcoming event in terms of Goffman's theatre metaphor, until I realised that there was much more to it than simply a desire to manage or control the impression they were about to convey to the Parliament.

By negotiating which narratives it would be best to employ and which narratives were better kept silent, the identity of the Hlučín region was being reconstructed once again. To my knowledge, everybody agreed on only three things at the outset. First, they agreed that the recently launched comic, *Hlučín Century*, would be presented, along with the poem *How It Was For Us*. Both historical narratives of the region and its inhabitants are generally considered by Hlučín residents to be fairly accurate narrative accounts of the Hlučín area's difficult heritage, especially as a direct counter-narrative to the dominant national discourse.



Picture 15. Hlučín delegates dressed in Hlučín 'folk costume' offering Pražské koláče

As discussed above, the widely known poem *How it Was for Us* by Jana Schlossarková is commonly recited at public events, and it seemed logical to present it to the Parliament. Also, it was unquestionable that, together with local ham, cheese, beer, and schnapps, *Hlučín area cakes* would be served. Each village bakes its own version of this delicacy, but the Competition for the Golden Cake is held annually to determine which village has



Picture 16. Presentation of the Hlučín Century comics in the parliament

baked that year's best cakes. It was therefore clear who would have the privilege of providing the cakes for the Parliament. The remaining arrangements, however, were more problematic. For example, most of the organisers/delegates agreed that it was desirable to involve local folklore groups to represent the region. However, the repertoire of these groups largely consisted of what are considered to be Moravian songs. The only alternative available would be German songs, which it would be acceptable to perform on the Polish side of Silesia, but not in Prague. After several heated debates, which I witnessed, an agreement was reached to perform standard Moravian songs after all, and on the day of our arrival, two folklore groups gave well-received performances of *Malostranské náměstí*.



Picture 17. Performance of the Hlučín area's folklore groups in Prague

At the end of the performance, however, one of the mayors (most likely encouraged by the alcohol they had been consuming together since the early morning) broke out of the crowd of bystanders and gave a short speech in German before singing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. To my great surprise, his improvisation was also well-received by the Hlučín area delegates, despite the previous conflicts. This moment of tension arose from what I call consistency errors in self-representation. These occur when seemingly incompatible, competing narratives meet and change at times when identity re-emergence is possible. In this chapter, I have depicted the dominant Czech national narrative in opposition to the vernacular counter-narrative, both seemingly clearly defined and separate. The separation is, of course, illusory, as both narratives are in the same space, with the demotic reacting against the dominant.

Chapter 5. Grandfathers in the Wehrmacht

This chapter addresses the issue of Hlučín men fighting in the Wehrmacht, which I theorise in terms of Sharon Macdonald's notion of 'difficult heritage'. The fact that Hlučín men actively fought during the Second World War is important for Hlučín's collective identity, but it becomes problematic when seen through the prism of the grand narrative of Czech nationalism. From a Czech national perspective, the fact that Hlučín men served in Nazi Germany's army is considered treasonable (Plaček 2000, Jung and Neminář 2000). On the other hand, for the Hlučín area's inhabitants, the theme of 'grandfathers in the Wehrmacht', even though troubling at times, is narratively constructed as a meaningful past that should be acknowledged and remembered within the Hlučín area.

Accordingly, this chapter starts with an ethnographic vignette of a conversation I had with the grandchildren of Wehrmacht soldiers. Then, I theoretically discuss the pattern and style in which those Wehrmacht stories are told and present an in-depth example of such story. In particular, in this chapter I show that these stories are heavily stylised, following a particular pattern resembling of the well-known, humorous, and nationally beloved Czech novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik*. To support my argument even further, on the example of an unpublished article entitled 'Reflections on the crimes of National Socialism in the Hlučín Area' I also show how 'Hlučín soldiers' stories' which do not conform to the described Schweikian pattern are dismissed and silenced.

Difficult Heritage: Grandfathers in the Wehrmacht

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Milan Kundera

The small one-room pizzeria, located in a converted backyard shed in the village of Oldřišov, Hlučín area, is open every week from Thursday to Sunday. There are three types of lager on tap, as well as a modest selection of soft drinks, spirits, tea, and instant coffee. Even though the practice of eating out or buying a takeaway is relatively uncommon in the Hlučín area, when the pizzeria's kitchen opens in the evening, it gives you a choice of six types of homemade pizza. In the Hlučín area, people do not usually dine out for two main reasons. First, as one of the most pronounced autostereotypes of Hlučínians, they are frugal in character: eating out without a justifiable reason is often considered extravagant and wasteful. Secondly, given the visible gendered division of labour, the sight of a family or a married man eating out regularly would imply that the woman of the house is incapable of preparing 'delicious and nutritious' food at home. However, 'exotic' food, such as pizza, which is ostensibly difficult to make from scratch without proper appliances (e.g. a masonry oven), is an exception to the rule, negating any possible gossip or criticism.

The pizzeria is rectangular in shape, and dominating the centre of the room, firmly ensconced in the middle of the wall adjacent to the entry, is a medium-size plasma TV. The only channel that is ever on is the sports channel, and woe betide anyone who dares to suggest changing it. The table with the best view of the TV is habitually occupied by the so-called '*štamgasti*',⁵⁷ a group of regulars who frequent the bar so often that they

⁵⁷ Probably derived from the German word *Stammgäste*, roughly 'regulars'.

have their own informally designated seats. As soon as the doors open, these men promptly arrive, without the company of their wives, sipping beer, watching sports, and occasionally engaging in light conversation. To accommodate larger groups or families, generally for jubilee birthdays, weddings, communions, or after-funeral gatherings, the owners have repurposed a room of their house [*soukromí salónek*], which is sealed off from their private quarters. As is common on such occasions in the Hlučín area, the women generally prepare homemade food and bring it to the event. Elsewhere, this practice might be seen as quite problematic, as the restaurateurs would lose a significant portion of their income, but in Hlučín, bringing your own open sandwiches, cakes, and canapés to social gatherings is not only appropriate, but to some extent required according to unwritten codes of conduct. The politics of offering, taking, and exchanging the food brought for these occasions is an important part of the event's social interactions and the relational dynamics between individuals and families.

It was a rainy and cold Friday evening in the middle of November 2015 when, soaking wet, I arrived at the pizzeria. Due to the dismal weather, and in addition to the near-opaque haze of cigarette smoke, the room took on a dark, dank, heavy atmosphere. I made my way to a table where three people I had met previously were sitting, one woman and two men. We were all in our late twenties to early thirties and decided to share two pizzas between the four of us. After few pints of Rohan, the local beer, we began speaking like old friends, telling each other jokes and other entertaining stories. Interestingly, we spoke in standard Czech, but the majority of jokes and anecdotes were told in *Po Naszymu*, the local dialect/language. I actively encouraged my companions to speak in *Po Naszymu*, and indeed they tried, yet each time the conversation gradually slipped back into standard Czech. Inquiring why that was the case, I was told that it was for my benefit, to make sure that I understood the conversation without too much effort on my part. However, I

believe that that explanation was more of a cover story, whereas, in fact, to continue speaking in Po Naszymu required too much exertion on their part, as standard Czech came far more naturally to them. By way of explaining this discrepancy, all three of them received a formal education in standard Czech, and they were often singled out by teachers and picked on by classmates for not mastering the official language. In addition, even as adults, the use of standard Czech is all around them in the mass media as well as social media. They are required to speak standard Czech at work, and it is the language of choice in public places, and also increasingly in private conversation. The joke below, described from the perspective of a ‘Czech’ (as opposed to a Hlučín) teacher, was told in standard Czech:

Jan: ...so you are collecting local jokes, Johana? That’s good! Do you know this one: A teacher asks her pupils what their grandparents did for work; Anička answers that her grandpa was a bricklayer, Petřík answers that his grandma worked in JZD (in cooperative farming), but the moment Hanz opens his mouth, the teacher stops him and winks, saying, we know Hanz, your grandfather worked as an *electrician*.

(The joke is funny because she is saying that, in point of fact, the grandfather was a Nazi, and the soldiers of the Schutzstaffel wore the SS insignia, stylised as ‘’, with Arminian runes, which closely resembles the generalised symbol for lighting or electricity.)

Unsure whether or not I was supposed to laugh, I settled on a short and awkward giggle, which I immediately followed with the question of whether some Hlučín men actually joined the elite SS forces, asking which unfortunately made the situation even more awkward. There is a discrepancy between how involvement with the German army during the Second World War is understood and contextualised by Hlučíns and the dominant Czech majority respectively. For Opavians and Czechs in general, having a grandfather who served in the Wehrmacht, or even worse, in the SS is akin to having a Nazi in the

family, which automatically implies a treasonous past which is best silenced and ignored. However, according to the Hlučín collective narrative, there is no shame in admitting that, both before and during the Second World War, Hlučín had pro-German rather than pro-Czech sentiments, though of course they were not Nazis (i.e. they did not adhere to or support the doctrines of the National Socialism). Consequently, within the Hlučín public discourse, Hlučín men served in the Wehrmacht (into which they were often conscripted against their will), but they never joined the Schutzstaffel or SS. Here, the main and most important distinction is that the Wehrmacht was the conscripted force of the Germany nation, while the SS was a voluntary and highly politicised force, with inextricable ties to the Nazi party rather than the German state. In other words, to have a grandfather who fought in the Wehrmacht is not something one needs to be ashamed of because there was often no choice in the matter, as he was compulsorily enlisted into the army. Consequently, he is not remembered as a traitor or, even worse, a Nazi, but as a *victim* of turbulent historical events.

The problem with associating either oneself or one's family, and by extension the Hlučín community, with the Nazi regime is that it contradicts the heavily stylised narratives of the Hlučín's difficult heritage, which I identify and discuss in terms of the 'Wehrmacht soldiers' stories'. Those stories are incredibly important for Hlučín, Hlučín families, neighbourly relations, and Hlučín identity, as well as the community's unity and cohesion. These stylised stories, which I theorise as a narrative and discursive device to master one's difficult past in a meaningful manner, have a distinct reoccurring pattern symptomatic of 'schweikism', a particular modality of resistance. As in most of my experience with these stylised Wehrmacht soldiers' stories, I was not able to meet and speak to the soldiers in question directly, as most of them had already passed away, nor to see how the stories are passed from one generation to another within one family. The

majority of Wehrmacht soldiers' stories I collected are retellings that are once or twice removed, as told by the soldier's children and grandchildren, but also by neighbours and family friends. The stories, even though implicitly present, are not shared without hesitation. They are often told in mutual exchanges between Hlučíns, almost swapping one story for another while enhancing the shared feeling of Hlučíns' uniqueness and cohesion based on a shared difficult heritage. Wehrmacht soldiers' stories are always personalised by giving the soldier's full name and village of origin and relating them to the soldier's family's living members. During my fieldwork, when an informant spontaneously decided to share a Wehrmacht soldier's story with me, especially if the soldier belonged to his or her family, it often signalled a change in the status of our relationship, moving from formal and professional to informal and friendly. Understanding the logic of these stories and laughing with rather than laughing at one is often what distinguish *Prjazáci* and *Cisaráci*, as it effectively demarcates difference and perpetuates one's collective identification against the Other.

Jan: [telling a story of his grandfather struggling as a Wehrmacht soldier fighting on the Eastern Front] ... and then my *opa* [grandpa in German] just could not take it anymore, so he decided to get himself injured. He asked his comrade, Hugo from Opole, to shoot him in the leg. They were both from Upper Silesia, my *opa* and that Hugo. They were Silesians, and they helped each other. Here you go, Johana, a German by conviction [*Němec z přesvědšení*] would not injure himself like that, said Jan while chewing last piece of the pizza.

Petr: My *opa* would not say that he is either a German or a Czech – he was Hlučín. It didn't matter that he served in the Heimatflak [German anti-aircraft defence] and then in the Wehrmacht. After the war, when he needed to apply for Czechoslovak citizenship,

the officer in charge asked my *opa* why he had joined the German army [Petr chuckles]. Well, my *opa* replied that he joined because he got the order to enlist. To which the officer replied: 'Ha! You received the order on the 8th of December! That was already after the war. Why did you not hide instead of enlisting if it was after the war?' So *opa* asked him if the officer was graciously recommending to hide under the table or the bed? [The story is funny because the main character, the soldier, is making fun of the officer by highlighting the absurdity of the questions and suggestions by accepting them but exaggerating them.]

There is an old axiom that humour is the weapon of the powerless, to which I can attest, as it was demonstrated through the stories I was told again and again throughout my time in the field. Surprising though it might be, the Wehrmacht soldiers' stories are often hilarious, tragicomically absurd, with plenty of jokes, surprises, and grotesque situations. In structure, form, and style, they are closer to 'travellers tales' or 'trickster stories' than to 'heroic war novels'. Humour can be used not only to subvert the powerful and to emphasise the absurdity of authority or a situation, it can also be used as a coping mechanism for coming to terms with a challenging past, as well as being a means of narratively mastering it. According to Němcová-Benerjee, humour 'conceals a complicated, double-edged impulse to disturb the order of the universe while also seeking to reconcile us to it' (Němcová-Benerjee 1985: 14). This ambivalence is especially true of dark or grotesque humour, the quintessential core of which is an almost irrational or incongruous laughter in the face of extreme danger.

Even though humour and laughter are hardly a new topic of inquiry in the social sciences and humanities, the analytical value of humour and laughter has been increasingly appreciated in anthropological literature, as reflected in an increasing number of monographs, edited volumes, and special issues dealing with the topic. Among the classic

studies dealing with humour and/or laughter are Radcliffe-Brown's analysis of joking relationships (1940, 1949), Douglas's essays entitled 'Jokes' and 'Do Dogs Laugh?' (1990 [1970, 1971]), and Basso's interpretation of western Apache jokes about 'whiteman' (1979). Among more recent publications are Wasilewska's monograph *Anthropology of Humour and Laughter* (2013), Reichl and Stein's edited volume *Cheeky Fiction: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (2005), and a *Special Issue on Humour and Laughter in Contemporary Anthropology* (Carty and Musharbash 2008). The general focus of these recent publications is what the jokes say about the people who make them, how and why they make them, and what the social and historical circumstances are in which they and their sense of humour are situated. These studies show that humour and laughter play an important role in mediating as well as creating social rupture, as they often accompany processes of social expulsion as well as inclusion (Carty and Musharbash 2008).

Švejkovina (Schweikism) as a Modality of Resistance

I argue that the Wehrmacht soldiers' stories of the Hlučín area draw on dominant Czech narrative repertoires, especially the famous novel *The Good Soldier Schweik*. The stories are fashioned such that the main protagonist, the soldier/grandfather, is always intelligent but at the same time also a bit grotesque; never a hero, but often behaving heroically (saving the lives of civilians and comrades). During his time in the Wehrmacht, he takes advantage of his common sense in a manner that allows him to ridicule any official authority subtly but noticeably, making light of the gravest situations and the gravity of war. For example, a very common theme in these stories is unintentionally or intentionally (the audience is left to decide) getting separated from one's troop and getting

into very difficult and dangerous situations, which are subsequently solved by the main protagonist, usually in very genial, but absurd ways.

For the ‘Wehrmacht part’ of his life story, the main character, the family member, is portrayed remotely as what in the Anglophone academic literature is described as a *trickster*. This term was first employed by Daniel Brinton in *The Myth of the New World* (1868), and since then it has become a standard term in anthropological and folklorist scholarship, especially when referring to America’s First Nations (Nicholas 2009: 9). According to Nicholas, ‘the trickster is often a comical character who lives by his wits, breaking social boundaries and using deception and trickery to survive’ (ibid.). His two most frequently mentioned characteristics are gluttony and lust (Nicholas 2009, Stein and Stein 2011). However, these are almost always absent from Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories as told in the Hlučín area, perhaps with the noticeable exception of alcohol consumption. However, in many trickster stories, the trickster may also be placed in situations of contact and social conflict, often being the one who flouts society’s rules and interacts with the non-native, dominant population. In these cases, the stories become stories of protest and resistance in which the social situation is reversed and the trickster outwits the dominant individuals (Stein and Stein 2011).

Within the Czech Republic, there exists a readily identifiable satiric comedy novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* [*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka*], written by Jaroslav Hašek and published in volumes in the early 1920s. Since then *Schweik* and *Schweikism* have become two bywords in the Czech language. Josef Schweik, the nationally beloved main character, is a member of the Austrian-Hungarian Imperial Army, who spends the entirety of the Great War ingeniously subverting the Army’s bureaucracy and political machinations. Throughout Schweik’s escapades, no matter what the situation or how big his blunder, Schweik always falls on his feet. Yet, when his self-serving antics prove too

much, drawing the unwelcome attention of his superiors, and using his wit and sheer dumb luck, his gaolers often spend more time in lock-down than he does himself. 'Schweik's way out is that of the knowing fool, who destroys the legitimacy of the authority he confronts by covertly subversive acts and an exaggerated mimicry of conformism, while simultaneously making fun of the regime and his superiors' (Němcová-Benerjee 1985). Importantly, while Schweik's antics are light-hearted, all his cons and stunts are aimed at his superiors and the larger 'institution of the army', he never makes a joke at the expense of his fellow soldiers, but instead represents comradeship and egalitarianism. Initially, the reader sees Schweik as a comically absurd persona, yet as more of his character is revealed, and his exploits are expanded upon, the reader is confronted with the complexities and intricacies of human nature, especially when confronted with the totalizing power of the military machine, and begins to identify with and relate to 'the good soldier'.

Schweik is never a wholly negative character. However, some literary critics, as well as a part of the general population, might read the character of Schweik in a narrowed, simplified way and portray his actions as cowardly. The underlying complexity, intriguing duality, and delightfully idiosyncratic tones of Schweik's character are too often left out or oversimplified. From the outsider's perspective, the misunderstanding of the character himself leads to a misunderstanding of the relationship and identification that the Czech people themselves have with the bumbling, but brilliant soldier. The extreme simplification of Schweik's character and his motives perpetuates a misunderstanding of the underlying message. This is well described and documented by the late Israeli politician and diplomat Yohanan Cohen in his book entitled *Small Nation in Times of Crisis and Confrontation* (1989). With the Munich Agreement and the consequent Czechoslovak surrender as a backdrop, many foreign critics (incorrectly, in

Cohen's opinion) equate Schweikism with cowardice. As such, the critics dubbed Czechs 'a nation of Schweiks, thick-headed cowards who would use the best of their cunning to evade the honourable duty of bearing arms' (1989: 45). Yet, within the Czech discourse, the notion of being Schweik-like as both a nation and a person is not as simple as being insulted or complimented: like the character himself, it is far more complicated. For example, both Schweik and Czechs would stereotypically ridicule the very idea that there is an 'honourable duty of bearing arms' in the first place.

Max Brod, a German-speaking Jewish writer in Prague and the publisher of Franz Kafka, saw a stage adaptation of 'Schweik' in 1923 and in his review of the play wrote: 'Is man good? No, that sounds improbable. But after seeing the play, the audience leaves the theatre with a delightful certainty that man is indestructible' (Brod, in Chalupecký 1983: 17). Similarly to Schweik's stories, the grandfathers in the Wehrmacht face all kinds of difficult, nearly impossible situations, but they always find a solution. It might not be the bravest or most glorious solution, but that does not matter as long as Hlučín prevails. What matters is whether they managed to endure hardships when necessary and that they found a way out at the earliest opportunity. As Ladislav Holý stated in his book *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation*, the Good Soldier Schweik is 'a survivor par excellence'.

