

Fasora, Lukáš; Hanuš, Jiří

## The myth of territory

In: Fasora, Lukáš; Hanuš, Jiří. *Myths and traditions of Central European university culture*. First published Brno§§Praha: Masaryk University Press, 2019, pp. 188-207

ISBN 978-80-246-4380-9 (Karolinum. Praha) (paperback); ISBN 978-80-246-4497-4 (Karolinum. Praha) (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/142145>

Access Date: 22. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

# THE MYTH OF TERRITORY

In 1691 the Jena scholar Caspar Sagittarius was searching for the answer to the question of what the university meant for the town and what the town meant for the university. He initially focused on calculating the economic benefits, highlighting the volume of work which scholars provided for Jena's shoemakers and washhouses, but gradually he turned his attention towards the more complicated and ambiguous social and cultural ties between the two institutions. He was also interested in the development of the "marriage trade" in the university town because "*a burgher's daughter who could hardly be fond of a local shoemaker or tailor could look favourably upon some of the master's students, another might favour a doctor, a superintendent, or even a counsellor and chancellor...*"<sup>448</sup>

Amongst the university myths, the myth of the school's territorial identity finds itself in a contradictory position. It is a myth that is shared and narrated by the academic community as one of the central features of its identity: either the school emerged as a provincial university (Landesuniversität), or it had been fought for over many years and was an expression of the country's provincial and national emancipation. This is one of the reasons why in a commemorative work for the 100th anniversary of the Brno Technical University it is histrionically called the "*School for Moravia*,"<sup>449</sup> and why Brno's Masaryk University has always identified itself as "*a Czech-language university in Moravia*" as an expression of the strength and success of the Czech emancipation movement in this territory.<sup>450</sup> This myth is spread with particular strength and intensity by the humanities, whose disciplines

---

448 Quoted from Leiß, Jürgen: *Justin-Liebig Universität, Fachhochschule und Stadt*. Giessen 1975, p. 90.

449 Pernes, Jiří: *Škola pro Moravu. 100 let Vysokého učení technického v Brně*. Brno 1999.

450 Halas – Jordán, *Dokumenty II.*, pp. 13–23.

are strongly connected to the culture of the province and region, and who feel called, if not duty-bound, to protect their interests.

But other no less important parts of the academic community do not even register the myth, and when they do, they doubt it provides any long-term context in the creation of the school's identity. The example of Torun's Nicholas Copernicus University shows that if we take a few steps away from the humanities towards the social sciences and some related sciences (e.g. geography), the awareness of the territorial link begins to weaken and the myth loses its function as a formative part of the identity of the discipline and the wider academic community. The Torun example is interesting because unlike in Moravia, Silesia or Greater Poland we are dealing with a relatively weak regional identity and provincial patriotism. Difficulties arise when merely trying to find a consensus amongst the disciplines on how to define the region. Although the disciplines agree on finding universal links worthy of the name "universitas", they also agree on their link "to the region" – for historians this is the historical territory of Pomerania (Pomorze Nadwiślańskie), though the majority of disciplines see it as "northern Poland" (e.g. archaeology, botany), while for physicists and chemists the region was the whole of Poland in the sense of their contribution to national science and the national economy.<sup>451</sup>

Since the 1970s the debate on the relationship between universities, towns and regions has been very lively and is a forum which attracts specialists from across disciplines. One of the main areas of debate is the attempt to quantify the benefits that universities bring to the labour market, the consumption of goods and services, innovation, etc. These efforts are undermined by the inability of those involved to agree on research methodology. The debate has also long been in the grip of the notion that the establishment of a university in a specific region necessarily helps it to catch up in economic terms. The policies of the regional and local political elites in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland led to a boom in small public universities as well as universities with ties to specific regions which were often relatively small.<sup>452</sup> It is worth remembering that after 1989 the number of universities in Central European countries grew significantly: there are now 77 universities operating in the Czech Republic, 434 in Poland, 70 in Hungary and 38 in Slovakia.<sup>453</sup> Many regions were unhappy with the idea of only having

451 Kalembe, Sławomir (red.): *Miejsce Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w nauce polskiej i jego rola w regionie*. Toruń 1989, pp. 5–7.

452 <https://aktualne.centrum.sk/status-univerzit-ohrozil-najma-vysoky-pocet-studentov/slovensko/spolocnost/> (5.5. 2018); Raczyńska, Magdalena: *Od elitarności do masowości. Stan szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce po transformacji ustrojowej z 1989 r.*, Policharia: Kultura, religia, edukacja 1/2013, pp. 217–244; *Diagnoza stanu szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce*. Warszawa 2009; Bedyk, Edwin – Maron, Olaf: *Ranking naukowy uczelni akademickich*, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/nauka/1621163,1,ranking-naukowy-uczelni-akademickich.read> (5.5. 2018).

453 <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/vysoke-skolstvi/prehled-vysokych-skol-v-cr-3>; Adámek, Vladimír: *Financování veřejných vysokých škol*. Brno 2012; <http://www.vysokeskoly.sk/katalog>; *Szkoły wyższe*

a specialized college and from the outset wanted a university with all the various disciplines. The network of higher-education institutions also significantly expanded as improved educational accessibility was seen as a precondition for regional development – something which was met with by the approval of voters and taxpayers. There had been little reflection on Germany and Austria's experiences, where specific conditions had to be met before the university could contribute towards regional development. If these were not met, the existence of universities could even have a harmful impact on the region. It has been shown that in underdeveloped or slightly underdeveloped regions, the university is mainly responsible for the outflow of active and educated people from the region, thus deepening its structural problems, while the establishment of a university with a properly established curriculum in a region with slight economic growth will operate more successfully.<sup>454</sup> The sustainability of curricula linked to the needs of the region is one of the most serious long-term issues for the strategic development of higher education. The excessive and chaotic establishment of the university network in the above-mentioned countries in the 1990s created a line of conflict between central management bodies and regional political elites, who saw each attempt to limit or restructure the regional university as an encroachment on their own position, and would call on the help of voters under the banner of defending regional identity. However, it is a much more difficult process to close down a badly structured or superfluous university than it is to establish one, which is why in the Czech Republic, for example, regional demands for higher education tend to be met by opening special sections of universities which already operate than by founding new ones.<sup>455</sup>