Numerous social scientists have studied Schweik and used his character and escapades as a way to unpack the intricacies and complexities of Czech nationhood and national identity. For example, for Ladislav Holý:

The little Czech man is not motivated by great ideas. His lifeworld is delineated by his family, work, and close friends, and he approaches anything that lies outside it with caution and mistrust. His attitude is down-to-earth, and he is certainly no hero: hence the popularity of the Good Soldier Schweik, the epitome of the little Czech. (1996: 62)

And further:

The little Czech as the typical representative of the Czech Nation is the embodiment of ordinariness and healthy common sense. Whatever else he may lack, he does not lack intelligence. Hence the unresolved problem which has not ceased to occupy the imagination of literary critics and the population at large: was the Good Soldier Schweik actually a simpleton, or was he an intelligent man? Did he really believe in what he was doing, or did he only pretend to believe (a sign of his shrewdness and natural intelligence)? However tenuous, torturous and unconvincing the proof may be, the consensus tends to be that Schweik was an intelligent man who simply put up a great show. It could hardly be otherwise: Schweik was a Czech and therefore he must have been intelligent. Those who say otherwise virtually brand themselves as national traitors. The little Czech has 'golden Czech hands' – an expression one continually hears uttered with pride – that manage to cope with everything they touch: he is talented, skilful, and ingenious. (ibid.: 72-73)

Others employed Schweik's stories and the related concept of Schweikism to theorise the power dynamics in society and the possibilities and limitations of resistance. The anthropologist Frederick G. Bailey, in his book *The Kingdom of Individuals: An Essay on Self-Respect and Social Obligation*, elaborates on the escapades of Josef Schweik, describing Schweikism as an unobtrusive way in which individuals can protect themselves from organisational exploitation through ironic cynicism (1993). In Bailey's elaborate understanding of the term, Schweikism involves a conflict of moralities and uncertainty concerning where duty lies. When discussing humour and subversion, Bailey explains that, in Schweikism, 'the ironic performance in particular is offered as a joke, something that need not be taken seriously; which is, of course, a neat piece of mystification. Do not take seriously the fact that we behave as if we do not take the organisation seriously!' (Bailey 1993: 77). While drawing heavily on Bailey, Fleming and Sewell, in their article 'Looking for the Good Soldier, Švejk: Alternative Modalities of Resistance in the Contemporary Workplace', call Schweik's capers and humorous mishaps 'organisational disengagement', and further discuss the means through which one can actively disengage, while simultaneously complying without conforming (2002). Discussing the practices of recalcitrance and resistance in the workplace when traditional avenues of protest are blocked or marginalised, the authors use the concept of Schweikism

as an example of a modality of employee opposition through ‘undermining or dissolving organisational power relationships in practical ways that also help to “unmask” the ideological absurdities that shore them up’ (2002: 859).

James C. Scott in his classic book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday form of Resistance* looks at ordinary, everyday peasant resistance and the reasons why open revolts are so rare (1985). He introduces the idea that oppression and resistance are in flux, and that by focusing on visible historic events such as organised rebellion or collective action we can easily miss subtle but powerful forms of ‘every day resistance’ (ibid.) ‘Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in the overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites’ (Scott 1985: 136). Scott also echoes Hašek’s *The Good Soldier Schweik* in relation to Bertold Brecht, who employs Schweikian behaviour as an example of everyday resistance, balancing between defiance and compliance (1985: 28, 241). Closely linked to the idea of resistance is Scott’s notion of ‘transcripts’ (hidden and public) which are established ways of behaving and speaking that fit particular actors in particular social settings, whether dominant or oppressed (1990). Resistance is a subtle form of contesting ‘public transcripts’ by making use of prescribed roles and language to resist the abuse of power. These methods are particularly effective in situations where violence is used to maintain the status quo, allowing ‘a veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion within the public transcript... in which ideological resistance is disguised, muted and veiled for safety’s sake’ (Scott 1985: 13)

The Wehrmacht story of František Hanáček

This section of the chapter mainly consists of the life story of the recently deceased František Hanáček, with whom I spent a considerable amount of time during my fieldwork. Encouraged by his granddaughter and great-granddaughter, I regularly visited Mr Hanáček in their four-generation family house in the Hlučín area. Mr Hanáček, who built the house himself with the help of relatives and neighbours, lived in two rooms (a bedroom and a living room) with a private bathroom and kitchen. When I was visiting, we would sit in his living room decorated by an autumnal, forest-themed wallpaper, which provided a marvellous visual background to his adventure stories, which had taken place mostly out of doors. Like the overwhelming majority of adolescent and adult males living in the Hlučín area during the Second World War, Mr Hanáček was drafted into the Wehrmacht army. His life story, as presented in this dissertation, is an in-depth example of the ‘Wehrmacht soldier’s story’, which, with some variations, every Hlučín family has, cherishes, and re-tells.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ A longer Wehrmacht story of František Hanáček is provided in Appendix 2.

During my life, I've been conscripted into numerous armies, changed uniforms and pledged allegiance to Adolf Hitler, to the Queen of England, to Eduard Beneš, and then to Klement Gottwald. After that, I was done with pledging and started to repair church roofs for a living.

(František Hanáček)



Picture 18. Mr Hanáček and myself in conversation

I was born on the 2nd of September 1923 in a village named Rohov, in the Hlučín area. In 1929, when I was six years old, I started primary school in Rohov, where we were taught in Czech. I attended the same school for five years, before moving to a larger school in the village of Píšť, where there was also teaching in Czech. There I stayed for an additional three years. Not all kids my age went to school like me. Some children were schooled at home because they were Germans and they wanted to be taught in German.

German schools started to close as the Hlučín area became part of Czechoslovakia, and German teachers had to start going to students' homes in order to teach in German. I mean, we all spoke Po Naszymu, so it was up to the parents whether their kids were taught in Czech and attended Czech schools, or whether they were to be taught in German and have a private German teacher.

We were a Czech family. My father was from south Moravia, and he came here when he was a young soldier. After the First World War, his army unit came to annex the Hlučín area, and that's how he met my mother. She was originally from this area. As my father was Czech, I was also Czech, so I went through the normal school system. After I was done with school, I was supposed to go and teach myself to be a painter, but the war started, so all learning or studying was over. The authorities sent me to Poland for a year for hard labour on local farms, where the farmers would select which of us they wanted to work on their estates. After one year, I was allowed to come back home to my family. In January 1940, I started repairing wheels as an apprentice in Píšť, and I stayed there for about two years.

When the German occupation came, we were the only family that declared Czech nationality and who stayed in the village. The other families decided to run away. My father decided that we would not leave, that we would stay at home, where we belonged. Our family went through a lot back then. During the occupation, before I was called up to the army, my father said we had to go and plough our fields so we wouldn't starve. We had three hectares of land, on which we occasionally grazed our cows. That's when these three men came, they were German provocateurs, who knows where they came from, but they wanted to start a fight. We were the last Czech family left there, so we were the ones they picked on. My father told me to quickly grab my tiller, as we needed weapons to protect ourselves if they were going to try to beat us. But all they did was shout at us:

‘Where are your presidents; where is Masaryk or Beneš to protect you now?’⁵⁹ When they saw that my father was not scared, but actually getting angrier and angrier, they decided to leave. The tillers in our hands might have been a little too frightening for them [sniggering]. However, knowing that we men were working the field, they went to our house and took my grandmother away. She was an old woman with very bad knees. All she cared about was the well-being of our family and the farm – she was a hard worker. After they brought her back she never spoke of the things that they did to her, ever.

When I was eighteen, I received my conscription notice, after which I had to enlist in the Wehrmacht. Then I was sent to Cosel where I was given all the necessary equipment and weapons. I sent a postcard to my family, just to let them know where I was and that I had arrived safely. I didn’t know how to write in German because I went to a Czech school, so I wrote it in Czech. The next day, an officer asked who wrote the postcard to Rohov. Eventually, I admitted it was mine. He tore the postcard up in front of me and said that it was forbidden to write in ‘Polish’. But that was difficult, because not everyone knew German. After Cosel, I was sent to Birkenthal, Germany, for basic training and driving lessons.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ By that time the Czechoslovak government had been exiled to London.

⁶⁰ He was assigned to be a driver for the 1st company of the 22nd Luftnachrichten regiment.



Picture 19. František Hanáček as a teenager in the Wehrmacht field uniform with Luftwaffe collar tabs and a Luftwaffe breast Eagle

During the war, they sent me all over Nazi-controlled territory. I went from Moscow to Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland; from Germany to France; from France to England; from England to Prague, and then back home again. Basically, I had to cross the entire European continent. You see, I was a driver for Luftwaffe repairers.⁶¹ We took care of the airports, maintained the communication infrastructure, and we also transported Luftwaffe staff over land. Thankfully, I was never sent to the front. Being a driver was not that bad. In addition to my driving duties, one particular commander of mine would always come to me when something needed to be fixed. He knew that I had the ability and know-how to fix almost anything, so I had to fix everything. He always came to me for help, because he knew I'd help. He used to call me *Junge*. It means young one, or 'lad' in German.

In 1943, while repairing a telephone connection, I happened to be in Katyn forest, where I saw the exhumation of dead Polish prisoners of war. I technically wasn't allowed to see it, but I found a way around it. I walked up to a gate-guard, with a loaded machine gun, and I asked to go beyond the perimeter. He said that no one was allowed beyond the gate. But I told him that my unit was fixing a broken telephone line that was located inside the restricted area, and that we needed to see it. So he let us in. I walked inside and saw people who looked like doctors, all wearing white coats with Red Cross badges on their sleeves, all around us. We thought they were Russians, but they spoke German. We walked further into the compound and saw a large pit, about ten metres wide and thirty metres long. They had uncovered a mass grave. The corpses lay stacked on top of each other like sardines. There were so many, all packed so tightly that there was no more space. The doctors had long sticks with hooks on the end, which they used to pull the bodies out of the grave one at a time. It was revolting. I have never seen anything like that before. They searched the

⁶¹ The Luftwaffe was the aerial warfare branch of the combined German Wehrmacht military forces during World War II.

pockets of the dead, looking for documents, knives, anything of value, which were then put into bags. After this, they reburied the dead in another grave not far from the first, dug by one of their excavators.⁶²

After Smolensk, my unit went to Minsk. At one point, the commander who liked to call me *Junge* told me to travel to a repair station, which was about ten kilometres from Minsk, and bring him his car. By then, I was able to speak a little Russian, which was very helpful. He gave me his bicycle, 20 litres of gasoline, and I was on my way. It was the middle of June, beautiful weather, I didn't even have to take my coat. I picked up the car, poured the gasoline into the tank, and made my way back. Now, you see, the problem was that they forgot to give me a travel order, and in Minsk I was stopped by the Kettenhunde, or the 'chained dogs', as they were called.⁶³

Of course, the first thing they wanted to see was my non-existent travel order. I tried to explain to them that I had been ordered to pick up the car and drive it back to my platoon. But there was no use explaining anything to them. I was told to get out of the car and join a long line of about ninety men. I was supposed to be waiting for orders from their captain. I thought it was a bit weird, but what could I do? I was ordered to a nearby gas station, which was, in actual fact, just two large two hundred litre barrels, and told to fill my car's tank to the brim. That was even stranger. I questioned the order as my unit was just few kilometres from where I was. Why would I need a full tank? But I was quickly told that

⁶² The Katyń massacre was a series of mass executions of about 20,000 Polish nationals carried out by the Soviet secret police in April and May 1940 in the Katyń Forest (Sanford 2006). The government of Nazi Germany announced the discovery of mass graves in the Katyń Forest in 1943. As a result of the German revelation, proving Nazi Germany's innocence in this particular matter, Stalin, refusing to take responsibility for the massacre, broke off diplomatic relations with Polish exiled government based in London (Sanford 2006). According to his narrative, Mr Hanáček was a direct witness of the exhumations of 1943.

⁶³ Kettenhunde is a nickname for the Feldgendarmerie, the uniformed military police, employed within army divisions as self-contained units with extensive police powers.

I wasn't re-joining my regiment, and that apparently I was going somewhere else. I tried to find a way to call to my superior, but their captain didn't allow it.

At that moment, I knew I was in serious trouble; I thought they were about to send me straight to hell. In the end, there were about a hundred of us who had been captured and were now waiting. That's when the captain told us we were going to Barysaw. We drove for what seemed like an age, which turned out to be about two hundred kilometres. When we reached our destination, we were given the order to halt. One of the commanders asked if anyone was armed. At the time no one had any weapons, we didn't even have gas masks. Well, he was understandably angry, soldiers in a foreign country with no guns and no gas masks? The poor man looked like he was about to tear us apart out of anger.

After we'd been given the command to halt, I thought it was the end of our journey. It turns out I thought wrong. Almost as soon as we were told to stop, we were off again, heading towards the river Olsa, where the Germans happened to be surrounded by Russians. We came across two paths, one leading right, the other left. I chose the one the right. I thought it was the right one. We drove down the hill, and although I didn't see it at the time, the road ahead was booby-trapped. The first indication that anything was wrong was a deafening explosion, which was uncomfortably close to our position.

The only thought going through my head at the time was that it was probably a landmine, and that I needed to check whether the truck and my passengers were unharmed. As I looked closer, I saw a small bus, loaded with the wounded from a previous battle. As it was a dark night, the driver had not only failed to notice us, but also the booby-trap that lay across the path. He drove straight into it, causing the explosion we all heard not two or three minutes before. It was a terrible mess. The wounded, now stuck in the trench, suffered additional and serious injuries. I turned the truck around and drove down the

path on the left-hand side, which led me to the 'road' that I had taken on my way into the village. The land around the road was a man-made marsh. It had been ploughed and saturated with water, thanks, in no small part, to the tanks driving all over the area. Ahead of us was a small bridge, with Russian tanks trying to take control of each bank. There was nothing left to do but drive across the bridge as fast as I could. As soon as we had crossed, there was another explosion right behind us. As I turned, I saw the road behind us engulfed in flames. After another couple of minutes driving, we reached a crossroads where the General was ordering all the new arrivals back to the trenches to fight. I was told to go for more wounded. As I returned to the front, all the men who had been injured were standing by the road, waiting to be rescued. There was only time to help those who were able to jump in the back of the truck while it was in motion. Even then, there were too many to fit in the back of the vehicle. In retracing my steps to rescue more wounded, I had to re-cross the burning bridge, of which thankfully only one side was still burning, and we made it through.

I couldn't take it anymore, so I tried to figure out how to avoid the general so as not to have to return, yet again, to the site of the battle. I thought I might be able to damage the truck just enough to need repairs, but not so badly that we wouldn't be able to escape the hell that was all around us. I stopped in a small clearing in the nearby forest and went through all the toolboxes I kept in the truck. I took a pair of pliers and unscrewed the current spark plugs that were in working order and swapped them for old and defective ones. When I returned and spoke with the general, he immediately ordered me to return for yet more injured soldiers, but I was able to tell him that the truck was in a state of disrepair. Accepting my explanation of mechanical difficulties, he ordered me down a small and barely distinguishable field road. He told me that at the end of the road there was a small repair station. Immediately after the wounded were unloaded, I was ordered

to go to the repair station, exchange the plugs and, when that had been done, to immediately return to the front. As soon as I was out of sight I switched the spark plugs again and, although it meant disobeying direct orders, I decided to leave the unit and its general high and dry and try to make my way back.

Much to my dismay, as I was travelling to re-join my unit in Minsk, I was stopped by the military police yet again. And again I switched out the spark plugs, relying on the debilitating effects of mechanical failure. As they could clearly tell that something was wrong with my supply truck, they let me go on my way. However, by this time I was running out of gas, and there was nowhere to refuel. But lady luck smiled down on me, and I met another squad of soldiers. Unfortunately, these morons didn't want to part with any of their supplies. But they told me I was just around the corner from the largest supply depot in the Minsk area and that I should get my fuel from them. So off I went to find the store. As I arrived at the supply compound, I spoke with one of the armed guards, asking if it would be possible to get fuel, as I was pretty much running on empty. He walked up to me and said I could grab anything I wanted and as much as I wanted, but I had to be out within an hour, as they were about to blow the place to smithereens. I was like a kid in a candy store – each and every barrack contained something different. One storeroom was full of rice and potatoes, another was full of tobacco and cigarettes, and in other I found French cognac and wine. So I took the truck around to each barrack and loaded it up with cigarettes and six hundred litres of wine and cognac. I also had the horse sense to gather all the bread, meat, and every other food item I could to get me through.

While I was leaving the barracks, I asked the guard on duty for the much needed gasoline. He said I would have to wait for him to go off duty and then he would help me find the gasoline. The shift change was scheduled for midnight, at which time he quickly showed me to the station, where I refuelled. In thanks, I told him to quickly take anything he

wanted from the back of the truck, which he did without hesitation. I gave him my farewell, and was once again on my way to Minsk. When I finally found my way back to my unit's last known position, I found it deserted. I asked around, trying to find out if anyone had any idea when and where my unit had gone. No one knew anything since, of course, that sort of information is classified. One of the Russian locals told me that he thought they went to Vilnius, in Lithuania, and he pointed me in the right direction, and I was off.

After many other adventures [described in the appendix], I finally found my unit near to Warsaw. The commander of my unit, his name was Major Metke, and he was from eastern Prussia, was happy that I had returned, telling me that it was good to have his *Junge* back. As you know, I was the youngest member of our unit. Not only had I finally found my way back, but I also informed him that my truck was full of wine, cognac, and cigarettes. Upon hearing this, he immediately sent me to one of his superiors, the drill sergeant who had originally trained us. He blew his whistle, and within few seconds men had descended upon my truck and were quickly unloading the wine, cognac, and all the cigarettes and tobacco. The entire unit was drunk for at least three days.

As it was coming to the end of the war, the four youngest soldiers in our unit, myself included, were sent to the western front, while the rest of the troop were to return to the east. I never heard from those who went east, and I am sure they all fell there, I'm certain. The four of us went to Frankfurt and awaited our next orders. There was a large group of soldiers that had to be sorted out and given fresh orders. I was sent to Hannover, to a small city called Celle. There was a national park there that was close to the city – it was inhabited by all sorts of wildlife, boars, bears, wolves, and many others.

The first thing we had to do was change our uniforms. We used to wear blue ones, but now we had to change and wear green ones. The four of us were assigned to an artillery battery, and thus we needed to be trained afresh in order to be able to operate these large armoured cannon. After we completed our training, we were relocated to the front line in Strasbourg. When we arrived, we slept on the floor of a local school and were told we'd be allocated to local families, who would then be able to accommodate us. I ended up in an old pharmacy, owned by a woman who was married to a miner. They lived upstairs, and their pharmacy was downstairs. I and another soldier slept in the attic. Both of us had beds there, it was very nice, very comfortable. Also, the hosts were very good people. When we brought ourselves food from the field kitchen, the lady actually asked if we'd switch meals with them, as they were curious about what we were eating. After Christmas they took us sledging – you see, we were young boys back then, only twenty-two years old at the time, and only eighteen when we joined the army. We wanted to have fun sometimes, just fool around and play in the snow. Not long after that we were ordered to move again.

I don't even remember what the new place was called. We were serving in bunkers and had to replace the cannon, making sure they were always ready to fight, but we never used them, not once. During our time living in the bunker, routinely, older soldiers would offer us all kinds of drinks. We never knew what it was, and we were always suspicious that they were making fun of us, so we politely refused. Upon discovering that the liquid was actually wine, we quickly changed our minds and had our fair share of glasses. But the older soldiers got one over on us nevertheless. As we had unwittingly had the last of the wine, they told us: 'Now, as you finished it, you're the ones that need to go to the nearby village to get us some more'. Well, we didn't want to go outside the bunker, no one did, which was the point, I suppose, as there were partisans everywhere, but we had

no choice. We went to the nearest village and in fact decided to settle there instead of returning to the bunker.

The village seemed to be abandoned, but in fact we found civilians hiding in cellars in a few houses; we found women, children and elderly. We couldn't just send the poor people away and take over their shelter for ourselves, but luckily we found an actual empty house, where we hid. We barricaded ourselves in, leaving only a small hole in the window so we could see outside. When we were done with these safety precautions we started playing cards in the kitchen, but our peace didn't last long, as we were interrupted by loud engine noises. One of the soldiers I was hiding and playing cards with said we had nothing to worry about, it was probably just one of our tanks. But when we heard an American soldier speaking, we fell into a grave silence. We ran quickly to the basement, getting rid of all our weapons. I had my white handkerchief ready on a stick, and as the American soldier slowly moved through the dark shouting 'Kuhmin'n! Kuhmin'n!',⁶⁴ I carefully waved the handkerchief from the dark corner we were hiding in and then slowly walked out. When we got out, I stared at the soldier; I had never seen a 'Negro' [*černoch*] in my life.⁶⁵

Near the end of the war, after being captured by Americans, I found myself in a detention camp, first in Strasbourg, and then I was moved to a detention camp in Compiègne, France. There were maybe two thousand of us there. The Americans interrogated us. They asked about everything, from minute childhood details to when we were captured. Every day new interrogators came in, and we had to start over. I told them that I am Czech, and

⁶⁴ Written phonetically; probably meaning 'I am coming in'.

⁶⁵ As central European countries were not involved in colonialism, nor the slave trade, it was highly uncommon for regular central Europeans to see any black people. Mr. Hubacek told me that, until that point, he had never imagined that people with such a skin colour actually existed. Furthermore, because of different historical and social developments from those of the former colonialist countries, the word 'Negro' does not have the same pejorative connotations as it does in both British and American English.

after some time, I was offered the opportunity to join the Czechoslovak Legion based in England. I and few other Czechs were given these large white bags, each with with three pairs of shoes, new clothing, shaving equipment, soap – they simply had everything! When we left the camp, on our way to the port in Cherbourg (in order to board a ship to England), we marched through the streets of Compiègne wearing the new uniforms, and we were nicely groomed. People were standing on the pathways, cheering and throwing flowers at us, as if we were heroes. Yet only a few weeks ago, when they brought us to Compiègne as prisoners of war in open wagons, people were throwing stones at us. You could not hide or protect yourself, there was barely any space, and with seventy men in each wagon, we had to stand, so many of us were injured as we couldn't dodge the incoming stones. One guy from my wagon was hit on the head particularly hard by somebody throwing stones from a bridge. He did not make it – he died right next to me.



Picture 20. František Hanáček in Czechoslovakian uniform

So I was sent on a ship to southern England. There, I received yet more training; I had to redo all the shooting drills, the driving, pretty much everything. But by this time the war was nearly over, and I did not stay in England very long. I was issued with an English driving license, and a soldier's service book. All of my old documents were in German. I had to drive to London several times, as I was asked to deliver small loads of supplies as a driver. One of the funny things was that I wasn't used to the traffic lights, as we, of course, didn't have them at home. But it wasn't too hard to understand – stop on red, go on green. When I was in London, I would always try to find an American military kitchen. These Americans were quite clever because they would always put their kitchens under a bridge in case it would be raining. So I always searched for the nearest bridge. They had this thing called 'baykuhn'⁶⁶ – they would slice speck into thin strips and fried it. I really liked the taste, and they would always share some. On the 1st of November 1945, I was finally able to begin making the journey home.

These 'Wehrmacht soldier's story' have special importance in Hlučín oral tradition, and their sharing reflects on how collective memory and collective identity is negotiated. However, the negotiations over Hlučín's 'difficult heritage' is problematic not only in relation to Opavians, but for various Hlučín's themselves. Even though the 'Wehrmacht past' is acknowledged as meaningful in the present, it is also challenging when it comes to public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity. Therefore, those stories are often heavily stylised as stories of everyday resistance, within the main protagonist carefully balancing in between overt disobedience and unscrupulous compliance. By the same token, stories and narratives which problematise the positive

⁶⁶ 'Bacon' written phonetically.

self-perception of Hlučíns collective identity and the ‘German’ past are either heavily censored or discarded altogether.

Erinnerungskultur in the Hlučín area

This point can be illustrated by an unpublished article entitled ‘Reflections on the crimes of National Socialism in the Hlučín Area’. This article has been vividly discussed within the Association of the Hlučín Area Municipalities, as well as by the editorial board of the previously-mentioned ethnographic journal, *Hlučínsko: Vlastivědný Časopis (Hlučín Area: Ethnographic Journal)*. During my fieldwork, I was a member of the journal’s editorial board. The rest of the board was composed of seven people, one woman and six men, all originally from the Hlučín area. Four were retired; the remaining three were all men aged between their late twenties to their mid-forties.

During one editorial board meeting in the winter of 2016, Josef Nichtmiller, in a somewhat irritated and moody state of mind, was sitting next to me. The meeting took place at the Silesian Archive in Opava, a beautiful and impressive former Jesuit monastery. Since one of the members of the board present that day was an archivist working there, the comfortable conference rooms of the Archive were a convenient meeting place. We agreed on the theme of the next issue of the journal and established what articles each of us should write and submit before the journal went to print. After approximately two hours, the meeting was over and Josef and I decided to have a quick lunch together.

As Josef’s mood was not improving, even after the productive meeting, I asked him what was wrong. He replied that he was upset about how things had turned out regarding his article ‘Reflections on the crimes of National Socialism in the Hlučín Area’, which he

had wanted to publish in the journal. ‘Somehow’, he said, ‘the article was leaked before the editorial board could officially discuss it during the meeting.’ He also told me that several mayors from across the Hlučín municipalities and some editorial board members had put their foot down and were firmly against publishing the article. It was unclear how these mayors had become aware of the article, or with whom they had spoken about it, but nevertheless the wheels were moving. One member even declared that if the article were to be published, they would publicly distance themselves from it and resign from the editorial board at once. A few mayors even made off-the-record threats that, should the article be published, they would rescind all support for the journal, and possibly even for the museum. As I have explained in Chapter Three, the Hlučín Museum is a grassroots organisation that depends for its existence on the support and approval of the Hlučín area inhabitants. Such a manoeuvre by the mayors could have severe consequences for everyone associated with the museum and the journal. To prevent possible conflict, the decision was made not to publish Josef’s article. Although no accusations of factual inaccuracies had been made, the fact that the article’s subject matter addressed unwanted and publicly silenced memories was enough to silence the article as well.

Josef’s article narrated a kind of Hlučín ‘soldier’s story’, but in a way that could not be further removed from the Schweikian pattern and style of a lovable ‘grandfather in Wehrmacht’. It addressed the historical realities of the Hlučín’s active acceptance of Nationalist Socialist ideology, their anti-Semitism, and the war crimes committed by Hlučín in the services of the Wehrmacht or even the SS. The main historical figure discussed in the article was Adolf Theuer, born in the village of Bolatice in 1920. Theuer served as an SS-Unterscharführer officer at the Auschwitz concentration camp. He was deployed to Auschwitz in 1940 and got promoted soon after; he was directly involved in the mass gassing of prisoners by inserting the lethal Zyklon B chemical into the gas

chambers. During his regular holidays to the Hlučín area, and to the pub in Bolatice in particular, an intoxicated Theuer would share stories of the murders he had committed in following Dr Mengele's orders. After the war, based on witness testimonies, Theuer was found guilty of war crimes and sentenced to death by hanging. His execution took place in April 1947 in Opava. From the collective memory perspective, however, for many Hlučínians the image of a Hlučín soldier actively and voluntarily participating in the Holocaust is difficult to comprehend and accept, despite the available historical evidence.

The article did not merely discuss the life story of Adolf Theuer, portrayed as a perpetrator rather than as a victim of grand historical events. It also challenged the popular idea that Wehrmacht soldiers did not participate in the war crimes committed during the Second World War. The author forcefully maintained that even the seemingly blameless Wehrmacht was involved in crimes against humanity and genocide. For example, the Wehrmacht as an institution starved 3 million Soviet prisoners of war to death. In occupied Serbia, Wehrmacht members systematically executed the Jewish population under the pretence of hostage shooting, as opposed to the genocide (i.e. they did not 'only' commit crimes against humanity, but also participated in the Holocaust). Between June 1941 and May 1942 alone, members of Wehrmacht shot 80,000 civilians under the guise of fighting partisans in the Soviet Union, not to mention their burning and plundering of Russian villages. It is likely, the article maintains, that some Hlučínians serving in the Wehrmacht directly participated in these atrocities, whether willingly or otherwise.

Josef explained to me, as though he wanted to justify himself: 'I wrote the article in Berlin, when I was there as an Erasmus exchange student. I think I was just really provoked and inspired by the intellectual atmosphere and stimulation I'd received at Humboldt-Universität. The way they [Berliners] are able to talk and reflect on the Nazi past, their *erinnerungskultur* [culture of remembrance] ... you know, the *Täter-Diskurs*

[offender/perpetrator-discourse] ... Germans are able to look at themselves critically, whereas we Hlučínians can only think of ourselves as victims.’ According to Josef, the tendency of Hlučínians towards banalisation, ‘alibi-ism’, and self-victimisation in their historical narrative prevents them from understanding their own existence as social actors with will, power and agency. Instead, he argues, in all available narratives, they always figure as passive victims of grand history and socio-political happenstance. Despite Josef’s initial disappointment, the article, although unpublished, was distributed and spread by unofficial ‘samizdat’ streams and networks.

In this as well as previous chapters, I have demonstrated that the Hlučín experience of the Second World War as *Reichsdeutsche* (Germans of the Reich/Imperial Germans, and not as Czechs, Slovaks or even Sudeten Germans) imposes serious difficulties on the community, leading to uncomfortable situations. For the Hlučín area’s inhabitants, the theme of ‘Grandfathers in the Wehrmacht’, however troubling at times, is constructed narratively as a meaningful past that should be acknowledged and remembered within the Hlučín area, but also within Opavian Silesia. The ‘Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories’ are highly valued by the families of the story’s main characters, but despite that, they are only shared carefully and sporadically with the external world. As important as they are for Hlučínians’ collective identity, these stories are perceived as problematic through the prism of the grand narrative of Czech nationalism. From the latter perspective, the fact that Hlučín men served in Nazi Germany’s army is considered treason. The inhabitants of the Hlučín area were not subjected to the expulsions of Germans based on a collective sentence of guilt, nor were they directly punished by the Czechoslovakian judicial system for having served in the Wehrmacht, but Hlučínians have been systematically harassed and stigmatised as ‘Germans’, ‘Nazis’, and ‘collaborators’. I have argued in this chapter that as a reaction to the Czech dominant discourse, and in order to discursively master their collective

memory and identity, 'Wehrmacht soldiers' stories' are heavily stylised, following a particular pattern resembling of *The Good Soldier Schweik* novel. The unitary and monolithic way in which those stories are told in the Hlučín area is not, however, accidental. On the contrary, there are forceful inter-group regulatory mechanisms (as demonstrated on the example of Josef's unpublished article) that demand that Hlučín 'soldiers' stories' are deliberately narrated and presented in a very particular Schweikian way.

Chapter 6. Tourism and Cuisine in the making of Opavian Silesian-ness

In recent years, increasing the attractiveness of the Moravian-Silesian region as a tourist destination has been the focal point of numerous investments aimed at revitalising the area's economy.⁶⁷ In order to develop and manage the region's branding and marketing strategies efficiently, the region has been divided into six tourist destinations, one of which is called the 'Opavian Silesia's Tourist Destination' [*Turistická Oblast Opavské Slezsko*].⁶⁸ As a possible instrument of economic renewal, these tourism development projects have been attracting interest from administrative, governing, and academic bodies, as well from the private sector, which has resulted in a focus on destination marketing strategies and travel media coverage. Analogously, a number of local social actors from both the private and public sectors have come together in an effort to construct a unifying grand narrative of Opavian Silesia's cultural heritage and authentic distinctiveness, which can be displayed to the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990) or the 'tourist glance' (Chaney 2002) as a part of the destination advertising.

The imaginary of Opavian Silesia's distinctiveness arises from a static and monolithic understanding of culture and authenticity according to which it is possible to search for and find a single authentic past or reality. However, the process of creating the destination image of Opavian Silesia as a unified and harmonious whole carries with it significant issues and challenges from contested collective identities, contradictory memories, and ambiguous cultural heritages. These issues and challenges complicate the attempts to

⁶⁷ On the Moravian Silesian Region, see Introduction.

⁶⁸ Opavian Silesia's Tourist Destination, as defined by the marketing strategy compiled by EVS Consulting Ltd., financed by the European Regional Development Fund (EU), and commissioned by the Moravian-Silesian Region, has an area of 1072 square kilometres and has a population of 182,000 (SLDB 2011).

negotiate and construct the region's 'authentic' nature, which is seen as necessary for successful destination branding and promotion.

At the same time, in the space of these negotiations, the traditionally recognised categories of 'locals', 'tourists', and 'entrepreneurs' are blurred to a significant extent. The social actors (individuals, groups and institutions) involved in these negotiations have invested in the project of creating an attractive touristic image of Opavian Silesia in multiple ways, often embodying the roles of the 'local', 'tourist', and 'entrepreneur' simultaneously. Therefore, even though I am generally less concerned with how tourism is organised physically and what are its outcomes than with how it provides a field for identity negotiations, because the social roles of 'locals', 'tourists', and 'entrepreneurs' are often embodied within a single social actor, in this chapter I investigate holistically how the destination image of Opavian Silesia is both created and consumed by local social actors.



Map 6. Opavian Silesia

Czech Silesia as a Tourist Destination

Initially, the Czech Republic was divided into fifteen separate tourist-targeted zones, of which one was the Touristic Area of North-Moravia and Silesia. However, this touristic zone, which roughly covered an area overlapping the borders between the Moravian and Silesian Administrative Regions, was further divided into another six tourist destinations: Jeseníky, Opavian Silesia [Opavské slezsko], Ostrava area [Ostravsko], Cieszyn Silesia [Těšínské Slezsko], Poodří-Moravian Kravařsko [Poodří-Moravské Kravařsko], and Beskydy-Valašsko. According to the official statement on the destination, the attractions include picturesque mountain scenery (Jesníky and Beskydy), spa and wellness centres, and, of specific interest to this chapter, a ‘rich and vibrant cultural heritage’ (MSTDMSR 2015).



Map 7. Moravian-Silesian Region's tourist areas (MSTDMSR 2015)

Tourism in Opavian Silesia is now at the apex of its development, with the main touristic artefact being its cultural heritage. However, both ‘Opavian Silesia’ as a destination and ‘Opavian Silesia’s cultural heritage’ as a commodity are contested concepts. The idea of Opavian Silesia as geographically and demographically defined can hardly claim any historical continuity, despite all the efforts to historicise it. In the same way, it does not correspond to any previously recognised political or state-sanctioned borders on the land itself, nor with any administrative structure. Nevertheless, in 2015 the town of Opava, in collaboration with the Local Action Groups (LAG) of the Opavian and Hlučín areas, initiated the ‘Opavian Silesia’s Tourist Destination’. According to the town hall’s spokesperson, Jiří Beránek, its ‘aim is to develop and improve tourism in Opava and Opava’s surrounding areas, to create links between the public sphere, the private sphere, and not-for-profit entities, and to strengthen the image of the region and its promotion’. From the perspective of Opava’s town hall, if Opavian Silesia was officially recognised, the town would be its natural centre, with its long history, prominent cultural importance, and significant administrative functions. After all, the geographical scope of the newly emerging Opavian Silesia as a tourist destination is approximately the same as the territory of the Opavian administrative district. However, from the standpoint of collective identity, collective memory, and cultural heritage, Opavian Silesia is an artificially created area and the product of the Tourism Department, comprised of several Silesian sub-regions. Moreover, it brings together ideologically opposed groups, such as the Opavians and Hlučínians, who have profoundly antagonistic ideas of collective identities and of what constitutes their respective cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, at the time of my research, there were strong dialectical divisions between the categories of Opavians and Hlučínians, between Czechs, Germans, and Silesians, as well as uncertainties over what constitutes and could be presented as Opavian Silesia’s

identity, culture, or heritage. Because of these conceptual ambiguities and uncertainties, combined with social actors' divergent visions and ambitions, establishing common ground on which to build a solid and functional representation of Opavian Silesia to boost tourism has proved difficult. However, as I will demonstrate below, the local social actors are neither passive victims of the undermining of local culture and identity by the tourist industry, nor staunch defenders of the 'old orders' and classificatory divisions. Instead, they are active agents involved in changing the representations of their region in a way that is potentially appealing to tourists and that suits tourists' preconceptions, while also being compatible with their own understandings of what Opavian Silesia was, is, and should be. When considering the dynamic negotiations of Silesian identity that encompass the joint efforts of Opavian and Hlučín representatives in coming to an understanding of what constitutes 'Opavian Silesia's cultural heritage', there is great potential to overcome a variety of differences between the two and to develop a shared narrative of Opavian Silesia and its inhabitants.

Therefore, together with the political and academic dimensions of the dominant discourse of Silesia, there is also a tourism dimension, balancing between Gerd Bauman's dominant and demotic discourses, which is relevant to the issue of Silesian identity formation and negotiation. I suggest that Silesian identity formation not only involves public contestation, negotiation, and representations of the past and present, but also their consumption. Who is marketing Silesian-ness, and how do various social actors commodify it for consumption? 'Tourist' representations are often focused on certain themes such as 'authenticity' and simple, idealised versions of a place stripped of its complexity (MacDonald 2002). According to MacDonald, the 'past' and 'cultural heritage' that informs this 'made-to-order' version that is ready for tourist consumption is not necessarily entirely wrong or untrue from the local populations' perspective, but it

is limited and simplified, neglecting aspects of everyday life and local reality that do not fit within the tourist's fantasy (ibid.). If tourism 'promotes' local cultures and identities, what version of local culture is it promoting? How is Silesian identity negotiated by various social actors within Opavian Silesia in relation to tourism? What are the goals, visions, contradictions, and obstacles involved in creating the 'Opavian Silesia's Tourist Destination'?

In his acclaimed monograph *The Tourist Gaze, the Cretan Glance*, Philip Duke focuses on the dynamic relationship between Minoan archaeology and tourism in Crete and examines how Minoan archaeology is used in the present and how the past is commodified by the tourist industry (2007). Similar to the Opavian Silesian case, Duke illustrates how the past is being reconstructed by academic elites in ways which are perceived as convenient for the tourist industry and is aiding the image of Crete as an attractive tourist destination. He demonstrates in his study of how authorities in archaeological discourses reconstruct the past in the present while avoiding references to conflicting interpretations of the Cretan past. The Minoan cultural heritage, Duke argues, is represented as a coherent and homogeneous singular narrative, stripped of both its complexity and its ambiguity. He asserts that 'public archaeology on Crete, manifested in sites and museums and the vast array of tourist information media, produces a virtually monolithic message about a particular past and thereby a particular present' (Duke 2007: 14). I appreciate his insights regarding how both scientific authority and the tourist industry operate within the binary opposition between authenticity and inauthenticity by creating a singular historical narrative, and how 'tourists are presented with a selective past at archaeological sites and museums, with certain aspects being emphasised and others silenced' (ibid.: 93). However, he also maintains that the five strong hegemonies that 'together have created the past that is on show to the public: colonialism and the rise

of modernity; academic elitism; archaeological paradigms; state politics; economics' (ibid.: 94) prevent any attempt at meaningful local control of the Minoan past. As I demonstrate below, the commonly recognised and somehow opposing categories of 'tourists', 'locals', and 'entrepreneurs' are not mutually exclusive in the Opavian Silesian case because a great number of social actors involved in the negotiations over Opavian Silesian identity and cultural heritage embody all three categories. While I acknowledge that there exists an official hierarchy of knowledge regarding what can be recognised as authentic Opavian Silesian cultural heritage, the dynamic negotiations on the ground provide a relatively inclusive platform involving a great array of various social actors.