An important aspect has been missing in the debate on universities' regional ties, which few authors raise: universities have to share cultural links with the region and attach themselves to the regional (provincial) communication network of experience exchange. Only then will they be successful, and as a result this success in the region will help them connect to the global science network, thereby strengthening their identity and the confidence of the academic subculture. The relationship between the university, town and region is much more than one of calculating profit. In the debates it is also necessary to focus more attention on the towns which have not been successful in the "competition" for a university, or which voluntarily decided against having one, often for good reasons. This is why there are various jokes doing the rounds in German regional universities that each

---

*i ich finanse w 2014 r.*, pp. 26, 29–30, 164, Poland : quarterly statistics 2016. Główny Urząd Statystyczny; <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi-intezmenyek>

454 [https://slovacky.denik.cz/zpravy\\_region/zlinska-univerzita-roste-20071.html](https://slovacky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/zlinska-univerzita-roste-20071.html) (5.5. 2018).

455 <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/518391/kiska-by-zrusil-tretinu-univerzit-ktore-by-to-mohli-byt/> (5.5. 2018); <https://restartregionu.cz/univerzita-karlova-zahaji-vyuku-ve-varech-pomoci-muze-program-restart/> (5.5. 2018).

city politician would like a university, but few would also want the academics and students to go with it...<sup>456</sup> This is no wonder as the presence of a university is very costly, while the impact on the lifestyle, culture and identity of the population is also considerable.

The Czech experience has shown that “fusion” with the region is more of an issue for the smaller and relatively new universities, which are able to respond better and more sensitively to regional conditions than the large metropolitan schools, and are more distant from the main political and ideological struggles which prevent meaningful cooperation. Regions with stronger identities – here the Silesian “tradition of difference” is appropriate – are better able to bring the university into their network of cooperation. Ostrava University is an example of a regional connection that works well. It was established in 1991 in a region which was referred to as the humanities’ “black hole” of Czechoslovakia – an area hit hard by rapid industrialization and by the equally rapid deindustrialization of the 1990s, with its attendant problems in social and cultural structural transformation. Although the prestigious Báňska Mining University had operated in Ostrava since 1945, the populous region did not receive any schools to promote its cultural development. In this respect, the university has played a very important role by contributing significantly towards the transformation of the region and its economy, supporting cultural life, developing tourism, as well as working with memory institutions. The university’s character reflects the demands of the region, represented by a varied portfolio of partners including business groups, museum representatives and the leadership of the Roman Catholic diocese. Particular attention should be given to the work of Ostrava’s arts and social science disciplines, which have tried to retain the specific characteristics of Silesia and use this platform to develop cooperation with their Polish, Slovakian and German partners. The examples of Ostrava, Brno and Pardubice demonstrate that the presence of students can change a previously unattractive industrial town into a vibrant centre of services, culture and leisure,<sup>457</sup> albeit that this is very difficult to quantify economically, while the residents themselves – in particular businesses in the catering and cultural sectors – are well aware of this fact during the academic holidays.

If the scientific, technical and medical disciplines represent an open window to globalization for the university, and the humanities more a link to the region, it is necessary to ask how a university’s cooperation with memory institutions might operate on a local and regional level. Such cooperation might lead to the coveted end of tension between globalism and regionalism, as some memory institutions

456 Briese, Volker: Universität und Umland am Beispiel einzelner Hochschulen: Universität Paderborn, In: Kellermann, Paul (Hg.): *Universität und Umland. Beziehungen zwischen Hochschule und Region*. Klagenfurt 1982, pp. 107–122, here p. 122.

457 <http://fajnova.cz/historicke-centrum-mesta-ozivi-ostravska-univerzita-jeji-studenti/> (10. 5. 2018)

are already well connected to a wide European network and are thus an equal partner of the university and an important source of inspiration. Here the role of the Ministry of Culture is particularly important, which grants some regional institutions and not others under its control human-resources and financial support in a form that allows them to join similar supra-regional networks. The Ministry of the Interior has a similar role, administering the network of archives. The co-operation between Brno's university and the local and regional memory institutions (the Moravian Museum, the Moravian Library, the Moravian Archive, the Moravian Gallery, etc.) has positive long-term effects because the university can find partners which are often older than itself, well-established in their field and have the ability to cope with tasks on a regional and wider level. The possibilities are limitless for such a group of research institutes. On the other hand, the groups around the universities in Ostrava, Pardubice and Plzeň are more heterogeneous and have different objectives, which the local museums, galleries and archives tend to pursue on their own with support from central institutions.

Since the Early Modern Age, when the universal identity and network of universities weakened, while links to their sovereigns, province and residential town strengthened, the mutual benefits for the university and town or province became an important public issue and part of a widespread debate on both sides over prestige, identity and the costs which both would have to bear. The pros and cons of their economic relationship were still quite clear, which is well illustrated in the relationship between the town of Gießen and its university, which was established in 1607. During this period the relatively small and insignificant town gained in prestige from its university and, due to the confessional (Lutheran) character of the university, became an attractive centre of learning for the more extensive area of north Germany and Scandinavia. Property owners reacted quickly to the influx of foreigners and students by increasing rents, while local craftsmen, innkeepers and merchants all benefited; many burghers could now provide their sons with a relatively cheap university education. However, there was disquiet in the town due to the need for more extensive investment – the modernization of the sewerage system, enlarging the town's cathedral, even the town hall had to provide the university with space for teaching and accommodation for the masters. There was also unrest in the town community due to the fact that some of the local townspeople had been unable to take advantage of the newly created market for goods and services, and as a result of higher prices had found themselves worse off; the local poor were particularly badly hit, which led to increased social tension within the town. The Gießen townsfolk also responded badly to the blunt enforcement of privileges on the part of the university and its individual masters.<sup>458</sup> Today Gießen is held up as a model example of a town coexisting with its university – its sym-