Understanding Cultural Heritage and Authenticity

Heritage commonly refers to materially valued things that can be passed down from one generation to the next (Turtinen 2000, Kishenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Further, cultural heritage relates to things of intrinsic historical or cultural value that are deemed worthy of preservation. Cultural heritage is often understood as encompassing both the 'tangible' (i.e. physical objects and places) and the 'intangible' (language, traditions, customs) (Turtinen 2000). However, there is an increasing awareness of the arbitrariness of binary categories such as the 'tangible' and 'intangible' (Kishenblatt-Gimblett 2004). As Kishenblatt-Gimblett suggests (ibid.: 53), intangible heritage, previously and sometimes still called folklore, at present includes not only the 'masterpieces, but also the masters'. As such, intangible heritage is alive, and preserving it means sustaining the whole system as a living entity and not just a collection of artefacts (Kishenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Arguably, lived and embodied practices of heritage such as customs and habits inform who we are as collectives and help to create our collective social memory and identity. Alongside practices of heritage, we also use objects of heritage to shape our ideas about

our past, present, and future. Hence, as with the widely discussed distinction between ‘memory’ and ‘history’ (Nora 1989, Assmann 1995, Olick and Vinitzky-Seroussi 2011), an important distinction needs to be made between ‘heritage’ and ‘history’ (Lowenthal 1997, Kishenblatt-Gimblett 2004). According to Lowenthal (1997), heritage must be seen as separate from history, as it is concerned with re-packaging the past for some purpose in the present. These purposes may be nationalistic in nature, or local, or both.

The notion of ‘heritage’, the idea that certain objects and practices are valuable and worth preserving, while others are not, informs the choices we make about what to conserve from the past and what to discard. According to Kishenblatt-Gimblett (*ibid.*), what constitutes ‘heritage’ depends not on some ‘intrinsic quality’ of a particular practice or objects; labelling something as ‘heritage’ is always a result of someone’s position and perspective of what is valuable. By the same token, what is valuable to one person is not worth preserving to another. Therefore, what can and should constitute heritage is often a contested issue. On one hand, collective representations are not invalidated by the fact that someone does not agree with them or like them, while on the other hand, objects of heritage are embedded in an experience created by various kinds of users, as well as by those who attempt to manage this experience (*ibid.*). Therefore, people not only perceive heritage differently, they also respond to it differently, depending on their value judgements and affiliations. As I demonstrate in the case of ‘Opavian Silesia’s cultural heritage’, any attempt to create an ‘official heritage’ is necessarily both partial and selective. This gap between what an individual and community understand as their heritage on the one hand, and the official heritage promoted and managed by government bodies or the state on the other, introduces the possibility of multiple ‘heritages’, which can be both complementary and contradictory.

From a constructivist and instrumentalist vantage point, a number of classic studies suggest that, rather than merely protecting and preserving the unimpeachable, ‘authentic’ past, historical narratives are to a significant degree constructed, invented traditions for any number of purposes (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). For example, several works explore how histories and genealogies have been created by nation states as part of their self-legitimation (Macdonald 2012). Similarly, there are numerous case studies focusing on ‘identity politics, in which minorities of various kinds [seek] to challenge aspects of nation-state hegemony and at the same time assert their own cultural and historical distinctiveness’ (ibid.: 236). Analogous to such political struggles for legitimacy and recognition, the development of cultural tourism and the marketing of tourist destinations opens up similar questions about ‘cultural heritage’. While discussing the efforts of many towns in the United States to embrace heritage tourism in order to stimulate economic growth and enhance the quality of life, Benita Howell maintains that cultural heritage is ‘packaged’ for tourist consumption as much as it is ‘packaged’ to support nationalistic propaganda (1994). If that is the case, is or can ‘cultural heritage’ as a reconstitution of the meaningful past be a resource for destination branding and marketing; what kind of potential profits (material and immaterial) are here to be made within ‘the heritage industry’ (Hewison 1987)?

In the cases I have observed during my fieldwork, the imaginary of Opavian Silesia’s cultural heritage seemed to be built on the assumption of the existence of a static, consistent, unitary, and authentic historical Silesian culture which can be extracted from the past through rigorous and systematic historical investigation. According to the perspective of the social actors involved in the negotiations over the destination branding of Opavian Silesia, once the true Silesian culture is recovered from the past, it can be subsequently exploited as a tourist commodity. Indeed, various research teams from the

Silesian University, Silesian Museum and Silesian Archive are proceeding towards extracting the ‘authentic Opavian Silesian Cultural heritage’ from various historical items and artefacts available in archives and storage rooms. This imaginary is built on the presumption that authenticity can be scientifically extracted from these artefacts due to the intrinsic quality which the latter possesses. For example, as discussed in the section below on Silesian cuisine, the process of codifying dishes and recipes as authentic or inauthentic requires the expert knowledge of the historians based at the Silesian University, who, through scientific investigations, can verify whether certain foodstuffs and dishes have been ‘traditionally’ consumed in the region. Then the University’s Institute of Gastronomy, Spas, and Tourism suggests how those dishes can be modified to meet the present-day demand. Finally, those dishes that have been verified by the academic authorities as authentic are then promoted by the Opavian Destination Management as ‘authentic Silesian cuisine’ to eating facilities as well as to potential customers. Here authenticity is understood as an inherent quality of culinary substances and formulas detached from everyday practice and experience. Authentic Silesian cuisine is not an embodied everyday culinary practice of Opavian Silesia’s inhabitants but instead an instance of historical knowledge based on an essentialist conceptualisation of culture. Therefore, as I demonstrate below, both cooks and customers need to be told and taught what the authentic Opavian Silesian cuisine is and how it should be prepared and consumed.

According to Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, ‘the concept of authenticity encompasses diverse sets of meaning that range from genuineness and originality to accuracy and truthfulness. In many respects, authenticity encodes the expectation of truthful representation. It is concerned with the identity of persons and groups, the authorship of products, producers, and cultural practices, the categorical boundaries of society: “who”

or “what” *is* “who” or “what” claims to be’ (2013: 339, emphasis in the original). Thus, as contemporary anthropology has moved beyond the confines of essentialist conceptualisations of culture, the concept of authenticity has been continuously problematised (Gable and Handler 1996; Field 2009, Fillitz and Saris 2013, Theodossopoulos 2013, Sjørølev 2013). In his stimulating study of the use of the concept of authenticity in anthropological analysis, Theodossopoulos argued against the expectation of a singular authenticity that exists beneath the surface of social reality. Instead, he suggests that anthropologists should adopt a ‘perspective on the study of authenticity that acknowledges the simultaneous co-existence of more than one parallel manifestation of authenticity in any given negotiation of the authentic’ (2013: 337).

Destination Management of Opavian Silesia

In late March 2016, I was asked by Josef Nichtmiller of the Hlučín Museum, one of my closest informants, if I would be free and willing to volunteer during the highly anticipated weekend of the 7th and 8th of May, probably the busiest weekend of the year for the Museum. Several events in multiple locations were taking place, and with the constant shortage of staff, any help was appreciated. First, there was the ‘Opening of the Tourist Season’ event happening that Saturday in the gardens of a nearby castle, where the Hlučín Museum wanted to have a promotional stand. The following day was Victory Day, commemorating the end of the Second World War and accompanied by numerous living history events and battle re-enactments throughout the region. The main events take place predominantly around the concrete border fortifications that were built in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s, marking the neat demarcation of the borderlands. Darkovičky, one of the most prominent of these fortifications located in Hlučín, was where most of the Museum’s employees were to be sent to coordinate the events.

However, it seemed equally important to the Museum's representatives that at least the permanent exhibition, 'Who are the People Living in the Hlučín Area?', remain open and accessible throughout Victory Day. As such, I agreed to participate at the 'Opening of the Tourist Season' in order to represent and promote the museum on the Saturday, and to open and administer the permanent exhibition at the Museum the following day.

Intrigued by the 'Opening of the Tourist Season' event, I began to investigate who was organizing it, its official purpose, and its intended audience. Consequently, I found that the event was being organised under the banner of the recently established 'Opavian Silesia Tourism Association' (*Turistická Oblast Opavské Slezsko z.s.*, hereafter OSTA), with financial support from Opava's town hall, European Union funds, the Moravian-Silesian Administrative Region, and the Silesian University in Opava. This project seeks to promote 'Opavian Silesia' as an appealing tourist destination with a distinct culture, people, landscape, and cuisine. In order to do so, the management team negotiates and lobbies within the region of Opavian Silesia to unite various social actors in the tourist and hospitality industries to cooperate in their everyday efforts. As the official webpage reads:

The Destination Management of the Opavian Silesia's Tourist Region is an organisation that aims to coordinate and co-operate with tourist service providers in the area (destination) **in order to manage tourism in the region more effectively**. It seeks to ensure sustainable land development, market competitiveness, making sure that all activities offered are comprehensive and easily accessible, and to establish and maintain **cooperation between public and private actors**. To achieve such ends, it uses standard business and brand management tools and strategies.

Destination management is an administrative and supervising process based on communication, coordination and cooperation, not only within corporations, but throughout the whole region. Therefore, it is important that individual and independent entities behave as **equal co-partners** rather than as competitors. This strategy provides the necessary framework that ensures the creation and sale of maximally comprehensive tourist packages and products. It is far more effective to **promote the area as a harmonious whole** than as composed of separate centres. (*Turistická Oblast Opavské Slezsko, z.s. 2017, emphasis in the original*)

While OSTA is a collaborative and cooperative association of individual institutions and organisations, its particular brand of destination management is embodied by the sole and central network orchestrator, Jakub Zrzavý, whom I met in early April 2016. His office, situated above a butcher's shop in Opava's main square, was in fact a small conference room with piles of miscellaneous newsletters, tourist and cyclist's maps, and bulletins, with countless information leaflets emblazoned with Opavian Silesia's logo scattered across the floor. 'I still need to distribute all of this promotional material, and therefore my schedule is a bit tight', he said apologetically. He offered me coffee and some biscuits, as local custom dictates, and asked what he could do for me. The mug of coffee I was given had the Opavian Silesian logo on it, as did the pen Mr Zrzavý was holding in his hand. The fact that I was associated with institutions such as the Silesian University and the Hlučín Museum and had various regionally influential acquaintances eased the conversation: 'Well, then, you know pretty much everybody I am dealing with from the position of destination manager', he said, as if we had an understanding. 'It's not always easy to find common ground and act in a united way. Everybody knows what's best for them individually, but then they might be forgetting that what is the best for the region is in the long run *also* best for them. This region has such potential! It might not be as picturesque as other places in the Republic, Czech Krumlov [South Bohemia] or Kutná Hora [East Bohemia], for example.'⁶⁹ But there is great potential for cycling tourism and sightseeing... and regional agricultural products are also of interest', he pointed out to me.

The 'Opening of the Tourist Season' event is an all-day opening ceremony, after which all the tourist attractions are open, as opposed to the off-season, when they are either shut

⁶⁹ Both Český Krumlov and Kutná Hora are among many towns in the Czech Republic included on the list of World Heritage Sites under the UNESCO heritage protection regime.

completely or have restricted opening hours. Before the creation of the united OSTA, various opening ceremonies were scattered throughout the region, with each event being managed individually. These locations and sites (castles and palaces, museums, lookout towers, religious architecture, fortifications etc.) organised their own individual, smaller scale opening rituals in order to ‘welcome spring and the opening of the new tourist season’. According to Mr Zrzavý, it took a while to convince all the tourist attraction managers that having a large-scale opening ceremony with thousands of visitors in one location on the same day would be profitable for all those involved. In order to be impartial, it was agreed that the joint event would take place in a different location each year, so as not to favour any particular attraction or location. The year of my fieldwork, the event took place on the castle grounds in the town of Hradec nad Moravicí, just south

of the town of Opava. Accordingly, it was agreed that in 2017 the event would take place at the Kravaře palace, in the heart of the Hlučín area.

On 7th May 2016, at about 5:30 am, the Hlučín Museum's van stopped in front of the house in Kateřinky where I was living. The driver was Josef Nichtmiller, a museum employee and doctoral candidate in history from the village of Pišť, Hlučín area. Next to him sat another Hlučín native, Radovan Janoš, an employee of the Local Action Group (LAG) of the Hlučín area, a local politician representing the environmentalist Green Party, a part-time farmer, and the husband of my informant and now close friend Marie, a stay-at-home mother of four. Both Josef and Radovan, the former a tall and lean man in his late twenties, the latter a broad and sturdily built man in his mid-thirties, consider



Picture 21. I am standing behind the promotional stand of the Hlučín Museum. In front of me is the museum's logo and banner, an enlarged picture of the museum's ethnographic journal Hlučínsko, the Opavian Silesian's tourist destination's logo, and a map of the Hlučín area.

themselves to be the Hlučín area's patriots. Despite being frequently picked on because of their origin, especially during their high school years in Opava, they feel proud about being *Prajzáci/Hlučíns* and they do not find the word '*Prajzák*' pejorative. In fact, I have heard both of them refer to themselves by both words, as '*Hlučíňák*' and '*Prajzák*'. They are both able to speak Po Naszymu, though rarely do so. Instead, they express themselves in Czech (*obecná čeština*). They also have a relatively solid grasp of German, mostly due to their studies in Germany as undergraduate students in the Erasmus exchange programme.

After a brief greeting, I quickly changed into a dark blue T-shirt with the Museum's logo printed on it, which Josef had brought for me. I then jumped into the van, and we headed towards the nearby town of Hradec nad Moravicí to prepare two promotional stands, one for the Hlučín Museum, the other for the LAG of the Hlučín area. Despite the fact that the two different stands could be seen as potentially competitive, the close cooperation and teamwork was customary among the Hlučín area's inhabitants. I was not surprised that after working together to build each other's tents, we went to help anybody else who needed it. Further, I could not help but notice that such assistance was provided primarily to people from the Hlučín area. In the spirit of reciprocity, we were given several glasses of sacramental wine from a stand promoting religious tourism and 'Hlučín cakes' [*prajské koláče*] from the Senior Club of Velké Hoštice. The all-women team associated with the club is considered to be one of the toughest competitors in the annual contest of the *Golden Cake*, frequently taking home the title of 'Best Hlučín cakes of the year'. In the

Hlučín area, such cakes are considered a necessity for weddings, funerals, religious celebrations, and other social gatherings.⁷⁰

Just after 8:30 am, the first visitors started to show up. To Mr Zrzavý's relief, it was a sunny, inviting, unseasonably warm weekend. Though official numbers are not available, most of those who organised the events agreed that there were probably between 5,000 and 8,000 visitors. However, the visitors were mostly residents of the Moravian-Silesian region itself. From the numerous conversations I had with the event's participants, many of them saw the event as a social gathering and an opportunity to meet their acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, friends, and extended family members, some of whom were promoting various enterprises and attractions at other promotional stands. Furthermore, the prospect of various folklore groups performing, roundabouts, and inflatable castles for children, and the great selection of beer and food choices, were further incentives to attend the event. While the visitors expressed an interest in learning



Picture 23. Promotional stand of the Senior Club of Velké Hoštice and three customers, one of them wearing mid-twentieth-century folklore costume



Picture 24. Hlučín area cakes made and being sold by members of the Club

⁷⁰ As religious celebrations, I have particularly *Krmáš* and *Odpust* in mind. The word 'Krmáš' is probably derived from 'Kermesse', and refers to the festivities associated with the celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of a church.

'Odpust' refers to the festivities associated with the celebration the church's patron.

what tourist attractions are available in Opavian Silesia, they invariably mentioned their familiarity with each location. When queuing in front of a food stand, a woman in her early forties told me: '[the event] is a nice opportunity to be outside with the kids and have some fun. We've seen most of the attractions advertised here. Many of them we've visited multiple times, in fact, including your museum [I was still wearing the Hlučín museum promotional T-shirt]. But I guess it is a good thing that each attraction's representative gathered at the same place to remind people that they have "survived the winter"', she said teasingly.

To my great surprise, the setting of the event was not at all welcoming of foreigners, including those living on the Polish side of the border. Given the convenient geographical proximity on the one hand and the lack of information available to prospective tourists from Poland on the other, one would have expected a particular focus on attracting those from nearby Polish *gminy* (communes or municipalities), given the event's stated aim. On that day I saw very few advertisements or promotional leaflets written in Polish, German or English.⁷¹ Everything written was in standard Czech, with the notable exception of a banner written in *Po Naszymu* welcoming tourists: 'Come to Hlučín/Prussia'.⁷² The banner had been created as a result of a joint effort by the Hlučín LAG and the Association of Hlučín Municipalities. When I asked Mr Zrzavý about the lack of promotional materials in other languages than standard Czech, he told me that at this point the Destination Management has neither the incentive nor the means to target prospective tourists living outside the Moravian-Silesian Region. The event was primarily

⁷¹ On the other hand, even though not particularly promoted during this specific event, cycle route planners and maps of the Silesian Euroregion are often in both Czech and Polish, as required by the European Commission's funding body.

⁷² *Poč hevaj na Prajzku.*

focused on the locals, on those living in close proximity to the tourist attractions and hospitality services being promoted.



Picture 25. 'Come to Hlučín/Prussia', a banner in Po Naszymu

As a result, the categorical division between ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’, or ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ has often been blurred and ambiguous in the case of Opavian Silesia. The majority of anthropological scholarship concerned with tourism treats ‘tourists’ and ‘locals’ as two opposing and somewhat antagonistic categories (e.g. Urry 1990, Coleman and Crang 2002). The opposition is often polarised even further by other social categories involved in tourism, such as ethnicity and nationality (Bunten 2014), race (Philipp 1994, Babb 2012), social class (Lee 1999) or gender (Schein 2000), as well as by processes closely related to tourism, such as temporal and special Othering (Salazar and Graburn 2014), exoticisation (Theodossopoulos 2014), colonialism, neo-colonialism and post-colonialism (Nash 1981), and globalisation (Crouch et al. 2005). However, during my research I found the often assumed binary opposition between the tourist and the local highly unrepresentative of the context I was observing and participating in. While performing tourism (see Coleman and Crang 2002, MacDonald 2002, Filipucci 2002, Quinn 2007), these social actors switched between the ‘tourist’ role and the role of the ‘local’ with remarkable ease, at times embodying both roles at once. Furthermore, the associated characteristics in the table below, which commonly distinguish the ‘tourists’ from the ‘locals’ and the ‘locals’ from the ‘tourists’ in anthropology and tourism studies generally, do not apply in the case of the newly emerging tourist region of Opavian Silesia.