---

458 Leiß, Jürgen: *Justin-Liebig Universität, Fachhochschule und Stadt*. Giessen 1975, p. 13.

bols are an attractive campus near the centre of the town and the popular-science Liebig Museum (1920) and Mathematikum (2002).<sup>459</sup>

The territorial character of institutional identity is a situational phenomenon.<sup>460</sup> Charles Taylor points out that we are constantly defining our identity as part of a dialogue, sometimes even a struggle, with what our significant “others” want to see in us.<sup>461</sup> Therefore, running a successful university means sensitively nurturing and cultivating a process of mutual learning between scientists and the regional recipients of their output. Here the position of the university is extremely delicate: as bearers of high truth (“lord guardians of the seal”), its scholars tend to put theory above practice, and if there is any inconsistency, many of them believe the fault lies in the practical application. University scholars pay a price for their social isolation, which is seen negatively by most people as arrogant privilege; they pay a price for looking at the world too narrowly through their own discipline; they pay a price for their inability to cultivate a transversal communication network between disciplines in order to tackle social problems. Another aspect of the university’s regional role is as a services market for the region, as well as a kind of missionary outpost and window, opening out from the region to the rest of the world.<sup>462</sup>

## University territorial identity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

In the countries of Central and South Eastern Europe the role of universities on a regional level is more complicated than in Western or Northern Europe. This is because there is a greater need for universities to unite the identity and culture of nations, regions and towns – an identity which may have been fractured over the course of time. The demands of the global elites and the structures they support lead these schools to participate in establishing standards of social behaviour which are similar across the European Union. This ignores the fact that there is a mixture of identities at play: the imperialist French identity embodied in its “Napoleonic” circle of universities, the anti-imperialist identity of the German universities in response to Nazi guilt, and the identities of the small nations from Central and South Eastern Europe with their history of oppression and struggles

459 <https://www.giessen.de/index.phtml?La=1&mNavID=640.4&object=tx%7C684.4427.1&sub=0> (25. 5. 2018).

460 Roubal, Ondřej: *Když se řekne identita – regionální identita III. část*. SOCIOweb 15–16, Prague 2003, pp. 1–5; Sökefeld, Martin, et al.: *Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology*. Current Anthropology. 1999, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 417–447.

461 Taylor, Charles: *Multikulturalismus: Zkoumání politiky uznání*. Prague 2001. p. 49.

462 Laske, Stefan: *Auf der Suche nach der regionalen Identität der Universität*. St. Pölten 1988, pp. 4–11.

to maintain at least the basic elements of national existence – which universities are an important symbol of.<sup>463</sup> In this light, the emphasis on a policy which brings European nations ever closer appears as the product of the dominant ideology and values of left-liberalism amongst the leadership of the main Western European powers and the European Union over the past decades, who behave with mistrust or even hostility towards conservative values, particularly the values of religion, the nation and the traditional family. However, in Central and South Eastern Europe these have not lost their importance and may appear in university traditions or even in curricula.

It is also necessary to remember the complicated regional identities, which are often obscure to outsiders, and the attendant competitive struggles, rivalries and various “sisterly fights” between universities for a place in the sun, transforming themselves under the circumstances into coalitions of various interest groups. For Czech academia the line of conflict is seen as between the “proper” universities with a tradition of at least fifty years, and the group of newer schools. At other times though, the line of “proper” universities is weakened as Charles University occasionally likes to distance itself from the others. In every country the standards of teaching at the oldest university are seen as the benchmark for the whole country and all of its regions – in this way the Belgian universities are inspired by Leuven University and the Polish by the universities in Krakow and Warsaw. At the same time, the numerous new universities hope to create an identity as a new force to be reckoned with, which is trying to catch up with and overtake the original model. And if the competition between the small regional universities and the old metropolitan schools is seen as counterproductive and fails to help the identity or activities of the school, then a more suitable opponent is at least found in some of the smaller, newer and less famous schools in the area.

Establishing a credible and coherent academic community while strengthening the links with the university’s regional identity is unthinkable without placing the historical experience and historical awareness of the people of the town and region into the “story” of the university. Only in this way will the university “suffer with the city” or accept all of the good with the bad, which in the pre-modern era was considered a basic civic virtue. But the question then arises of how to overcome the contradiction between the struggles the university went through to develop its identity in the past with today’s calls for reconciliation and cooperation, often under the ambiguous terms of “European values” or “Europeanism”? Here history encounters the present, and the encounter is not always positive on both sides. Are historical aspects still productive in establishing the identity of the

---

463 Barban, Andris: *The Magna Charta and the Role of Universities in the Development of the Danube Region*, In: Rozman, Ivan – Lorber, Lučka (eds.): *The Role of Universities and the Competitiveness of the Danube Region/Vloga univerz in konkurenčnost podonavske regije*. Maribor 2006, pp. 55–68, here p. 61.



university when there are so many concomitant risk factors, oppression, hatred and revenge which make the future so uncertain? And why in fact talk about a university's regional identity when the vast majority of students (and their parents) do not choose a university because of regional patriotism, but simply because of transportation, the curriculum on offer, the prestige of a diploma, the cost and availability of accommodation, safety and so on?

## The coexistence of territorial identities

When does the myth of the regional bond within the academic community acquire such significance that it becomes not only a spur for academia but also for the non-academic community? All of the different facets of the university's struggles with identity can be observed in Moravia, where it has been demonstrated that the university can be part of Brno, Moravia or the nation, depending on the context.