The Tourist	The Local
Mobile	Immobile
Global	Local
Dominant	Marginalised
Industrial	Traditional
Ordinary	Exotic
Autonomy	Dependent
White	Non-White

Figure 3 Table of binary oppositions between 'tourist' and 'local'

According to Salazar and Graburn:

While anthropologists traditionally analysed tourism in terms of 'hosts' and 'guests' (Smith 1977, 1989; Smith and Brent 2001), recent research has reflected the more complex and fluid situation in most contemporary commercial tourist venues. There are nearly always a somewhat privileged set of mediators acting as fulcrum, filtering information and actions of tourists vis-à-vis locals (Salazar 2010a). In most tourist destinations of any scale, the 'locals' and the 'visitors' are by no means a simple or solitary group, but are themselves conglomerates of stakeholders. Outsiders include not only tourists, but also investors, travel industry staff, sellers and provisioners, technical and business experts (often expats), the press and the media, and often migrant workers. Locals include the owners and the property-less, the workers and the uninvolved residents, proprietors, entertainers, suppliers, and possibly agriculturalists and anglers. (2014: 15)

Nonetheless, a small number of people outside the Moravian-Silesian region made it to the event. Due to the boom in cycling tourism in Silesia, affecting conjointly Opava, the Hlučín, area and the neighbouring Racibórz region on the Polish side, a visible number of Polish-speaking cyclists attended the event. I approached several groups of ‘Polish’ visitors, asking them about their experience of the event. For example, I talked with Leszek, a cyclist in his sixties from the nearby Polish coal-mining town of Wodzisław Śląski (*Loslau* in German), approximately 30 km from Hlučín and about 50 km from Opava. Obviously entertained by hearing my peculiar pidgin of Czech, Polish, and Po Naszymu, he told me that he was originally from Silesia and considered himself to be a Silesian (*Ślqnzac*) before being a Pole. He arrived at the event with his three male cycling friends, all of them wearing full cycling gear, including brightly padded cyclist’s shorts and aerodynamic helmets. He told me that they were enjoying the event, especially its wide selection of tasty food choices and nicely cold draught beer. ‘The music is also alright’, he said. Leszek did not feel that the lack of Polish translations affected him negatively, as he can communicate with the sellers in Po Naszymu. However, he stressed that, when talking to people a generation younger, communication in Po Naszymu proves more problematic. He told me that he cannot understand why, for example, when the youngsters from Poland and the Czech Republic meet, they speak English together. ‘No, [the fact that Polish translations are not accessible] is not a problem for me or my mates, but I reckon it will be a problem for the youngsters. But then the youngsters prefer to talk to each other in English anyway... I think that in the future English translations will be necessary, though’, he concluded.

Apart from the variety of promotional stands encouraging visitors to take away various leaflets and plan a visit to the designated attraction or hospitality establishment, the event offered a number of other activities. A historical train was organised for the day, taking

visitors from the towns of Opava and Ostrava to Hradec nad Moravicí, where the event took place, and transporting them back again. In addition to promotional stands advertising various tourist attractions, hospitality establishments, and food stands, which usually represented a particular pub or restaurant, there was also a ‘market’ selling ‘regional products’ [*jarmark regionálních produktů*]. However, those who marketed the event chose the archaic word *jarmark* for market, which used to be current in central Bohemia, as opposed to the more locally recognised terms for market, such as *rynek* or *trh*.⁷³ When asked about in my view a peculiar choice of word, I was told that *jarmark* as a term for a particular kind of a tourist attraction is widely recognised by tourists throughout the Republic and has been used to aid the tourists with their expectation management. According to one of the organisers/participants from the Opava LAG, ‘when attending a *jarmark*, the tourists know that what they are going to experience is not only an ordinary “market” where you can buy or sell random things. At a *jarmark* the tourist will also come into contact with history, folklore, tradition, heritage, and the authentic culture of the place which is being preserved and cherished for posterity.’

⁷³ Both *jarmark* and *rynek* have their origin in Middle High German. *Ring* refers to ‘a town square’, originally ‘a circle’, while *Jarmarkt* refers to an annual fair (the biggest fair of the year). *Trh*, on the other hand, is etymologically from Proto-Slavonic *търгъ*.



Figure 4. Logo of 'Regional Product of Opavian Silesia'

To warrant the brand of 'the Regional Product of Opavian Silesia® [*Opavské Slezsko regionální produkt®*]', licensed by the Destination Management, the product must have a clear and authentic association with Opavian Silesia. According to Opavian Silesia's official webpage, the brand guarantees that the products have a 'true origin' in the region, though origin is not the only condition (ARZ 2017). According to the online guidelines for obtaining the cherished label, any product labelled with the logo must contribute to the region's good name, and therefore the products must be of an extremely good quality, environmentally friendly, and, most importantly, must have a unique relationship to the territory of Opavian Silesia (ibid.). According to Mr Zrzavý, the aim of branding 'regional products' is to make the region more visible to prospective tourists and to help small-scale, local producers succeed in highly competitive markets. At the same time, he continues, 'branding makes it easier for customers to orientate themselves and pursue the right products from the extensive range of goods available'. However, the brand's logo is not only intended to appeal to tourists who want to 'discover and taste the authentic character of the region' of Opavian Silesia (ARZ 2017). It is also designed to appeal to local residents who want to buy regional products from a local producer, support their fellow countrymen, and familiarise themselves with their own homeland and what it has to offer.

Nearly every stand at the event displayed the logo, including the Hlučín Museum stand I worked at. Generally speaking, those I talked to at this and other occasions were pleased with the logo's design, with the Silesian eagle, heraldic symbol of the Silesian land, heavily invoked.

One stand located closest to the entrance gate was dedicated exclusively to the ‘Opavian Silesia’s Tourist Destination’, functioning as an information centre, as well as introducing the tourists to the idea of ‘Opavian Silesia’. In the midst of an event aimed at defining and valorizing ‘authentic’ Opavian Silesian culture, I noted an anachronistic component to the music and dance performances arranged for the event. The repertoire primarily consisted of Czech and Moravian, rather than Silesian, styles of song and dance.



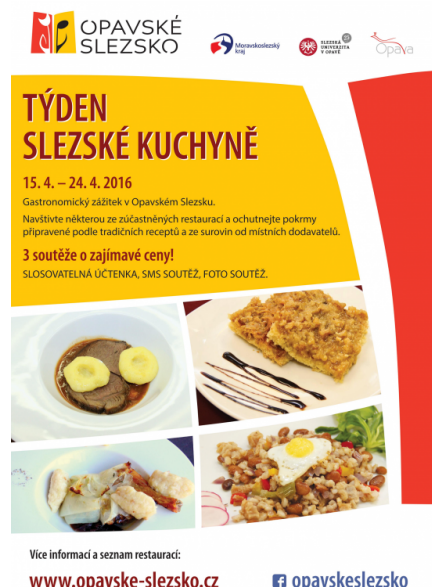
Picture 26. ‘Opavian Silesia’s Tourist Destination’ stand

To perform ‘authentic’ Silesian folklore in the Czech lands is seen as problematic for two reasons. First, both the melodies and lyrics are thought of as too slow and melancholic to be performed during a celebration. Secondly, most of the lyrics are either in standard

German or in *Po Naszymu*, to the extent that the audience would understand neither the words themselves nor the poetic imagery and symbolism invoked in the lyrics and melody. As one of the performers, a retired woman from the village of Kobeřice, in the Hlučín area, flippantly told me: ‘Of course we could sing [the Silesian songs]. I know both German and *Po Naszymu* well, but the tourists would think that we still have the *Reich* [the German Empire] here’.

Finally, the event also offered gastronomical experiences [*gastrozážitky*] promoting the idea of Silesian food tourism. In the OSTA view, having a monolithic and marketable Silesian cuisine made of certified regional products that could be offered to the tourists by local hospitality establishments is an essential element in promoting tourism in the region. Consequently, the codification process of Silesian cuisine, conceptualised as a signifier of a distinct Silesian cultural heritage, is treated by OSTA members as a long-term project with carefully tailored strategies, objectives, and a timeline. For instance, several weeks before the Opening of the Tourist Season in spring, the Destination Management organises a ‘preparatory’ event called the ‘Week of Silesian Cuisine’ in order to encourage local eateries to include examples of ‘Silesian cuisine’ on their menu. For this week-long event, various restaurants, pubs, and cafeterias enter the competition to prepare the tastiest ‘Silesian dish’, hoping that the event will provide valuable advertising and consequently attract new customers. In order to ‘teach’ the local chefs what constitutes Silesian cuisine, an official Silesian cookbook has been created. However, as I demonstrate in the next section, the project of Silesian cuisine, including the official cookbook, is contested and problematic.

Silesian Cuisine



... food is often a primary marker of individual and group identity. Food is therefore extremely affective; its taste on our individual tongues often incites strong emotions, while the communal, commensal experience of such sensation binds people together, not only through space but time as well, as individuals collectively remember past experiences with certain meals and imagine their ancestors having similar experiences. When this occurs, food is transformed into heritage. (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014: 1)

The culinary competition between eateries called the Week of Silesian Cuisine [*Týden slezské kuchyně*]

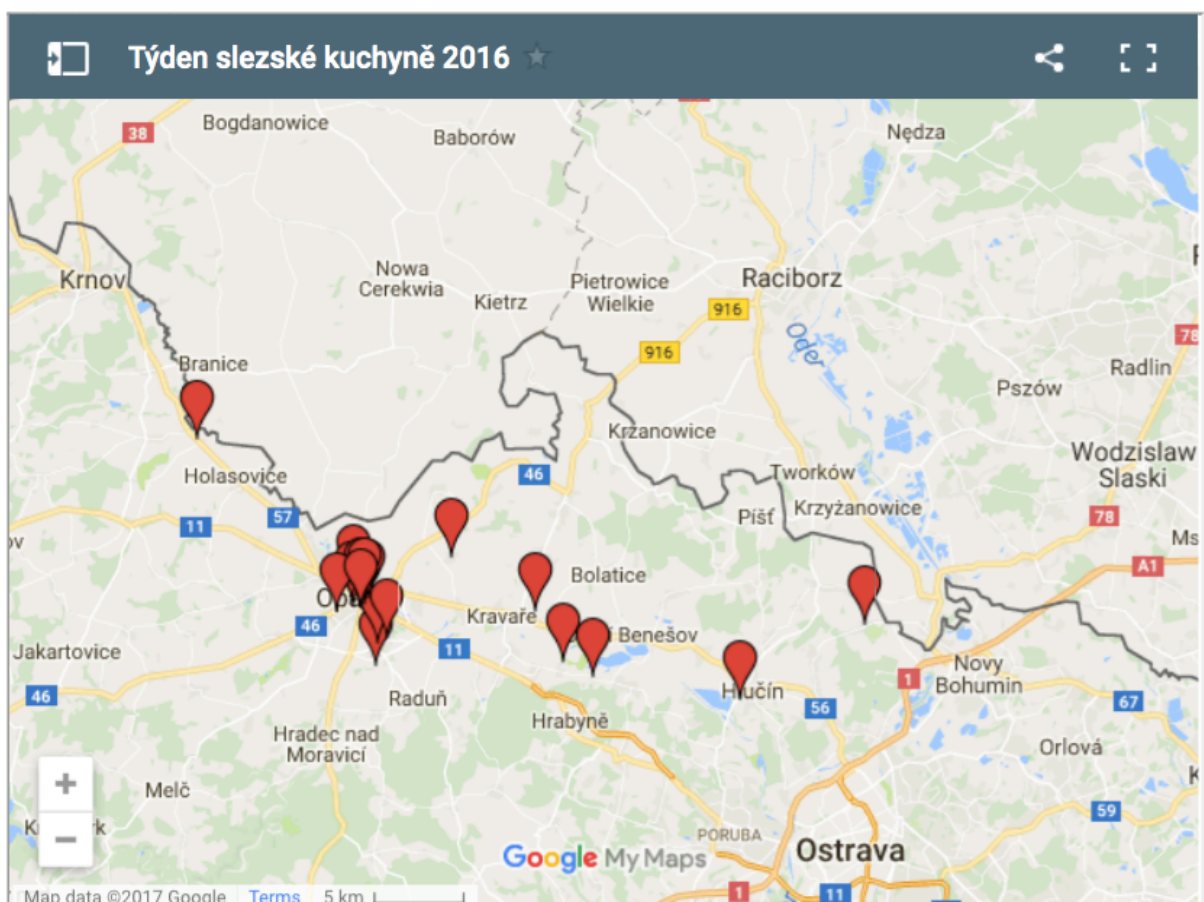
first started in spring 2014 as a joint project of several

social actors in Opavian Silesia and has since become an annual event. Organised primarily by Destination Management, it involves approximately twenty competing dining venues (twenty-three in 2016 when I conducted my fieldwork), as well as a number of customers voting online for ‘the tastiest Silesian dish’ that week. According to the main coordinator, Mr Zrzavý, the Week of Silesian Cuisine prepares local eateries for the tourist season. The aim is to encourage restaurants to offer authentic Silesian dishes not only during the competition, but throughout the whole year. The contest is conceived as an opportunity for the restaurants to try various Silesian dishes and get instantly valuable feedback from both the customers and the organisers.

In order to define what constitutes an ‘authentic Silesian dish’, a historical investigation is being conducted by the Silesian University’s Research Centre for Silesian and Central European Cultural History (1000-1800).⁷⁴ Inspired by the Research Centre’s preliminary

⁷⁴ *Výzkumné centrum pro kulturní dějiny Slezska a střední Evropy (1000-1800)*. For the Research Centre for Contemporary History, Historical Memory and Cultural Heritage (1800-2000) see Chapter 3.

findings, the Silesian University's Institute of Gastronomy, Spas, and Tourism has written a cookbook of Silesian dishes. Entitled *Opavian Silesia: Here we Serve Regional Dishes* [*Opavské Slezsko: Zde podáváme regionální pokrmy*], the book has been published by the Destination Management of Opavian Silesia and was financed by the European Union and the Moravian-Silesian Administrative Region. The cookbook, like the Week of Silesian Cuisine, serves to help and encourage restaurateurs in offering Silesian dishes – part of the intangible cultural heritage of Opavian Silesia – to their customers.



Map 8. Eating places participating in the Week of Silesian Cuisine

During the Week of Silesian Cuisine in April 2016, I made sure to visit as many competing culinary establishments as I could. Sometimes I decided to go alone, making it easier to strike up conversation with a variety of patrons, waiters/waitresses, and restaurateurs. Occasionally I was able to convince my colleagues from the Silesian

University to have a quick lunch in one of the competing restaurants nearby, but mostly I would go for lunch or dinner with any informant who had the time and the inclination to do so. Because I had a car available during my fieldwork and was ready to give anybody a lift to the restaurant and back home again, many of my elderly informants were keen to join me, often organizing themselves into a small group.

On a particular Thursday late one sunny morning I left Kateřinky/Katherain, the suburb of Opava where I resided during my fieldwork, heading towards the town of Kravaře in the Hlučín area. After driving for about twenty minutes, I collected two informants of mine, Alfréd and Dana, a retired couple. Wanting to visit relatives, but not wanting to bother with the train or bus, they were grateful for the chance to get a lift to the nearby town of Háj ve Slezsku, which belongs to the Opavian Silesian Tourist Destination, but lies outside the Hlučín area (the town never belonged to Prussia, and therefore its inhabitant are *Cíсарáci*, not *Prajzáci*). When I told them that I planned to drive to a restaurant there for a lunch because of the competition, they agreed to accompany me in trying out what was on offer. According to the local custom, we would have lunch right at noon and then visit their relatives together. Once I arrived in front of the three-generation house they lived in, they got into the car and asked me if I could also pick up a friend of theirs on the way called Ludmila, a widow who wanted to join us for the trip. I agreed, and the four of us, three Hlučíns and I, went to the restaurant called ‘Silesian Framhouse’ [*Slezský Grunt*], about a twenty-five minute drive from Kravaře.

When we arrived, we were given two lunch menus to select from. One was the ‘standard’ lunch menu for the week offering a selection of common dishes such as mushroom risotto, schnitzel with potato salad, or deep fried cheese with chips as a main course. The other, more puzzling menu was specifically designed for the Week of Silesian Cuisine. Some dishes common throughout the Czech Republic, such as sauerkraut soup or rabbit in

cream sauce with dumplings, had only the adjective ‘Silesian’ attached to their names. Other dishes, such as *rapuncka*, *šimlena* or *slezský bigos*, were bewildering to say the least. ‘I know what *rapuncka* is!’ said Alfréd excitedly. ‘When I was a boy, it was grown in the fields all around. How is it in Czech? Yes, it is *polníček* [field salad]. But nowadays it is not very commonly grown here anymore, but you can buy it in every supermarket. I nearly forgot the word. But at home we would not have it as a main dish like they offer it here, it was just a side dish... and quite a poor one’, he added. Ludmila suggested that *šimlena* might be the black sauce that used to be served on Christmas Eve before the now customary deep-fried carp with potato salad gained popularity all over the country and became the ‘traditional’ Christmas dish. Perplexed by the last item, Ludmila said that she had not heard about *slezský bigos* and that surely it must be something Polish. In fact, the item on the Silesian menu called *slezský bigos* was accompanied by a description citing the *Opavian Silesia: Here we Serve Regional Dishes* cookbook.

Silesian Grange, the restaurant and more recently a guesthouse under one roof, is a family-owned business, and the restaurateur is almost always present in the converted farmstead, either working in the restaurant’s kitchen as a cook or rebuilding and maintaining the property. When I asked him about the Silesian menu, he told me that it is a mixture of the recipes his family used to make when he was little and recipes described in the cookbook. He had considered taking the one-day culinary course on ‘Gastronomy of Opavian Silesia’ [*Gastronomie Opavského Slezska*] provided by the Silesian University prior to the Week of Silesian Cuisine, but found it too expensive.⁷⁵

Generally, he appreciated the efforts being made to promote and propagate Opavian Silesia as a tourist destination, having himself quit farming to focus on the culinary and

⁷⁵ I also signed up for the culinary course organised by the University and managed by Mr Burda, but due to the lack of interest from prospective participants, the course was cancelled.

hospitality industry. His business had been going well, particularly because of European Union investments in the Euroregion Silesia projects, and particularly its influence in the booming industry of cycling tourism. On the other hand, he was sceptical of the idea of condensing the diverse elements of Opavian Silesia into a single cultural and culinary heritage. In his understanding, Opavian Silesia is composed of different territories, such as the Hlučín area and Opavain Katherain, often sharing very little in terms of history, national affiliations, or cultural influences. He suggested that, as I travel within Opavian Silesia frequently, I must know that culinary offerings vary not only between regions, but between municipalities and villages as well. On top of this, newcomers who came to settle here in the last six decades or so have their own traditional recipes brought from their former homes. ‘All these newcomers who came to Opava from God knows where, what do they *really* know about our ways and what people ate here?’, he asked conceitedly.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, despite his reservations about the existence of a distinctive and monolithic Opavian Silesian cuisine, he bought the cookbook and incorporated some of the recipes into the restaurant’s menu, participated in the Week of Silesian Cuisine, and promoted his establishment with a stand at the Opening of the Tourist Season event.

After our lunch at the Silesian Grange, I drove about two kilometres to the house of my companions’ relatives. When we arrived at around 2 pm, we were welcomed by a married couple, Anna and Rudolf, both in their late sixties. Ludmila, who had known the couple from previous occasions, brought them a bouquet of flowers. Dana brought them a dozen Hlučín cakes [*prajzské koláče*] made in Kravaře, the small town where Alfréd and Dana lived, and I brought a bottle of red wine. Anna and Rudolf invited us to make ourselves comfortable in the living room, while they brought plenty of food to the table in front of

⁷⁶ *Všecka ta náplava co přitáhla Bůch ví odkud.*

the sofa we were sitting at. There were *chlebičky*, a kind of open sandwiches, warm toast, and homemade sweet rolls, as well as fruit and chopped vegetables from their own garden. Dana also put the bouquet and cakes on the table and opened the wine. After initial pleasantries and proper introductions, the six of us started to discuss the idea of Opavian Silesia's culinary tradition(s) with regard to the earlier experience of the Week of Silesian Cuisine competition. Additionally, I brought a printed version of the Opavian Silesia's cookbook, which was later heavily scrutinised by Dana, Ludmila, and Anna. Alfréd and Rudolf, reluctantly, also attempted to contribute to the discussion, which was dominated by the three women.