From the Late Middle Ages the territory of the Habsburg monarchy had relatively few universities in comparison with Western and Southern Europe. There were only three medieval university foundations operating on its extensive territory – in Prague, Krakow and Vienna. In the Early Modern Age, the medieval network of universities was not particularly extensive – some of the important new schools were to be found in the cities of Olomouc (1573), Vilnius (1579), Graz (1585), Trnava and later Pest (1635), Lviv (1661) and Innsbruck (1669). One typical feature of these newly founded universities was the cooperation between the state and the Jesuit Order, which was very influential in the running of the universities until its dissolution in 1773. With the new wave of foundations in the Habsburg monarchy in the mid-19th century, several technical universities were established (including in Brno in 1849), though at the same time the emperor abolished the university in Olomouc (1860) due to ongoing disputes with the Catholic Church. During this period Moravia, an important, well-populated and economically dynamic province of the Habsburg empire, became a royal province without a university – all it had was one technical university based in Brno and an isolated theological faculty as the remains of what had been Olomouc's university.<sup>464</sup> In this vacuum it was obvious that the theme of a Moravian university would become a contentious political topic in the liberal political situation of the Habsburg empire after 1861. A university-style school was generally viewed as

---

464 d'Elvert, Christian: *Geschichte der Studien-, Schul- und Erziehungsanstalten in Mähren und Oesterr. Schlesien insbesondere der Olmützer Universität*. Schriften der historisch-statistischen Section der k.k. mährisch-schlesischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde. Bd. X., Brünn 1857, p. XVIII ff.; Nešpor, Václav: *Dějiny university olomoucké*. Olomouc 1947, pp. 30–32, 40–43, 59–65;

a great boon for the economy of Moravia, as the existing situation whereby Moravian students travelled to the universities in Vienna, Prague, or more seldomly to Krakow, significantly lowered access to education in the province and restricted its economic growth. However, leaving the economic aspect of the matter to one side, the struggle for a Moravian university became a fight over identity. On the one hand was the “Moravian” theme, which had been highlighted by the Moravian estates since the mid-18th century, when the difficulty of the estates, the state and the Jesuit Order sharing in the governance of Olomouc’s university had become increasingly clear. The attempt by the estates to extricate university education from ecclesiastical influence and redirect the school’s work towards the benefit of the province – in the secular and economic sense of training medical, legal and economic specialists – was evident when the university was briefly relocated to Brno (1778–1782) as the political and economic centre of the province. However, this was not only a dispute between political representatives in Moravia and the universal power of the Roman Catholic Church, it was also a dispute between the secular and religious powers in Moravian society – another line of conflict which would accompany the Brno university into the 20th century. Meanwhile another battle over identity loomed on the horizon which was connected to the university – the conflict between the Czech and German emancipation movements over which language any future university courses would be taught in.

The encroaching “Czechization” of teaching at the university in Prague, which led to its division in 1882, and the Polonization of Krakow University, which gathered pace from the 1860s, provided the Czech national movement in Moravia with examples to follow. It was clear that without a comprehensive education network in the Czech language from primary-school level to university, the emancipation of the Czech nation in Moravia would always be just a chimera. The Slavonic population of Moravia would continue to be exposed to German cultural influences, while the patriotically conscious Moravian Czechs would always remain an appendage to the much stronger national movement in Bohemia. A large number of Czech intellectuals and national politicians in Bohemia viewed the actions of the Czech educated elites in Moravia in the 1880s–1890s with misgivings as they did not want to divide their forces, preferring instead to concentrate on properly equipping the only Czech university in Prague. As a result, the public case for a Moravian university had to be made by intellectuals from Moravia living in Prague,<sup>465</sup> especially university students and some university teachers such

---

465 Havránek, Jan: *Moravané na pražské univerzitě v 19. a 20. století*, In: Malíř, Jiří – Vlček, Radomír (red.): *Morava a české národní vědomí od středověku po dnešek.*, Brno 2001, pp. 111–121; Pešek, Jiří: *Prag und Wien 1884 – ein Vergleich zwischen den Universitäten und deren Rolle für die Studenten aus den Böhmisches Ländern*, In: Corbea-Hoisie, Andrei – Le Rider, Jacques (eds.): *Metropole und Provinzen in Altösterreich (1880–1918)*. Wien – Köln – Weimar 1996, pp. 94–109.

as Tomáš Masaryk, who was originally from Moravian Slovakia.<sup>466</sup> Among the influential political circles in Prague it was felt it would be more desirable to mollify their countrymen in Moravia with minor political concessions extracted from the Vienna government, and focus their efforts on more important themes (for Prague), such as constitutional and linguistic matters and economic demands. At the same time, some of the Czech national leaders in Prague were worried that any direct refusal to support a Moravian university would lose them support among Moravian political representatives, pushing them towards a separatist route to achieve their goal.<sup>467</sup>

Moravian Czechs had another alternative – to cooperate with Moravian Germans based on provincial patriotism, which might have led to the establishment of a bilingual university. Although there were not many positive experiences from the small number of such universities in Europe,<sup>468</sup> hypothetically it was a possible route to their objective, and a route which could be relatively quick, as the Vienna government had signalled that the key to establishing a university was an agreement between the Czech and German politicians in the province. If a bilingual university had been established in the 1880s, it would undoubtedly have been a great triumph for the Moravian Czechs, as they had previously lacked the political strength to achieve such an objective. However, such a political decision would have meant the Czechs would still have been clients of the Vienna government and hostage to the agreement with their German partners in Moravia. Of the approximately 70% of the population who spoke a Slavonic language (not only Czech, but also different dialects), the majority came from the urban and rural populations, for whom a university education had always been an expensive and unnecessary luxury. For many from the lower classes the issue of national identification was not a defining one, and they had stronger ties to their religion, their patrician's family or the region than to their language and nationality. As the Czech national movement became more democratic and took on more of the characteristics of a mass movement (the Camps Movement from 1868–1871), people from the province who had previously been indifferent were becoming increasingly attached to the idea of Czech identity, and this began to take on more of a national than provincial character.

Naturally, the attitude towards the university also changed amongst Moravian Germans. What had begun primarily as an economic interest also gradually changed to an aspiration to improve the cultural status of their own ethnicity in Moravia. One common feature of the petitions from the 1860s for a new univer-

466 Masaryk, Tomáš: *Jak zvelebovati naši literaturu naukovou*. In: Athenaeum II, 1885, pp. 272–288, esp. p. 275.

467 Jordán, *Dějiny university*, pp. 43–45.

468 Cf. Turczynski, *Czernowitz*, pp. 25–36; Bostan, Grigore: *Der Beitrag der Universität Czernowitz zur Entwicklung der rumänischen Kultur und der ukrainisch–rumänischen Beziehungen*. Bern – Wien 1998;

sity in Brno to replace the defunct university in Olomouc was the self-evident link between the university and the German language. Czech was seen by the Germans as an inferior language with an uncertain future, and it was assumed that the Moravian people who spoke various Slavonic dialects rather than standard Czech would accept this fact as benefiting themselves and the whole country. It was incomprehensible to German intellectuals that the entire Moravian population might not want to become part of the globally famous network of German science and culture through a German-language university. Engineers in the economic sector had been trained in Brno since 1849 using both Czech and German, but even here German began to dominate, and by 1873 it was the only language used in teaching. Therefore, under these circumstances, establishing an expensive university for a small, underdeveloped, predominantly agricultural nation with an uncertain future appeared to make no sense, even to the more moderate German leaders. However, by the 1880s German politicians were becoming increasingly concerned that due to the success of the national-emancipation movement, Czech Moravians could no longer be counted on as mere consumers of high German culture. The Germans were gradually discovering that subordination to “Germanness” in Moravia was coming to an end and it would be necessary to face the fact that Moravian Czechs, following the example of their countrymen in Bohemia, would wish to create a fully-fledged alternative to German culture. German politicians were faced with the question of whether to be more accommodating with a timely, symbolic concession such as a university, or whether to maintain a tough, inflexible position and insist upon the superiority of German culture over Czech.

There was cause for concern here, but also reasons to be optimistic. The Moravian Czechs at that time were not nearly as economically powerful as the Germans.<sup>469</sup> The large Moravian towns were firmly under the control of the Germans (Brno, Olomouc, Jihlava, Moravská Ostrava etc.), where the use of Czech in public had long been considered to be the sign of an outsider. In addition, the Czech camp was still heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, which was loyal to the emperor and conciliatory in its attitude towards the escalating Czech-German conflict. However, the smiles on the lips of the optimists soon froze when confronted by the demographic predominance of Slavonic inhabitants over Germans amongst the youth. It was evident that the culturally advanced and wealthy German community was dying out in the language islands, and not even the assimilation of the non-German population would prevent this. The Moravian Slavonic population was now much more inclined towards recognising its Czech linguistic and cultural ties than being assimilated into German culture. The network of Czech primary and secondary schools in Moravia began to improve from the 1860s, then rapidly so in the 1880s when the Old Czech representatives acquired more influence over

---

469 Janák, Jan: *Hospodářský rozmach Moravy 1740–1918*. Brno 1999, pp. 49–59.

the decisions made by the Austrian government; it was particularly important to improve the state of the Czech gymnasiums whose graduates, naturally, wanted to move into higher education. Overall, the Moravian Czechs were making significant progress – more so in culture than in the economy – nonetheless, they could no longer be overlooked.

Although the German politicians in Moravia did not overlook the progress of their rivals, the German liberals were becoming increasingly worried about their own leadership standing within the German camp. They were coming under more intense pressure from radical nationalist forces, who were supported by the less well-off bourgeoisie. As a consequence, of the two possible ways to respond to the progress being made by the Czechs, they decided to choose the confrontational one, opting to boycott any emancipatory steps the Czechs took in the field of culture.

The university issue thus became of symbolic value – a special prize for the victors of the nationalist contest, the golden apple of its day. The result was that the German side refused any kind of bilingual university, insisting on a German-language university as the answer to the Czechs' allegedly excessive demands. There was also uncertainty among Moravian Germans as to whether it was politically productive to adopt such a prominent position in the university issue. For many young Germans in Moravia a higher education was fairly easily accessible even without a university in Brno – towns in the south such as Mikulov or Znojmo liked to present themselves as distant parts of the Viennese agglomeration, while for Germans in north or north-west Moravia, the educational institutes in Prague, which had many places for German students, were accessible by rail. It transpired that the Brno city politicians were the most vociferous supporters of a German university, and despite being powerful, they were somewhat isolated on this point. Although other German interest groups were prepared to block the idea of a Czech university in Moravia, at the same time they were resigned to the fact that there would not be a German-language university and could thus concentrate on more important issues. There were also compromise solutions from the more politically creative politicians in Brno city hall, namely the establishment of two universities – a German one in Brno and a Czech one in another town with Czech municipal leadership. Here national identity became intertwined with provincial as well as local identities. Possible locations for a Czech university included Kroměříž and Prostějov, while one shrewd solution was Královo Pole. A Czech university could benefit from its proximity to the provincial capital of Brno due to the fact that both municipalities were adjacent to one another and practically unified, but at the same time the university would in fact be outside of Brno and would thus not provoke the more radical elements amongst the Brno Germans.

From 1895–1897 both political camps were confronted by the mass character of the Czech-German struggle, where bourgeois political forces were upstaged in

public life by the mass political parties with their large though poor and less literate membership.<sup>470</sup> This mass engagement reached its peak when socialist forces also joined in demonstrations in 1905. Politics left the negotiating table for the streets, resulting in the death of a young Czech joiner, František Pavlík, who was killed by the police during a demonstration in support of a Czech university in Brno.<sup>471</sup> There was now no escaping the spiral of oppression and violence, the moderate forces lost their influence and the university question became one of “who will defeat whom”.<sup>472</sup>