Dana: It's sort of a mishmash of everything: old and new, from here and from there: sweet and sour...I don't know if this is a good cookbook. Yes, I recognise some of the names, it's in Po Naszymu, but it's just the name, the actual recipes vary from one village to another. Like this *šimlena*: for me, a person from beyond the river [former Prussian Silesia], '*šimlena*' is a black sauce [made of plum stew], which goes well with carp. And here in front of the river [former Austrian Silesia], it seems to be a dessert [made of plum stew] with quark.

Anna: I am not sure if *šimlena* is a dessert with quark. Where did you come up with this?

Dana: Well, that's what they served us in Silesian Grange.

JM: Maybe the similarity is that *šimlena* is something made of plum stew?

Alfréd: Could be, but then I think in Bělá they make *šimlena* from blueberries. But I liked how they made it today in the restaurant. I thought it was quite tasty.

Dana: You know what's tasty? Hlučín cakes! And there is not a single recipe for them in the cookbook.⁷⁷ Well, if they want something traditional and 'ours', why it is not there? I know that everywhere in Hlučín they make them slightly differently, but those are just small variations. Everybody knows what the cakes are and what they should look like!

Anna: Yes, but you need skills to make them – it goes from mother to daughter – you need to see how it is made and feel the dough in your hand first to know how dense it should be, otherwise you cannot make it. And you know how it goes, girls make them together and see and compare. For me, being from *Císarská* and not from the *Prajzká*, I never learned how to make them. I tried many times, but it was never as it should be.

⁷⁷ Even though no recipe for the Hlučín area cakes is included in the cookbook, at the end of the book is a list of local products which were awarded by the label of the Regional Product of Opavian Silesia®, and Hlučín area cakes from Bolatice and from Pišť were granted the logo. When I later asked Mr Burda why any of the recipes is not included, he told me that making the cakes would be too difficult for the local restaurants' chefs, who are not specialised in it.

I even have the Hlučín cookbook [*prajszká kuchřka*] by Mrs Schlossarková, but it didn't help.⁷⁸

As illustrated by the examples above, *Cisaráci* and *Prajzáci* differentiate themselves to a large extent on the basis of their cuisine and culinary practices. However, as I observed during my fieldwork, with the noticeable exception of the Hlučín area cakes, the differences are discursively constructed rather than embodied in everyday experience and practice. What the majority of Opavians and Hlučín eat is a mixture of so-called 'international cuisine' and what in the Czech national discourse is considered Czech cuisine. Nevertheless, there is a commonly accepted notion that *Prajzáci* and *Cisaráci* are two distinctively different groups with distinctively different cuisines.

Many scholars focusing on food studies have stressed the importance of food in facilitating dialectical constructions of categories of belonging and non-belonging (Lu and Fine 1995, Gabaccia 1998, Wilk 1999, Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014). Food is used to represent and distinguish a particular outsider group or people, often through discourses and the notion of tradition. While there are always variations in any group's cuisine, these often present both a monolithic and unproblematised conception of heritage and food (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014). The portrayal of Silesian identity throughout projects and cookbooks such as the Week of Silesian Cuisine and the *Opavian Silesia: Here we Serve Regional Dishes* cookbook can then contribute to the creation and subsequent circulation of collective imageries of belonging both within and outside the group. Di Giovane and Brulotte call these processes and negotiations 'imaginaire dialectic', by which they mean 'a complex, formal and informal process of presenting,

⁷⁸ For Mrs Schlossarková, see Chapter 5 and the poem 'How It Was For Us'. She is considered by many to be the local bard, a poet and novelist writing mostly in Po Naszymu, representing a certain type of the Hlučín area's oral tradition and cultural heritage.

imagining, re-presenting and re-imagining by groups of stakeholders in a field of production' (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014: 6).

The Week of Silesian Cuisine competition was organised by Destination Management in cooperation with the Silesian University's Institute of Gastronomy, Spas, and Tourism [*Institut gastronomie, lázeňství a turismu*]. The Deputy Head of the Institution and a renowned expert regarding 'Silesian Cuisine' is Mr Burda. He is also one of the main authors of the cookbook and the convenor of the unrealised culinary course. According to him, the Institute's employees, associates, and students have long been interested in the culinary heritage of Silesia, as well as other regions of the Czech lands and border areas. However, in comparison to the Silesian University's Research Centre for Silesian and Central European History, the Institute is policy-focused, while the Research Centre operates on the theoretical level. Regarding regional tourism and gastronomy, the Institute relies on the results of social research conducted by the Research Centre in order to apply these results to regional practice and the popularisation of cultural heritage, including the culinary arts of Silesia's historical land. As Mr Burda told me, 'thanks to historical research we can distinguish which of the dishes, now bearing the name "Silesian", can really be included in the list of traditional regional dishes, and on the contrary, where their "regional" origin can be questioned or denied all together'.

The idea of Opavian Silesia's cultural heritage, as approached by the local social actors involved in the negotiations, suggests a view of culture as a static entity, unbounded by social change or context. This conceptualisation of cultural heritage paints the picture of a relatively stable and unified historical construct that is experienced in a non-interactive and non-relative manner. This understanding assumes that through methodical and systematic research, the historical narrative will emerge as a verifiable and accurate reflection of history that can be packaged and sold to the tourist community. For example,

as discussed below, the process of codifying dishes and recipes as authentic or inauthentic requires the expert knowledge of the historians based at the University's Research Centre, as well as the know-how of the Institute and the Destination Management's employees. Authenticity in that regard is understood an inherent quality of culinary substances and formulas, and not as an embodied everyday practice.



Figure 7. The institutional hierarchy of expert knowledge regarding the standardisation and codification of Opavian Silesia's cuisine

‘The cookbook published in relation to the Week of Silesian Cuisine’, Mr Burda continues, ‘is a way for the University’s Research Centre’s outcomes not only to inform the competition, but also more generally present the regional gastronomic heritage to professional chefs as well as to a wider audience.’ The cookbook provides the reader with the context of the historical development of Silesia and Opavian Silesia in particular, highlighting the region’s history, touristic potential, and the characteristics of Silesian culinary heritage, accompanied by cooking recipes of distinct regional dishes. It considers a range of recipes for various soups, main dishes, desserts, and mixed drinks that are

consequently presented within the framework of the ‘Week of Silesian Cuisine’. According to the cookbook’s description, in order for the dishes to be considered part of Silesian cuisine, they must be prepared according to the original, historical recipes adjusted with regard to the tastes of the modern guest, or alternatively prepared from regional ingredients, both *certified* and *common*.

As the cookbook’s preface reads:

The modest desire of the authors and their collaborators is to deepen awareness of Silesian regional gastronomy, bring a ‘piece’ of Opavian Silesia into readers’ homes, and, last but not least, help professional chefs and restaurant owners orientate themselves in the complex issues of the regional culinary tradition. The increasing interest in the cultural heritage of our own country and its regions, which has recently been evident, especially in the context of the revival of tourism, not only to foreign destinations but also to various parts of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, has also drawn increased attention to the so-called traditional or regional specialties, as well as to everyday meals. (Burda and Korbelařová 2015: 1, my translation)

According to Mr Burda, the reason for the desire to eat or taste foods with a ‘regional’ or ‘traditional’ label can be seen in the ever more prominent globalisation of our meals. He explained to me that it all begins with raw materials such as ‘Dutch potatoes, Egyptian strawberries, apples and garlic from China. The grocery stores are offering a range of products from all over the world, but almost never anything local.’ Similarly, he continues, ‘small pizzerias can be found in every small town in the Republic, but to find a good honest restaurant offering good local food is not easy’. Mr Burda is convinced that what people want nowadays is honest, traditional, and authentic food. When I asked him if Silesian cuisine as described in the cookbook is authentic, he gave me an ambiguous answer. ‘The problem with authentic Silesian cuisine is that it is not really tasty’, said Mr Burda bluntly. ‘Yes, rural households used almost exclusively raw materials from their own production or from local markets, and their diet was therefore authentic in this respect. However,’ he carries on, ‘if we maintained the same recipes as our ancestors, no

normal person would want to eat it. I tried some of those authentic dishes according to the authentic historical recipes provided by the Research Centre ... you know, the real thing, and it is sweet and sour at once, tasting like you would put starter, main course, and the dessert on to one plate and mix it all together. We had to modify the recipes to make it taste a bit better. Nobody would buy it otherwise.'

When I asked Mr Burda if he considered asking local people for their family recipes, he replied that that would be the least authentic possibility. Just as the restaurateur of the 'Silesian Grange' argued in the previous example, Mr Burda claimed that after the Second World War we can no longer really talk about the existence of authentic regional cuisine in Opavian Silesia because of the demographic exchange of the populations. After the Germans were displaced, Opavian Silesia was repopulated by individual families from various corners of the country, as well as by political exiles from abroad, like those from Greece or the Balkans, and they brought their regional dishes with them. The original culinary heritage was essentially destroyed after the Second World War without being replaced by another coherent system of dishes characteristic of another area. By comparison, Mr Burda explained to me, that on the Polish side of the border, after the German expulsion took place, the land was repopulated by whole villages from the *kresy* (the eastern borderlands which Poland lost to the Soviet Union after WWII), and they brought their culinary traditions with them. But that did not happen on the Czech side of Silesia. The only exception, as he pointed out, is Hlučín, of course, where a massive exchange of population had not taken place. Also thanks to the distinct collective identity of the Hlučins, most of the features of their traditional meals were preserved. But, according to his understanding, that should be considered a Prussian culinary tradition, not an authentic Czech Silesian one.

Considering Silesian cuisine has thus allowed me to demonstrate the existence of two contradictory social dynamics happening at the same time in Opavian Silesia. On the one hand, *Cisaráci* and *Prajzáci* differentiate themselves to a large extent on the basis of their cuisine and culinary practices. There is a commonly accepted notion that *Prajzáci* and *Cisaráci* are two distinctively different groups with distinctively different cuisines, which facilitate dialectical constructions of categories of belonging and non-belonging. Through discourses and the notion of tradition, the two cuisines represent and distinguish *Prajzáci* and *Cisaráci* as two different groups. On the other hand, the portrayal of Silesian identity through projects such as the Week of Silesian Cuisine and the *Opavian Silesia: Here we Serve Regional Dishes* cookbook can then contribute to the creation and subsequent circulation of collective imageries of belonging that transcend the *Prajzáci* and *Cisaráci* binary opposition.

Regarding the multiple investments in the tourist industry in Opavian Silesia, certainly there is a strong commercial undercurrent to designating certain foods as Opavian Silesia's intangible cultural heritage. Silesian cuisine is being 'standardised' (going through the process of designating, classifying, and certifying foods as a particular culture's heritage) for the economic and social revitalisation of the newly emerging Opavian Silesia Tourist destination. Additionally, various institutes that depend on either the Silesian University, the town of Opava or both are making an active effort to participate and to exercise their authority derived from their expert knowledge in the process of creation and standardisation creation of the monolithic Opavian Silesian cuisine. Like the idea of a singular and authentic representation of Opavian Silesia as a tourist destination discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the imaginary of Opavian Silesia's distinctive cuisine arises from a static, modern idea of culture and authenticity according to which it is possible to search for and find a single authentic past or reality.

On one hand, this serves to flatten and simplify divergent local cultures and heritages into one monolithic narrative, but on the other hand, it allows for interactions and negotiations between a wide array of local social actors over the newly emerging identity of Opavian Silesians. Locally in particular, the numerous projects that aspire to establish a monolithic Silesian cuisine and heritage often act as mediators, bringing people together through both discursive practice and economic exchange. Can food, conceptualised as a marker of cultural heritage, create and reinforce a group's identity? In this section I have shown that, like ethnicity or collective memory, Silesian cuisine is not a fixed thing but a process of creating and performing an element of collective identity, labelled 'cultural heritage'.

Despite the fact that the various social actors involved in negotiations over the Week of Silesian Cuisine and the Silesian Cuisine cookbook entertain different understandings, tastes, village loyalties, and imaginaries of what types of food should stand as a marker of Silesian culinary heritage, the existence of these varieties seems to be downplayed in the greater Silesian imaginary. Always lurking behind these identity markers is the issue of value and 'authenticity': the choice of how we imagine, and separate out, different types of cuisines, even within one's group, varies according to how we regard food as a marker of community, authenticity, and heritage. In the contemporary Opavian Silesian case, the discourse of culinary heritage is utilised to construct the 'imagined community' of Opavian Silesians (Anderson 1983, Giovine and Brulotte 2014).

In this chapter, I have discussed how the development of the Opavian Silesia's Tourist Destination, which I treat largely as a discursive construct, is being viewed and negotiated through both expert knowledge and the everyday practice of various social actors living in Opava and the Hlučín area. I explored how *Opavian Silesia* as a place, its *cultural heritage* as a tourist attraction, and *Silesian-ness* as a commodity became key components of place-marketing for tourist industry purposes. Furthermore, I have also attempted to

blur the lines between ‘locals’, ‘tourists’, and ‘entrepreneurs’, as these academically established categories are not mutually exclusive in the Opavian Silesian case, and a great number of social actors fit into a combination of the three categories. The joint effort to promote Opava and the Hlučín area as an attractive monolithic tourist destination provides a common goal for various social actors, while the subsequent negotiations over the image of Opavian Silesia as a destination provides a platform on which local social actors have a voice in defining their branded, collective representation. Because the end goal of these efforts is a newly emerging singular and simplified brand of Opavian Silesia under which the Opavian and Hlučín area populations can identify, negotiations over the question of what constitutes Opavian Silesia have the potential to act as a vessel creating and promoting a standardised version of Opavian Silesian identity.

Conclusion

This study began as an attempt to understand how Silesian identity is negotiated within the Czech-Polish borderland, more specifically in and between the Czech town of Opava and the Polish town of Racibórz, which together constitute ‘Euroregion Silesia’. Upon my arrival to Opava in the summer of 2015, however, it became clear that the local population was not even remotely concerned with the Euroregion within which they lived, nor with their Polish neighbours. Many Opavians were not even aware that Euroregion Silesia existed, and very few had any involvement with the other side of the national border other than occasional grocery trips to the nearest supermarket offering relatively cheaper Polish goods. Instead of relating to the idea of shared Silesian-ness and cross-border cooperation with Racibórz, however, the Opavians spoke of ‘the people living beyond the river’ in the Hlučín area. By allowing my research and fieldwork to be shaped by my informants, rather than leading them to discuss what I initially wanted to talk about, my work explored and scrutinised various ethnographic accounts dealing with group identity negotiations within and between Opavians and Hlučíns. This dissertation has theorised these multi-layered negotiations predominantly with reference to Gerd Baumann’s theoretical framework of dominant vs. demotic discourses (Baumann 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002). By illustrating and examining the negotiations, I show how the two discourses interact and are employed in people’s everyday practice. To emphasise the contested nature of such interactions, I focus primarily on cases where negotiations of Silesian identity have been particularly complicated and challenging.

Starting from the premise that collective identity and collective memory are intrinsically related, I have considered the ways and dynamics through which Opavians and Hlučíns have constructed, identified with, and displayed various versions of the past while

summarily rejecting others. I pay special attention to the visible markers of this heritage negotiation, such as museum exhibitions, memorials, cookbooks, poetry and visual art. When considering the ways in which collective identities and collective memories have been and are negotiated, I have adopted Sharon Macdonald's term 'difficult heritage' and concentrated on cases where heritage becomes particularly problematic: when it is recognised as meaningful to the present, while simultaneously posing a challenge to a group's positive self-perception and contemporary identity (Macdonald 2009). Parallels and connections are clearly visible between Baumann's dominant vs. demotic discourses and Macdonald's notion of difficult heritage. The key aspect of both theories lies in the coexistence between two polar states: for Baumann, demotic vs. dominant, and for Macdonald, the monolithic grand historical narrative vs. more fluid, mixed historical interpretations. While I agree with Baumann that social actors have 'dual discursive competence' and that they ascribe to one or the other depending on circumstances and intentions, I argue that, even though people can navigate between the two, this often causes difficulties. These difficulties lie not so much in the process of switching between the dominant and demotic discourses as from being cognisant of both at the same time. In other words, what makes a heritage difficult is the tension between the dominant and the demotic discourse arising from the dual discursive competence.

The structure of this dissertation begins with a general and institutional understating of Silesian identity before working its way to the particular and personal. To demonstrate the great variety of ways, situations, and degrees in which the negotiations take place, each chapter explores negotiations of Silesian identity at various levels and in various social settings, while taking the opportunity to explore the involvement in these negotiations by different social actors and power relations. The order and contents of the chapters and presented case studies are not, however, merely a random selection of

examples of Silesian identity negotiations and formations. The thesis layout and internal logic instead takes the reader systematically from the dominant, Czech national understanding of Silesian identity propagated by state-run institutions, Opavian officials, and the general public to a more nuanced and complex demotic understanding of local collective identities. As depicted through many examples from the Silesian University in Opava and Opava's town hall, the reasons why Opavians champion Czech nationalistic readings of Opavian Silesian cultural heritage are compound and multi-layered. After introducing and discussing the dominant discourse, the reader is then introduced to the demotic discourse of Silesian identity, highlighting its multicultural, multilingual, ambiguous, and fluctuating character. When discussing the demotic discourse, the examples and case studies are, again, presented in an order that flows from the institutional and general towards the personal and individual. I also demonstrate, however, that the personal dimension and the demotic discourse are unsurprisingly inextricably intertwined with, and dependent on, the collective dimension and the dominant discourse. To illustrate this point, I show that even the very personal, demotic narrative of a Wehrmacht soldier is embedded within the collective dimension and imbued with it, as well as by various elements of the dominant discourse.

In the Introduction and the two subsequent chapters, which focus primarily on theoretical concerns and premises rather than empirical material, I introduce the reader to the ethnographic and sociological background of the field site, review the relevant theoretical literature, and discuss the methods and methodology of my research. As such, these opening chapters are theoretical and explanatory, providing the necessary context and understanding. In the first ethnographic chapter (Chapter 3), I present a case study where a change in how Opavians presented their collective heritage and collective identity turned out to be impossible. I illustrate how Opavian representatives have reconstructed

Opava's past when it is 'convenient' to do so (e.g. the Jewish memorial), while suppressing traces of the past that are inconvenient and difficult to remember (e.g. the German memorial). These examples clearly demonstrate the contested, and contestable, nature of collective memory. Within the context of my research, I suggest that the struggle over memory control is the struggle between official memory (belonging to the Czech dominant discourse) and the German-Silesian counter-memory (belonging to the demotic discourse). According to Opava's representatives and the majority of the town's inhabitants, the former should be remembered and the latter forgotten.

The following chapter (Chapter 4) starts from two distant locations, both physically and conceptually: the Silesian University in Opava, and the Museum of the Hlučín Area. Each of these places represents two distinct and contradictory narratives of Silesia's past and present. As I have previously discussed, the Opavian official narrative epitomises the dominant discourse, according to which Opava is, and always has been, an integral part of Czech history and identity; by contrast, the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilinguistic character of Opava is carefully and quietly omitted from this simplified, essentialist, historical narrative. In this and subsequent chapters, I argue that Opavian intellectual elites play a pivotal role in the collection, assimilation, and official propagation of Czech national sentiment in Opava. The intellectual elites rely on nationalism as a rhetorical device and use it to further their own interests, given that their livelihoods are directly connected to public opinion. To delve deeper into this phenomenon, I utilise Wimmer and Glick Schiller's concept of 'methodological nationalism', which, I argue, is the dominant perspective adopted by the Opavian intellectual elites (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). As I have demonstrated in several chapters, the extent to which intellectuals are to be considered the 'artisans of nationalism', as Boyer and Lomnitz put it (2005), can be expressed through the

publications produced by researchers at the Silesian University and the initiatives of social actors within the political arena.