The breakup of the Habsburg empire and the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 meant that the university issue could be reopened in a different context. The decision by the Revolutionary National Council in January 1919 to establish a university in Moravia was not motivated by provincial patriotism. Instead the motivation was clearly the symbolic and practical culmination of the national triumph as confirmed on the territory of Moravia.<sup>473</sup> From the perspective of the Prague political elites, it had not been linked strongly enough to the Czech national movement. It was a kind of missionary area, and in the eyes of some critically minded contemporaries, it was a colony of triumphal Czech nationalism and imperialism.<sup>474</sup> After the Habsburgs and Germans, the third to lose out was the Roman Catholic Church, which until the last moment had postponed and blocked the establishment of a university, fearing it would become a hotbed of secularism emerging from revolutionary fervour. It was punished for this in several ways including the absence of a theological faculty in the new university.<sup>475</sup>

However, the strong words from this time of triumph were not accompanied by deeds, and it soon became clear that the Brno university was the Cinderella to Charles University, and that its equipment was woefully inadequate. This fact was again grist to the mill of Moravian provincial patriots, who were frustrated with and sharply critical of Prague and the overly centralized Czechoslovak state. In 1923–1924 and again in 1932–1933, the Prague government first drew up proposals to close down one faculty, then later two faculties at the Brno university in an effort to reduce the burden of social and education expenditure on the state

470 Malíř, Jiří: *Systém politických stran v českých zemích do roku 1918*. In: Malíř, Jiří – Marek, Pavel: *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a v Československu 1861–2004*. I., Brno 2005, pp. 17–57.

471 *Die tschechischen Ausschreitungen und Gewalttätigkeiten*, Neues deutsches Blatt 7.10. 1905, year 1, no. 31, p. 4; Křen, Jan: *Konfliktní společenství. Češi a Němci 1780–1918*. Prague 2013, pp. 191–196; Pernes, Jiří: *Nejen rudé prapory aneb Pravda o revolučním roce 1905 v českých zemích*. Brno 2005, pp. 115–120.

472 *Zur Forderung der czechischen Universität in Mähren*, Deutsches Nordmährerblatt 12. 3. 1904, year 6, no. 11, pp. 1–3.

473 <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/022schuz/s022007.htm> ff. (10.5. 2018).

474 *Krise zvěrolékařské fakulty v Brně*, Lidové noviny 21.4. 1921, year 29, no. 197, p. 1.

475 *Cyrillo-Methodějská universita na Moravě*, Hlas, 24.5. 1894, year 46, no. 116, p. 1; <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/022schuz/s022007.htm> ff. (10.5. 2018).

budget. This was met by a wave of solidarity by Moravians, criticizing the centralism of the Czechoslovak administration and the harsh attitude of Prague's central organs towards Moravia.<sup>476</sup> There were protests by the Czech public in Moravia and Silesia, with even the long-running rivalry between Brno and Olomouc being set aside.<sup>477</sup> No significant support was forthcoming from the educated Czech elites in Bohemia, while the Slovak intelligentsia were also lukewarm in their support, so it was left to the Moravians to defend their university themselves. Its spokespeople claimed the university was Moravia's contribution to the expanding power of the Czech nation and the Czechoslovak state; Moravian patriotism was presented as benefiting the national idea.<sup>478</sup> German political circles did not become involved in the matter, and it is possible that they observed proceedings with a certain *schadenfreude*.

The aversion of a great number of Germans towards the Brno university manifested itself in the support given by Brno Germans to Nazi officials after Brno was occupied in March 1939.<sup>479</sup> The cutbacks to the university and its eventual closure in 1939 were met with the approval of the majority of Germans in Brno, as a resurgent German nationalism viewed the university as a symbol of German subjugation in the past. There was no element of Moravian or local patriotism in this discourse as the university had long been viewed as part of the national conflict. The Germans had never managed to coexist with the university – only a handful of German-speaking students studied there, usually from mixed-national or Jewish backgrounds. Therefore, the closure of the school in 1939 and its reopening in 1945 was the story of Czech national suppression and triumph. Meanwhile, accounts were settled with the German adversaries in 1945 when the German population of Brno was resettled in Austria and Germany.<sup>480</sup>

With the end of Czech-German rivalry, the university in Brno took on a distinctly Czech character under the influence of its war generation of academics, though its international links were still valued. In comparison with the interwar period, when international ties were undermined by a chronic lack in finance and were mainly with France and Britain, the international dimension was now assuming too much significance. The period 1945–1948 saw a dramatic increase in the importance of the links to Slavonic countries, especially the Soviet Union. There was still respect for the liberating Anglo-Saxon powers, but France had lost much

476 Halas, František X. – Jordán, František: *Dokumenty k dějinám Masarykovy univerzity v Brně II.*, Brno 1995, pp. 78–96.

477 Národní archiv, Fond Ministerstvo školství a národní osvěty, k. 1115, sign. 5I2A, čj. 138493/23.

478 Halas – Jordán, *Dokumenty II.*, pp. 78–96.

479 Jordán, *Dějiny univerzity*, pp. 213.

480 Dvořák, Tomáš: Brno a německé obyvatelstvo v květnu roku 1945. Pokus o anatomii historické (ne)paměti. In: Arburg, Adrian von – Dvořák, Tomáš – Kovařík, David: *Německy mluvící obyvatelstvo v Československu po roce 1945*. Brno 2010, pp. 89–113.

of its standing following the trauma of the Munich Agreement. The “Moravian” aspect had virtually no role to play in these links, which were about connecting national educational institutes to the global network. After 1948 the globalizing tendency was replaced by Czechoslovakia’s entry into the bloc of people’s democratic countries, especially the Slavonic group. The university presented itself in these forums as a member of a large family of nations on the path to socialism, part of the victorious political camp which would soon embrace the whole world. A trend developed here which might be described today using the slogan “think globally, act locally”<sup>481</sup>: the university joined the international division of research inside the socialist camp and was active in supporting the development of countries through teaching foreign students, etc.

However, it would also be a mistake to imagine that the feeling of national victory over Germany and the globalizing tendencies of the communist era extinguished the local patriotic character of the university’s identity. Ladislav Štoll, a powerful man within Czech science, attended a conference of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Brno on the theme of universities, only to be appalled by what he saw: “*There are strong anti-Prague and anti-centralizing tendencies apparent in the discussions. They talked ironically about the ‘Prague comrades’. Typical of Brno students is a strongly anti-Prague local ‘patriotism’, which Šling indulged in (...)*”<sup>482</sup> A regional Communist leader, Otto Šling’s (1912–1952) influence in the university and elsewhere was based on his regional patriotism combined with student left-wing avant-gardism – in the autumn of 1950 he was removed from his post and later hanged.<sup>483</sup> However, this did not mean that the university’s identity was separated from Moravian and Brno regional patriotism forever – Šling’s era was just one of many short episodes in the long-term development of this identity.

It is obvious from this short detour into the complex web of identities of the Brno university community that it was not easy to lead a discussion on the historical aspects of today’s academic community for the 100th anniversary of the university in 2019. In many ways there seems very little convergence between past identities, the victorious struggles of the university and the present political situation. It is difficult to celebrate a historical anniversary in an era when the leading representatives of universities officially demand the development of a spirit of cooperation and the communication of “European values”, with all the ambiguity of this term. Perhaps it would be simpler to commemorate an older anniversary, preferably medieval, which would give the organisers more room to manoeuvre and would allow more of a focus on aspects connected with current political re-

---

481 Kellermann, Paul: *Einleitung*, In: Universität und Umland. Beziehungen zwischen Hochschule und Region. Klagenfurt 1982, p. 9.

482 Pernes, Škola, p. 65.

483 Šling, Karel: *Otto Šling – příběh jednoho komunisty*. Paměť a dějiny 2012, no. 4, pp. 116–121.



quirements. But this is not at all simple for a university which was founded during a turbulent and tense period at the start of a century which has justifiably been called the century of extremes. However, there is no need to imagine that any potential conflicts related to the commemoration of the university's foundation in 1919 would lead to tension within the academic community – most academics are not interested in the historical aspects of the university's foundation, and if they are, then it is only in connection with the narrow interests of their subject. Only a few voices were raised from the humanities, pointing out that the university emerged firstly as the victory of Czechs over Germans, then as a symbol of the importance of Moravia for the Czech nation and the new state, and thirdly as an expression of the triumph of secular progress over the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

## Globalists and localists

After the fall of communism and the Czech Republic's entry into the European Union, the dividing line between the narrators of the myth of territorial ties was transformed. This quiet transformation occurred in the 1990s when, on the basis of applied research, some disciplines used increased state investment and cooperation with private firms to become so attached to the international network that they became either indifferent to their territorial links or viewed them more as an encumbrance. The university community began to split between the globalists and the localists. Each group interprets the university's past and present in its own way, resembling a mythical narrative, though both stories – fortunately for now – stand more apart from each other than opposed to one other. Rudolf Stichweh believes that in comparison with the top American universities, supporters of locally and regionally focused European universities have more of an influence, which has grown over the past decades, whereas Princeton, Yale and Harvard have become unambiguously global institutions.<sup>484</sup>

The first group would like to see the university develop as an institution which is firmly set within the international community and is ready to profit from the results of globalization. It then sets its priorities for the university's development accordingly: to direct resources towards supporting student and academic mobility, to introduce English as one of the university's official languages and the main language in research, and to focus energy on climbing the ratings ladders. Their goal is to ensure the university has high enough status to access national and international research funding – in the Czech Republic this means a position among

---

484 Stichweh, Rudolf: *Universitäten im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*. In: Rudersdorf, Manfred – Höpken, Wolfgang – Schlegel, Martin (Hg.): *Wissen und Geist. Universitätskulturen*. Leipzig 2009, pp. 119–138, here 120–121.

the six research institutions aspiring to participate in global affairs.<sup>485</sup> In the USA there are 150 such research institutions from a total of 3,000, in Great Britain approximately 20, in Brazil 6, etc.<sup>486</sup> The objective of the globalist is, therefore, to move step by step away from the university's bond to the territory of the Czech lands or Moravia, as this bond to a small post-communist country in Central Europe does not provide them with a brand equal to their ambitious, and in some cases, excellent research. For the globalists the term national or even "Moravian" university is a millstone, weighed down by history, and for some it is just an unpleasant memory of times which were backward and uniformly grey.

For the localists, on the other hand, globalization represents a series of risks, and they cannot imagine separating the university from its territory. Cutting themselves off from historical traditions is seen as damaging on principle; they see many positives in the national and "Moravian" aspects of the university's history, mainly from the solidarity arising from an awareness of the academic community's heroism when faced by enemies, political oppression and crises. Their arguments are also strong: the large majority of students are from Moravia, in particular South Moravia, while only a handful of courses are taught in English at this large university. The university education also focuses on the needs of the region; the majority of teachers, doctors and lawyers work in Moravian institutions. They point out that for many years the university drew on its strength to overcome crises from its symbolically expressed link to Moravia – the foundation stones of the first university building in 1928 were brought from Moravian towns which symbolized the tradition of education (Nivnice – the birthplace of Comenius; Hodslavice as the birthplace of František Palacký; Hodonín as a reference to T.G. Masaryk, etc.). There were few references to Prague while any international links only appeared in connection with important "Moravian" figures.<sup>487</sup> In a university with a proven structure of traditions and decision-making processes, globalism represents activist ideas borrowed from who-knows-where and applied haphazardly solely because they are mechanisms which operate in the "developed" environment of Western European or American universities. They are angered by the dominance of English and highlight the importance of other languages that are needed to maintain Europe's great cultural diversity, which is threatened by globalization and digitalization.<sup>488</sup>

---

485 Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc, The Czech Technical University in Prague, The Technical University in Brno and the Czech Republic Academy of Sciences.