This matter is, however, far from simple, and there are numerous counter-narratives articulated by various minority groups. The one that is most forcefully articulated is the narrative of the main cultural institution of the Hlučín area, the Hlučín Museum. I understand these narratives to be part of the demotic discourse, which (in reaction to the dominant discourse) reconsiders the presumed equation between the national imaginary (Czech, German, Polish) and a given community. Instead of depicting collective identity in primordialist terms, the Hlučíns' narrative contextualises collective identity as fluent and situational, evoking cultural hybridity and creolisation. Both the *Hlučín Century* comic and the poem 'How It Was For Us' represent alternative media through which the expressions of just such hybrid and creolised narratives flow. Finally, I rely upon an ethnographic vignette of Hlučíns in the Parliament to illustrate the fact that, despite the Hlučíns' dual discursive competence, navigating between dominant and demotic discourses is not always free from difficulty and tension; occasional 'consistency errors' in self-representation come to the fore. These consistency errors are, however, precisely those moments when a change is possible. This is shown by the case of the Hlučín man who broke free from a crowd of his fellow delegates and, despite (or perhaps because of) the carefully-tailored script, sang 'Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles' in front of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. This act of rebellion was well received by the Hlučín delegates, and it allowed for a change in their self-narratives and self-representation to emerge.

In Chapter 5, I elaborate further on Baumann's notion that demotic discourse is not an autonomous opposite or an independent alternative to the dominant one (Baumann 1996: 195-6). Even when Hlučíns engage in the demotic discourse when narrating their stories,

the dominant discourse is still present and does not lose its salience. I show this interlinked nature and asymmetric dependency between the demotic and dominant discourses by demonstrating that the ‘Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories’ are stylised after a particular narrative pattern that closely resembles that of Jaroslav Hašek’s satirical/dark comedy novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik*. Instead of depicting Hlučín as turncoats who betrayed the Czech nation to serve the Germans, the Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories draw on Czech national cultural resources and model themselves narratively after the beloved character of Josef Schweik, the ‘knowing fool’, and the archetype of ‘the little Czech’ (Holý 1996: 72) who, after all, served in the Austrian army himself. The Wehrmacht story of František Hanáček is an in-depth example of just such a stylised and well-rehearsed narratives. This example explicitly illustrates how tragicomic war-time escapades are narratively depicted in ‘Wehrmacht soldiers’ stories’, balancing tragedies (such as the Katyń massacre or being a prisoner of war) against comically absurd situations of small acts of covert sabotage, stealing alcohol and getting drunk, or leaving one’s troop ‘high and dry’ in dangerous situations, only to get lost oneself soon thereafter.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) brings together the data and perspectives of the thesis and shows that, at certain times and under certain circumstances, social actors actively attempt to overcome difficulties derived from the tensions and hostilities between various groups and endeavour to collectively negotiate and recreate their joint group identity and cultural heritage. As I demonstrate in this chapter through the example of tourism and the creation of ‘Opavian Silesia’s Tourist Destination’, various groups were able to come together to come up with a single narrative for Opavian Silesia’s cultural heritage, which is seen as necessary for successful destination branding and promotion. These negotiations occur simultaneously as bottom-up and top-down processes, giving rise to both new factions and new unions between Opavian and Hlučín area inhabitants, intellectual elites, the

ordinary population, and institutions and official/unofficial associations. To promote the commercial tourism-driven success of Opavian Silesia within a single narrative, these active efforts inevitably lead to the simplification and commodification of its multi-layered and often contradictory representations. On the other hand, because the end goal of these efforts is a newly-emerging single and simplified brand of Opavian Silesia with which the Opavian and Hlučín area populations can identify, the negotiations on the ground over Opavian Silesia's narrative have provided a more egalitarian field of discourse giving local social actors a voice in defining their branded, collective representations. In other words, the negotiations over the question of what constitutes Opavian Silesia have the potential to act as a vessel to create and promote a standardised version of Opavian Silesian identity.

Future Work

Czech and Polish Upper Silesians

Regarding the potential broadening of my research, one of the many possibilities for future research would be to incorporate the Racibórz area and its inhabitants, connecting such findings with those of my work in Opava and the Hlučín area. One way of exploring Silesian identity further (across Czech and Polish borders) would be through the involvement of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Euroregion Silesia, or through an investigation of the ways in which various cultural and educational institutions communicate and cooperate based on the idea of shared Silesian-ness (e.g. joint projects between the Silesian Museum in Opava and the Silesian Museum in Katowice, the annual

conference of rectors of Silesian Universities,⁷⁹ and so on). At present, apart from studies that focus on the dual town of Cieszyn, there is a lack of synergy and symbiosis between research conducted in and about Czech Silesia and studies that focus on Polish Silesia. However, to bridge this gap, I suggest that researching Upper Silesia as a unit in its own right would provide us with new perspectives and new ways of understanding the mechanisms of identity formation and negotiation outside the trap of methodical nationalism.

Language

A significant number of questions remain unanswered regarding *Po Naszymu* and both its everyday and political use. In Katowice, there have been several attempts to unify and standardise *Po Naszymu* and proclaiming it a distinct and distinguishable language of the Silesian people. However, these movements, whether they will be successful or not, are not, generally speaking, taking place in Czech Silesia, even though *Po Naszymu* appears to be seen as important aspect of collective identity in the region. Are there various kinds of *Po Naszymu*, are there dialects within what is itself arguably a dialect or ethnolect, and if so, what are these differences?

⁷⁹ Czech: Konference rektorů slezských univerzit, Polish: Konferencja Rektorów Uniwersytetów Śląskich

Another possibility for future research would be the investigation of how Hlučíns narrate and negotiate their collective identity and collective memory in relation to relatives living in Germany, who have nevertheless maintained contact with those who stayed in the Hlučín area during and after socialism. As the joke below illustrates, family members who opted to live in Germany had access to valuable Western consumer goods, which they often shared with their ‘poor eastern kinsfolk’. However, the Hlučín area inhabitants’ comparative access to western goods, as opposed to the dearth of these goods elsewhere in Czechoslovakia, only added to the hostility and envy directed towards Hlučíns:

On President Gustav Husák’s⁸⁰ visit to the Hlučín area, he gets out of the car and sees a well-maintained family house, with a Mercedes parked in the garage. In front of the house is a young boy looking curiously at the president. Gustav Husak, surprised by the absence of a welcome committee, comes closer to the boy and says, ‘Hello, little youngster; do you know who I am?’ The boy shakes his head. ‘I am your president’. The little boy looks at Gustav Husák with confusion and puzzlement. So Husák tries again, ‘Well, I am the one who provides everything for you and your family’. The boy’s face brightens. He turns around, runs to the house, and says, ‘Daddy, daddy! Onkel Friedrich from Germany has come to visit!’

In terms of the referential framing of Hlučín identity, in comparison to Opavians, Hlučíns are often associated with the difficult German heritage of Silesia. However, how do Hlučíns negotiate and discursively treat their past and present in relation to their German relatives?

⁸⁰ The 9th Czechoslovakian president (in office from 1975-1989) and a long-term Secretary General of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1969-1987).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of my main 40 informants

Not-Anonymised	Gander	Age Group	Education	Occupation
Jana Schlossárková	F	70-80	Vocational t.	Nurse/Poet/Retired
Native Hlučín. We met on several accessions (usually when involved in, or discussing social/cultural events of the Hlučín area and the Hlučín museum). Conducted one recorded interview on 27 th December 2016.				
Alexander Burda	M	50-60	Master's d.	Education/Gastronomy
Native Opavian. We met on several accessions (usually in relation to social and cultural events and gastronomy). He is a colleague of mine from the Silesian University in Opava. Conducted two recorded interviews; one conducted individually on 9 th March 2016 and the second as part of a focus group in April 2016.				
Anonymised	Gander	Age Group	Education	Occupation
Olga Adamcová	F	50-60	Doctorate's d.	Academic
Non-native Opavian. A colleague from the Silesian University in Opava. Conducted two recorded interviews, one in November 2015 and the other in January 2016.				
Česlav Bolrák	M	70-80	Doctorate's d	Academic
Non-native Opavian. A colleague from the Silesian University in Opava, where we met regularly, especially as we shared the same office space. Conducted one recorded interview in June 2016.				

Jaroslav Duda	M	70-80	Master's d.	Chemist/Retired
Native Opavian. We conducted one recorded interview in February 2016.				
Libor Dvořák	M	50-60	Professor	Academic/Politician
Non-native Opavian. A colleague from the Silesian University in Opava. Conducted one recorded interview in November 2015.				
Cyril Fojtík	M	30-40	Master's d.	Museum Director
Non-native Hlučín with whom I met at least once monthly. Conducted two recorded interviews, one in September 2015 and the other one in July 2016.				
Pavel Gebauer	M	20-30	Secondary e.	Student of Law
Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in October 2015.				
Rudolf Gozdowský	M	30-40	Vocational t.	Machine Operator
Non-native Opavian with whom I met at least once monthly. Conducted one recorded interview in March 2016.				
Conrad Halfar	M	70-80	Master's d.	Engineer/Retired
Native Opavian. Conducted two recorded interviews in June 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).				
František Hanáček	M	90-100	Vocational t.	Roofer/Deceased
Native Hlučín. Conducted seven recorded interviews in November and December 2015 and January, February, March, April and May 2016.				

Ludmila Havelková	F	40-50	Primary e.	Factory Worker	Non-native Opavian. Conducted two recorded interviews in October and December 2015 (one individually and one as a part of a focus group).
Jana Havelková	F	18-20	Vocational t.	Cashier	Non-native Opavian. Conducted two recorded interviews in October and December 2015 (one individually and one as a part of a focus group).
Jitka Holasová	F	50-60	Master's d.	Museum Director	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in May 2016.
Herbert Hora	M	70-80	Secondary e.	Constructor	Non-native Opavian. Conducted two recorded interviews in June 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).
Radovan Janoš	M	30-40	Doctorate's d.	Environmentalist	Native Hlučín. We met at least once monthly. Conducted two recorded interviews in November 2015 and July 2016.
Marie Janošová	F	30-40	Master's d.	Teacher/Parental Leave	Non-native Hlučín. We met nearly every week throughout the duration of my fieldwork. One of my closest informants and a friend. Conducted three recorded interviews in November 2015 and March 2016 (one individually and two as part of a focus group).
Milan Julík Sr.	M	60-70	Professor	Academic	Non-native Opavian. A colleague from the Silesian University in Opava. Conducted one recorded interview in December 2015.

Milan Julík Jr.	M	30-40	Doctorate's d.	Academic	Non-native Opavian with whom I met at least once monthly. Colleague from the Silesian University in Opava. We collaborated on several research projects together. Conducted one recorded interview in May 2016.
Helena Kluská	F	70-80	Vocational t.	Butcher/Retired	Native Hlučín. I met a member of the Kluský family at least once fortnightly. Conducted one recorded interview as a part of focus group in July 2016.
Wilhelm Kluský	M	80-90	Vocational t.	Carpenter/Retired	Native Hlučín. I met a member of the Kluský family at least once fortnightly. Conducted one recorded interview as a part of focus group in July 2016.
Petr Kluský	M	30-40	Secondary e.	Plumber	Native Hlučín. I met a member of the Kluský family at least once fortnightly. Conducted one recorded interview as a part of focus group in July 2016.
Oldřich Kovář	M	30-40	Doctorate's d	Museum Employee	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in March 2016.
Ivan Kupka	M	40-50	Secondary e.	Ambulance driver	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in March 2016.

Lenka Michálková	F	60-70	Secondary e	Novelist/Retired
Native Hlučín. We met at least once monthly. Conducted four recorded interviews (two individually and two as part of a focus group) in November 2015, February, June, and July 2016.				
Karolína Nejedlá	F	20-30	Vocational t.	Nurse
Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in January 2016.				
Josef Nichtmiller	M	20-30	Master's d.	Museum Employee
Native Hlučín. We met nearly every week throughout the duration of my fieldwork. One of my closest informants and a friend. Since late October 2015, we have been in regular contact. Conducted six recorded interviews in September, October and December 2015, and June and July 2016 (four individually and two as part of a focus group).				
Steffi Pospíšilová	F	90-100	Secondary e.	Piano teacher/Retired
Native Opavian. I knew her from previous fieldwork, as part of my ethnography for a Master's thesis submitted at the University of Amsterdam. During my doctorate research, we met on several occasions (usually to discuss social cultural events relating to German Opavian heritage). Conducted two recorded interviews as part of a focus group in June 2016.				
Richard Richter	M	50-60	Doctorate's d	Academic
Native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interviews in June 2016.				
Pepa Soukup	M	70-80	Primary e.	Factory worker/Retired
Non-native Opavian. Conducted two recorded interviews in February 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).				

Heda Soukupová	F	70-80	Primary e.	Factory worker/Retired	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in February 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).
Jana Soukupová	F	40-50	Vocational t.	Confectioner/Retired	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in February 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).
Petr Šupák	M	40-50	Doctorate's d	Museum Employee	Native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in December 2015.
Dana Víchová	F	20-30	Vocational t.	Hairdresser	Non-native Opavian with whom I met at least once monthly. Conducted one recorded interview in February 2016.
Nad'a Volná	F	20-30	Vocational t.	Waitress/Unemployed	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in May 2016.
Dušan Žák	M	60-70	Professor	Academic	Non-native Opavian with whom I met approximately every fortnight. Conducted one recorded interview in June 2016.
Jakub Zrzavý	M	30-40	Bachelor's d.	Destination manager	Non-native Opavian. Conducted one recorded interview in April 2016.
Karel Židek	M	60-70	Vocational t.	Factory Worker	Native Hlučín. Conducted one recorded interview as part of a focus group in March 2016.

Kateřina Źídková	F	50-60	Secondary e.	Factory Worker
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Native Hlučín. Conducted one recorded interview as part of a focus group in March 2016.

Monika Źídková	F	20-30	Secondary e.	Personal Assistant
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Native Hlučín. We met at least once monthly. Conducted two recorded interviews in January 2016 and March 2016 (one individually and one as part of a focus group).

Appendix 2. Wehrmacht story of František Hanáček

I was born on 2nd September 1923 in a village called Rohov, in the Hlučín area. In 1929, when I was six years old, I started primary school in Rohov, where we were taught in Czech. I attended the same school for five years, before moving to a larger school in the village of Píšť, where the teaching was also in Czech, and where I stayed for an additional three years. Not all kids my age went to school like me. Some children were home schooled because they were Germans and wanted to be taught in German. German schools started to close as the Hlučín area became part of Czechoslovakia, and German teachers had to start going to students' homes in order to teach in German. I mean, we all spoke Po Naszymu, so it was up to the parents whether their kids were taught in Czech and attended Czech schools, or whether they were to be taught in German and have a private German teacher.

We were a Czech family. My father was from south Moravia, and he came here when he was a young soldier. After the First World War, his army unit came to annex the Hlučín area, and that's how he met my mother. She was originally from this area. As my father was Czech, I was also Czech, so I went through the normal school system. After I was done with school, I was supposed to go and teach myself to be a painter, but the war started, so all learning or studying was over. The authorities sent me to Poland for a year for hard labour on local farms, where the farmers would select which of us they wanted to work on their estates. After one year, I was allowed to come back home to my family. In January 1940, I started repairing wheels as an apprentice in Píšť, and I stayed there for about two years.

When the German occupation came, we were the only family that declared Czech nationality and stayed in the village. The other families decided to run away. My father

decided that we would not leave, that we would stay home, where we belonged. Our family went through a lot back then. During the occupation, before I was called up to the army, my father said we had to go and plough our fields so we wouldn't starve. We had three hectares of land, on which we occasionally grazed our cows. That's when these three men came – they were German provocateurs, who knows where they were from, but they wanted to start a fight. We were the last Czech family left there, so we were the ones they picked on. My father told me to quickly grab my tiller, as we needed weapons to protect ourselves if they were going to try to beat us. But all they did was shout at us: 'Where are your presidents; where is Masaryk or Beneš to protect you now?'⁸¹ When they saw that my father was not scared, but actually getting angrier and angrier, they decided to leave. The tillers in our hands might have been little too frightening for them [sniggering]. However, knowing that we men were working the field, they went to our house and they took my grandmother away. She was an old woman with very bad knees. All she cared about was the well-being of our family and the farm, she was a hard worker. After they brought her back, she never spoke of the things that they did to her, ever.

Behind our garden fence there was a small sandy hill, with old pine trees growing on its crown. My father chopped down one of the pines and dug a makeshift bunker for the family. That's where my family hid throughout the war. When the Russians arrived after the war, my family was the only one that had stayed in the village. There was nobody else. The soldiers were surprised that my family were the only ones who stayed, so they decided to make my father the new Mayor of Rohov. One of my sisters took care of the food stamps, so in the end they managed to take care of themselves quite well.

⁸¹ By that time the Czechoslovak government was in exile in London.

I received my conscription notice on 15th April 1942, after which, I had to enlist in the Wehrmacht. I was eighteen. No one asked us if we wanted join, it was our obligation, our duty, we had no choice. When German men left for war, their women received financial aid, as they were all alone. My mother, however, didn't get any aid because we had declared our Czech nationality. I was one of eleven siblings, and my mum needed all the help she could get. So my father decided to go to the municipality in Opava and negotiate. He had a friend there, his name was Procházka, and my dad told him that they could either send me back home to my family farm, or they could give him all the money he needed. Of course Procházka said they couldn't send me home, as the German army was in desperate need of soldiers, but he eventually agreed to provide financial aid. In the meantime I was sent to Cosel, Poland, where I was given all the necessary equipment and weapons. I sent a postcard to my family, just to let them know where I was and that I had arrived safely. I didn't know how to write in German because I had gone to a Czech school, so I wrote it in Czech. The next day, an officer asked who wrote the postcard to Rohov. Eventually, I admitted it was mine. He tore the postcard up in front of me and said that it was forbidden to write in 'Polish'. But that was difficult, because not everyone knew German.

After Cosel, I was sent to Birkenthal, in Germany, for basic training and driving lessons. It took two months. Our garrison was formed entirely of men from Upper and Lower Silesia. The basic training was terribly hard, but I don't regret it. It was a good learning experience. That's where I left my childhood and became a man. On 19th August 1942 we were transported by a train to the Russian city of Vjesma, near Moscow. But by this

time our troops were already in retreat, so we were relocated to Smolensk and then Minsk.⁸²

During the war, they sent me all over Nazi-controlled territory. I went from Moscow to Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland; from Germany to France; from France to England; from England to Prague, and then back home again. Basically, I had to cross the entire European continent. You see, I was a driver for the Luftwaffe's repairers.⁸³ We took care of the airports, maintained the communication infrastructure, and also transported Luftwaffe staff on land. Thankfully, I was never sent to the front. Being a driver was not that bad. In addition to my driving duties, one particular commander of mine would always come to me when something needed to be fixed. He knew that I had the ability and know-how to fix almost anything, so I had to fix everything. He always came to me for help, because he knew I'd help. He used to call me *Junge*. That means youngster or 'lad' in German.