486 Altbach, Philip: *Tradition und Transition. The International Imperative in Higher Education*. Boston 2007, p. 90.

487 Jordán, *Dějiny university*, pp. 118–119.

488 [http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/shoda-globalismu-a-lokalismu-je-civilizacni-nezbytnosti-pez-/tema.aspx?c=A180425\\_151517\\_pozice-tema\\_lube](http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/shoda-globalismu-a-lokalismu-je-civilizacni-nezbytnosti-pez-/tema.aspx?c=A180425_151517_pozice-tema_lube) (29.4.2018); <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/>

Both positions have their symbolic expressions, and a symbol has the potential to become a bone of contention. As was seen in the story of early-modern Gießen, problems can multiply in the relationship between the university and the inhabitants of a town or region if the university demands privileged treatment, resulting in pressure on the regional and city budget. A poor signal is sent if the buildings disturb the urban appearance, with brutalist buildings disrupting the style of the city and *genius loci*.<sup>489</sup> Enormous multi-discipline concrete campuses on the outskirts of cities in Germany and Poland (Regensburg, Saarbrücken, Poznań) express doubts about the university community's ability to be part of urban society.<sup>490</sup> If, as in Brno or Vilnius, the university chooses a middle way by leaving the arts and social science departments in the city, then this is beneficial not only for these disciplines and the university, but it also sends a signal that it is willing to "suffer with the city". In the case of science, technical, sports and medical disciplines, a certain distance away in campus areas is required, but even here it is necessary to prevent them from becoming isolated by reaching out into the life of the city through joint projects, celebrations and cultural and sports events. A tendency to become closed off will be met in turn by the town and region also rejecting any notions of solidarity.<sup>491</sup> A special chapter is the role of mass higher education in the development of the relationship between the university and the town: on the one hand – as in the case of the Early Modern Age – the mass of students means increased consumption and an injection of money into certain sectors of the economy, on the other hand, it can put pressure on the city transport network and the entire infrastructure, and also bring noise and night-time disturbance.

By creating such a huge capacity for research, something of a rarity in Central Europe, the university in Brno has become more global than many of its colleagues and competitors from the ranks of regional universities. Even if there is an overly strict dividing line between research universities with global aspirations and regional universities dominated by Bachelor's courses and research in a national

---

veda/2404318–islandstina–vymira–mezi–jazyky–ohrozene–digitalizaci–sveta–patri–i–cestina (29.5. 2018).

489 Geißler, Clemens – Engelbrecht, Gerhard – Kutz, Joachim: Wirtschaftliche und soziale Effekte der Regionalisierung des Hochschulsystems, In: Kellermann, Paul (Hg.): *Universität und Umland. Beziehungen zwischen Hochschule und Region*. Klagenfurt 1982, pp. 40–69, here p. 66.

490 Mayer, Franz: Universität und Gesellschaft: Einige Überlegungen zur Gründung, Planung und Aufbau einer Universität in Regensburg. *Zeitschrift für Politik, Neue Folge*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Oktober 1966), pp. 269–284.

491 Cf. Zerlang, Martin: *The university and the city*. *GeoJournal*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (November 1997), pp. 241–246; Duarte Horta, Regina: *The City Within the City: the University City, History and Urbanism in a Latin American Case Study*. *Iberoamericana* 2001, Año 13, No. 51 (Septiembre de 2013), pp. 7–25; Berdahl, Robert M. – Cohon, Jared L. – Simmons, Ruth J. – Sexton, John – Berlowitz, Leslie Cohen: *University and the city*, *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 4–18.

context, at least in the Central European and Czech context there is still a significant dividing line in the extent of the territorial bond. The weakening of this bond has the character of symbols signalling to the outside that: we are integrated into the global network of universities! Alongside this we are also integrated into the region and our objectives are the same as the priorities and strategies of the city and region. However, in the competition for a position among the universities this is not mentioned as we are more proud of our globalism. The university in Brno sent a similar signal in 2017 when it became the first university in the Czech Republic to introduce the defence of the thesis in a world language for all subjects, though this was somewhat diluted later by the recognition that some disciplines had specific links to Czech. The idea behind this step, weakening Czech as a language of science and pressurising researchers to distance themselves in their research and publications from the nation and region, provides much food for thought when considering the university's territorial links and identity, the consequences of which are still impossible to foretell.

## Conclusion

The two myths standing beside each other, and sometimes opposite each other, are supported by people whose daily lives personify the idea of thinking globally and acting locally. It is rare to find research which purports to be merely provincial in its ambitions, just as one seldom encounters globalist extremism which ignores the needs of the region.<sup>492</sup> Amongst scientists it would be difficult to find either globalists or localists who did not share at least some of the values of the other side. The distinction is not as clear as it might seem and neither myth is aggressive in character. The issue of the territorial bond thus shows the university – as was seen above – as a *multiple hybrid organisation*,<sup>493</sup> i.e. an institution made up of various parts with different missions and internal cultures, in this case in relation to the territorial bond: “*The university is too difficult and complex an organization to be described, let alone governed and administered.*”<sup>494</sup> By choosing their own methods, pace and direction, globalists and localists and university disciplines are striving towards an optimal balance whereby the university is rooted firmly in the region while simultaneously being part of the international debate, where

---

492 Kellermann, *Einleitung*, p. 9.

493 Kleinmann, Bernd: Universitätspräsidenten als „institutional entrepreneurs“? Unternehmensmythen und Führungsaufgaben im Hochschulbereich, In: Scherm, Ewald (Hg.): *Management unternehmerischer Universitäten: Realität, Vision oder Utopie?* München – Mering 2014, pp. 43–62, here p. 48.

494 Delbecq, André – Bryson, Paul – van der Ven, Andrew: *University Governance: Lessons from a Innovative Design for Collaboration*, *Journal of Management Inquiry* 22, 4, 2013, pp. 382–392, here p. 390.

regional scientific findings will be relevant to the rest of the world due to their general applicability. Such a “fusion” of the university with the city and region is an expression of democracy, but also that the university is not shutting itself away in its ivory tower, but is a valuable actor in improving the lives of the region’s inhabitants and taxpayers, who have the right to make demands of the university and expect certain results. In so doing, it can fulfil its fundamental role as the “window” of every region – an innovative intersection between the world of science, the region and the city.