In 1943, while repairing a telephone connection, I happened to be in the Katyn forest, where I saw the exhumation of dead Polish prisoners of war. I technically wasn't allowed to see it, but I found a way around it. I walked up to a gate-guard with a loaded machine gun and asked to go beyond the perimeter. He said that no one was allowed beyond the gate. But I told him that my unit was fixing a broken telephone line that was located inside the restricted area, and that we needed to see it. So he let us in. I walked inside and saw people who looked like doctors, all wearing white coats with Red Cross badges on their sleeves, all around us. We thought they were Russians, but they spoke German. We walked further into the compound and saw a large pit, about ten metres wide and thirty

⁸² He was assigned to be a driver for the 1st company of the 22nd Luftnachrichten Regiment.

⁸³ The Luftwaffe was the aerial warfare branch of the combined German Wehrmacht military forces during World War II.

metres long. They had uncovered a mass grave. The corpses lay stacked on top of each other like sardines. There were so many, all packed so tightly that there was no more space. The doctors had long sticks with hooks on the end, which they used to pull the bodies out of the grave one at a time. It was revolting. I had never seen anything like that before. They searched the pockets of the dead, looking for documents, knives, and anything of value, which were then put into bags. After this, they reburied the dead in another grave not far from the first, dug by one of their excavators.⁸⁴

After Smolensk, my unit went to Minsk. At one point, the commander who liked to call me *Junge* told me to travel to a repair station, which was about ten kilometres from Minsk, and bring him his car. By then I was able to speak a little Russian, which was very helpful. He gave me his bicycle and twenty litres of gasoline, and I was on my way. It was the middle of June, beautiful weather; I didn't even have to take my coat. I picked up the car, poured the gasoline into the tank, and made my way back. Now, you see, the problem was that they forgot to give me a travel order, and in Minsk I was stopped by the Kettenhunde, or the 'chained dogs', as they were called.⁸⁵

Of course, the first thing they wanted to see was my non-existent travel order. I tried to explain to them that I had been ordered to pick up the car and drive it back to my platoon. But there was no use explaining anything to them. I was told to get out of the car and join a long line of about ninety men. I was supposed to be waiting for orders from their

⁸⁴ The Katyn massacre was a series of mass executions of about 20,000 Polish nationals carried out by the Soviet secret police in April and May 1940 in the Katyn Forest (Sanford 2006). The government of Nazi Germany announced the discovery of mass graves in the Katyn Forest in 1943. As a result of the German revelation proving Nazi Germany's innocence in this particular matter, Stalin, refusing to take responsibility for the massacre, broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile based in London (Sanford 2006).

According to his narrative, Mr Hanáček was a direct witness of the exhumation of 1943.

⁸⁵ Kettenhunde was a nickname for the Feldgendarmerie, the uniformed military police employed within army divisions as self-contained units with extensive police powers.

Captain. I thought it was a bit weird, but what could I do? I was ordered to a nearby gas station, which was, in actual fact, just two large two hundred litre barrels, and told to fill my car's tank to the brim. That was even stranger. I questioned the order, as my unit was just few kilometres from where I was. Why would I need a full tank? But I was quickly told that I wasn't re-joining my regiment and that apparently, I was going somewhere else. I tried to find a way to call to my superior, but their captain didn't allow it.

At that moment, I knew I was in serious trouble; I thought they were about to send me straight to hell. In the end, there were about a hundred of us who had been captured and were now waiting. That's when the captain told us we were going to Barysaw. We drove for what seemed like an age, which turned out to be about two hundred kilometres. When we reached our destination, we were given the order to halt. One of the commanders asked if anyone was armed. At the time no one had any weapons, we didn't even have gas masks. Well, he was understandably angry – soldiers in a foreign country with no guns and no gas masks? The poor man looked like he was about to tear us apart out of anger.

After we'd been given the command to halt, I thought it was the end of our journey, but it turned out I thought wrong. Almost as soon as we were told to stop we were off again, heading towards the river Olsa, where the Germans happened to be surrounded by Russians. Our task was to bring in the wounded soldiers who were stuck in no man's land, so they could receive proper medical treatment. All I was thinking was that this was the end; the end of the world, of my world, or at the very least my life. But as a soldier, you have to obey your orders. After we disembarked, my first mission was to take the army supply truck and rescue some military officers who were trapped in a nearby village. In the surrounding area there were no roads, or at least, not as we knew them. Instead, the terrain was criss-crossed with wide paths made by tanks as they rolled through

the village. After I rescued the officers, and under the cover of night, we made our way back to camp. As we navigated our way back, we came across two paths, one leading right, the other, left. I chose the one the right. I thought it was the right one. We drove down the hill, and although I didn't see it at the time, the road ahead was booby-trapped. The first indication that anything was wrong was a deafening explosion, which was uncomfortably close to our position.

The only thought going through my head at the time was that it was probably a landmine, and that I needed to check whether the truck and my passengers were unharmed. As I looked closer, I saw a small bus, loaded with the wounded from a preceding battle. As it was a dark night, the driver had not only failed to notice us, but also the booby-trap that lay across the path. He drove straight into it, causing the explosion we all heard not two or three minutes before. It was a terrible mess. The wounded, now stuck in the trench, suffered additional and serious injuries. I turned the truck around and drove down the path on the left-hand side, which led me to the 'road' that I had taken on my way into the village. The land around the road was a man-made marsh. It had been ploughed and saturated with water, thanks, in no small part, to the tanks driving all over the area. Ahead of us was a small bridge, with Russian tanks trying to take control of each bank. There was nothing left to do but drive across the bridge as fast as I could. As soon as we had crossed, there was another explosion right behind us. As I turned, I saw the road behind us engulfed in flames. After another couple of minutes driving, we reached a crossroads where the general who had given me the order to rescue the officers in the first place was ordering all newcomers back to the trenches to fight. I was told to go for more wounded.

As I returned to the front, all the men who had been injured were standing by the road, waiting to be rescued. There was only time to help those who were able to jump in the back of the truck while it was in motion. Even then, there were too many to fit in the back

of the vehicle. In retracing my steps to rescue more wounded, I had to re-cross the burning bridge, of which thankfully only one side was still burning, and we made it through. I couldn't take it anymore, so I tried to figure out how to avoid the general so as not to have to return, yet again, to the site of the battle. I thought I might be able to damage the truck just enough to need repairs, but not so badly that we wouldn't be able to escape the hell that was all around us. I stopped in a small clearing in the nearby forest, and went through all the toolboxes we kept in the truck. I took a pair of pliers to unscrew the current spark plugs that were in working order and swapped them for older and more defective ones. When I returned and spoke with the general, he immediately ordered me to return for yet more injured soldiers, but I was able to tell him that the truck was in a state of disrepair. Instead of accepting my explanation of mechanical difficulties, he ordered me down a small, and barely distinguishable field road. He informed me that at the end of the road there was a small repair station. Immediately after the wounded were unloaded, I was ordered to exchange the plugs, and when this was done, to immediately return to the front. As soon as I was out of sight I switched the spark plugs, and although it meant disobeying direct orders, I decided to leave the unit and its general high and dry, and to make my way back and re-join my unit in Minsk.

Much to my dismay, as I was travelling to Barysaw, I was stopped by the military police, yet again. And again, I switched out the spark plugs, relying on the debilitating effects of mechanical failure. As they could clearly tell that something was wrong with my supply truck, they let me go on my way. However, by this time I was running out of gas, and there was nowhere to refuel. But lady luck smiled down on me, and I met another squad of soldiers. Unfortunately, those morons didn't want to part with any of their supplies. They told me I was just around the corner from the largest supply depot in the Minsk area and that I should get my fuel from them. So off I went to find the store. As I arrived at

the supply compound, I spoke with one of the armed guards, asking if it would be possible to get fuel, as I was pretty much running on empty. He walked up to me and said I could grab anything I wanted, and as much as I wanted, but I had to be out within an hour, as they were about to blow the place to smithereens. I was like a kid in a candy store – each and every barrack contained something different. One storeroom was full of rice and potatoes, another of tobacco and cigarettes, and in other I found French cognac and wine. So I took the truck around to each barrack and loaded it up with cigarettes and six hundred litres of wine and cognac. I also had the horse sense to gather all the bread, meat, and every other food item I could to get me through.

When leaving the barracks, I asked the guard on duty for the much needed gasoline. He said I would have to wait for him to go off duty, and then he would help me find the gasoline. The change of shift was scheduled for midnight, at which time he quickly showed me to the station, where I refuelled. In thanks, I told him to quickly take anything he wanted from the back of the truck, which he did without hesitation. I gave him my farewell and was once again, on my way to Minsk. When I finally found my way back to my unit's last known position, I found it deserted. I asked around, trying to find out if anyone had any idea when and where my unit had gone. No one knew anything, since, of course, that sort of information is classified. One of the Russian locals told me that he thought they went to Vilnius, in Lithuania, and he pointed me in the right direction, and I was off. I don't remember exactly how long I was on the road; three days, maybe more. Driving through the rugged terrain, I was suddenly stopped by a soldier. He had no coat, his pants were rolled up to his knees, and he wanted to know where I was going., I didn't know who he was or what to say, so I lied and said I was going to Warsaw. He wanted a ride, but I told him my truck was full, to which he replied that he would hide between

the barrels of cognac. What more could I say? We were on the road for few more days before we arrived in Vilnius.

I asked my unexpected and somewhat unwanted companion to get off at the train station, where he could buy fresh bread and other food supplies. But he returned saying that no one was there. At least we had the cans of meat, as well as butter and fat, so at least I knew we wouldn't starve. Since there was no one who was actually in Vilnius, we decided to go to Warsaw, where I had initially told him I was going. When we finally reached Warsaw, we found it utterly devastated. If only you could have seen it – it was completely destroyed, ruined! There was nothing but dust and debris. There was obviously no way we could stay. From there, I had no idea where to go, as I had no clue where my unit was. How could I find them? I knew of a minor HQ office nearby, so I went to ask if they knew where my unit was. Each unit had a name and a number, so I asked for Luftwaffe and its associated number. I no longer remember if it was 82 or 84. The officer looked them up and said they were only about six kilometres from Warsaw. I was so happy on hearing how close there were, I went in search of them immediately. As I drove around, I began to see the number of my regiment scrawled on various trees and fences. All I had to do was follow the arrows toward a village called Podkowa Leśna. Before the war, it had been some kind of resort for vacationers. After what seemed like an eternity, I finally found the commander of my unit. His name was Major Metke, and he was from eastern Prussian. I told him I was sorry, but I had been lost or appropriated by other units for a month now, but I was finally able to report back to him. He seemed genuinely happy that I had returned, telling me that it was good to have his *Junge* back. As you know, I was the youngest member of our unit.

Not only had I finally found my way back, but I also informed him that my truck was full of wine and cognac. Upon hearing this, he immediately sent me to one of his superiors,

the drill sergeant who had originally trained us. He blew his whistle, and within a few seconds, men had descended upon my truck and were quickly unloading the wine, cognac and all the cigarettes and tobacco. The entire unit was drunk for at least three days. I spent another two weeks in Podkowa Leśna. These villages and the surrounding areas of Poland were extremely dangerous, as the woods were full of partisans waiting for any weak spot in our defences or for stray and wounded soldiers. After those two weeks, an order came through to take all vehicles and head to eastern Poland, to Gołdap, where the head of the Wehrmacht, Herman Göring, was based. When we arrived, we saw a large airfield, a railway, and numerous bunkers spread around the base. It was huge, camouflaged and hidden under beneath fake roofing tiles. Unless a pilot knew its exact location, it would have been impossible to spot it from the air. As it was coming to the end of the war, we were ordered to blow the base up so that it wouldn't fall into enemy hands. We were given a week to complete the mission. First, we had to tear down all load-bearing beams and pillars. Our next task was to take care of the wiring, so we completely gutted the place. After we had destroyed the airfield, we hid inside the bunkers. After the week was over, we were told that we wouldn't be using any of the jeeps or supply trucks anymore, as the Germans had completely run out of gas. We had to give all our cars to the Italians. In the meantime, I was decorated for my efforts during the insane month when I was separated from my unit, as well as for bringing the wounded soldiers back to the base.

The four youngest soldiers in our unit, myself included, were sent to the western front, while the rest of the troop were to return to the east. I never heard from those who went east, and I'm sure they all fell there, I'm certain. The four of us went to Frankfurt and awaited our next orders. There was a large group of soldiers there that had to be sorted out and given fresh orders. I was sent to Hanover, to a small city called Celle. There was

a national park that was close to the city, inhabited by all sorts of wildlife, boars, bears, wolves, and many others.

The first thing that we had to do was change our uniform. We used to wear blue ones, but now we had to change and wear green ones. The four of us were assigned to an artillery battery, and thus we needed to be trained afresh, in order to be able to operate these large armoured cannon. The new commander I served under was from Vienna; he was a good man, truly a friend. He could look you in the eye and know everything about you and your life. He could see straight through you; he immediately knew what kind of person you really were. Once, one of the soldiers lost his pen, there were fourteen of us. The commander wanted to make sure that no one had stolen the pen, as that was what the soldier was implying. So, the commander walked around the room, taking a very good look at each of us, when he stopped by this young man and asked him his month of birth. The young soldier replied, saying that he was born in early June. The commander told him to meet him in his office. And to our unending surprise, this man born in June was indeed the soldier who stole the pen.

After we completed our training, we were relocated to the front line in Strasbourg. When we arrived, we slept on the floor of a local school, and we were told we'd be allocated to local families, who would then be able to accommodate us. I ended up in an old pharmacy owned by a woman who was married to a miner. They lived upstairs, and their pharmacy was downstairs. I and another soldier slept in the attic. Both of us had beds there, it was very nice, very comfortable. Also, the hosts were very good people. When we brought ourselves food from the field kitchen, the lady actually asked if we'd swap meals with them since, as they were curious about what we were eating. After Christmas, they took us sledging; you see, we were young boys back then, only twenty-two years old at the

time, and only seventeen when we joined the army. We wanted to have fun sometimes, just fool around and play in the snow. Not long after that, we were ordered to move again.

I don't even remember what the new place was called. We were serving in bunkers, and we had to replace the cannon, making sure they were always ready to fight, but we never used them, not once. During our time living in the bunker, routinely, older soldiers would offer us all kinds of drinks. We never knew what it was, and we were always suspicious that they were making fun of us, so we politely refused. Upon discovering that the liquid was actually wine, however, we quickly changed our minds and had our fair share of glasses. But the older soldiers got one over on us nevertheless. As we had unwittingly had the last of the wine, they told us that, 'Now, as you finished it, you're the ones that need to go to the nearby village to get us some more'. Well, we didn't want to go outside the bunker, no one did, which was the point, I suppose, as there were partisans everywhere, but we had no choice. We went to the nearest village and in fact decided to settle there instead of returning to the bunker.

The village seemed to be abandoned, but in fact we found civilians hiding in the cellars of a few houses; we found women, children and elders. We couldn't just send the poor people away and take over their shelter for ourselves, but luckily we found an actual empty house where we hid. We barricaded ourselves in, leaving only a small hole in the window so we could see outside. When we were done with these safety precautions we started playing cards in the kitchen, but our peace didn't last long – we were interrupted by loud engine noises. One of the soldiers I was hiding and playing cards with said we had nothing to worry about, it was probably just one of our tanks. But when we heard an American soldier speaking, we fell into a grave silence. We ran quickly to the basement, getting rid of all our weapons. I had my white handkerchief ready on a stick, and as the

American soldier slowly moved through the dark shouting ‘Kuhmin’n! Kuhmin’n!’,⁸⁶ I carefully waved the handkerchief from the dark corner we were hiding in, and then I slowly walked out. When we got out, I stared at the soldier; I had never seen a ‘Negro’ [*černoch*] in my life.⁸⁷

Near the end of the war, after being captured by Americans, I found myself in a detention camp, first in Strasbourg, and then I was moved to a detention camp in Compiègne, France. There were maybe two thousand of us there. The Americans interrogated us. They asked about everything, from minute childhood details to when we were captured. Every day new interrogators came in and we had to start over.

I told them that I am Czech, and after some time, I was offered the opportunity to join the Czechoslovakian Legion based in England. I and few other Czechs were given these large white bags, each with with three pairs of shoes, new clothing, shaving equipment, soap, they simply had everything! When we left the camp, on our way to the port in Cherbourg (in order to board a ship to England), we were marching through the streets of Compiègne wearing the new uniforms, and we were nicely groomed. People were standing on the pathways, cheering and throwing flowers at us, as if we were heroes. Yet only a few weeks ago, when they brought us to Compiègne as prisoners of the war in open wagons, people were throwing stones at us. You could not hide or protect yourself, there was barely any space, and with seventy man in each wagon we had to stand, so many of us were injured, as we couldn’t dodge the incoming stones. One guy from my wagon was

⁸⁶ Written phonetically; probably meaning ‘I am coming in’.

⁸⁷ As central European countries were not involved in colonialism, nor the slave trade, it was highly unusual for regular central Europeans to see any black people. Mr Hubacek told me that, until that point, he had never imagined that people with such a skin colour actually existed. Furthermore, because of different historical and social developments from former colonialist countries, the word ‘negro’ does not have the same pejorative connotations as it does in both British and American English.

hit in the head particularly hard by somebody throwing stones from a bridge. He did not make it. He died right next to me.

So I was sent on a ship to southern England. There, I received yet more training; I had to redo all the shooting drills, the driving, pretty much everything. But by this time the war was nearly over, and I did not stay in England too long. I was issued with an English driving licence and a soldiers' service book. All of my old documents were in German. I had to drive to London several times, as I was asked to deliver small loads of supplies as a driver. One of the funny things was that I wasn't used to the traffic lights, as we, of course, didn't have them at home. But it wasn't too hard to understand – stop on red, go on green. When I was in London, I would always try to find an American military kitchen. Those Americans were quite clever because they would always put their kitchens under a bridge in case it rained. So I always searched for the nearest bridge. They had this thing called 'baykuhn'⁸⁸, they would slice speck into thin strips and fried it. I really liked the taste, and they would always share some.

On 1st November 1945, I was finally able to begin making the journey home. I was given an army truck with eight prisoners of war. We disembarked in Belgium, where we made our way to Germany, Bavaria, through Pilsen, and then to Pankrác prison, Prague. It was there that I dropped the prisoners off. Then I stayed in Invalidovna barracks. On 1st March 1946 I was sent back to Hlučín, just a few tantalising kilometres from home. After several months, I was released on permanent leave. After I arrived home, I was employed as a roofer for a businessman in Píšť, where I worked with my father and two brothers. I travelled to all the surrounding and nearby villages, mainly fixing roofs, as they had

⁸⁸ 'Bacon' written phonetically.

been seriously damaged during the war. However, in 1948, nationalisation and communists came, so all the businesses were done.

What was even worse was that I had to go back into military training once again, because I was perceived as an ‘untrustworthy citizen’. I was assigned to the Bohemian Forest borderlands [*Šumava*], where I became the driver of a small army car. Then, also as a punishment for serving in the Wehrmacht, I was assigned as a miner to the Kladno-Dubí coal mines for over a year.

On 8th November 1949, I married Anežka Parlíková from the village of Závada. We built this house (pictured above), and I’ve lived here ever since. We had two daughters, Anežka and Hedvika. When my wife and I got married, we were going through hard times. It was right after the Second World War, and everything was lacking. We had some money, but there was nothing to buy, including building materials. It took us about fifteen years actually to finish this house. Food and clothing were purchased with stamps, and by 1954 we had finally had enough. As I said, the money wasn’t a problem – my wife was a cleaning woman at school and I was painting and repairing churches, and putting up scaffolds. In 1956 I was sent to the military again for 42 days because I was still considered as an ‘untrustworthy citizen’. This label never left me, even though I worked hard, every day but Sunday, even after retirement. I finished my last roof when I was 85 years old. It was for my granddaughter, and that was the last time I stood on a roof.