

PATTERNS OF VERNACULAR CONFLICTS
IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY-MODERN TOWNS
OF HISTORICAL UPPER HUNGARY

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Along the history of Central and Eastern Europe, a great variety of intercultural conflicts has been emerged in this region, among which a special form of conflict is embodied by tensions between vernacular language groups within medieval and early modern urban communities. Despite many valuable research results, the question of pre-modern vernacular conflicts is generally on the periphery of academic interest; while particular urban histories have explored much around these events, a general conceptualization seems to be lacking. This paper attempts to contribute to the academic discourse with a conceptualization, trying to clarify the specifics of these pre-modern vernacular urban conflicts in a comparativ way: ie. comparing them with modern nationalisms. As a result, it is concluded that pre-modern tensions between vernaculars were driven both by differing interests and emotions of the parties – like in case of modern nationalisms – but, unlike modern nationalisms, they lacked an intellectual motive. This lack of intellectual motives is embodied in the non-participation of circles of people-of-letters in these conflicts and in the apparent absence of explanatory (ideologizing) narratives that could provide more abstract reasons for situational contradictions than pure conflicts of interest or emotional hatred and distrust.

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Na poli medzikultúrnych konfliktov v dejinách strednej a východnej Európy tvoria osobitnú doménu napätie medzi ľudovými jazykovými skupinami stredovekých a ranonovovekých mestských komunít v historickom regióne Horného Uhorska (teda na dnešnom území Slovenska). Napriek mnohým hodnotným výsledkom výskumu je celá otázka predmoderných konfliktov ľudových jazykov vo všeobecnosti na periférii akademického záujmu; zatiaľ čo príbehy debát a napätí sa veľa skúmajú, zdá sa, že chýba všeobecná konceptualizácia. Tento príspevok si kladie za cieľ prispieť k akademickému diskurzu takýmto konceptualizačným pokusom, snažiac sa komparatívnym spôsobom objasniť špecifiká týchto konfliktov, t. j. porovnávať ich s modernými nacionalizmami. V dôsledku toho sa dospelo k záveru, že predmoderné napätie medzi vernakulárnymi jazykmi bolo poháňané záujmami a emóciami strán – ako sú moderné nacionalizmy – ale na rozdiel od moderných nacionalizmov im chýba intelektuálny motív. Tento nedostatok intelektuálnych motívov je stelesnený v neúčasti skupín intelektuálov na konfliktoch alebo v zjavnej absencii vysvetľujúcich naratívov, ktoré by mohli poskytnúť abstraktnejšie dôvody pre situačné rozpory ako konflikty záujmov alebo emocionálna nenávisť a nedôvera.

Kľúčové slová: medzietnické vzťahy; nacionalizmus; emócie; záujmy; ľudové jazyky;

Keywords: Inter-Ethnic Relations; Nationalism; Emotions; Interests; Vernacular Languages;

Research in the fields of nationalisms and inter-ethnic conflicts has been rather strongly focusing on the 19th – 20th centuries (and, already, on the 21st century), since nation is essentially considered to be a product of modernity: quasi-mainstream concepts of academic literature interpreting nation – formed by historians, sociologists and political scientists – attempt ultimately to reveal something from the functioning of modern societies.¹ This approach can also be regarded as dominant within historians' discourse; and from a certain aspect, there is nothing to dispute/question about the truth of this approach: the term nation, as we know and experience it today, is an institutional regime of industrial-civil societies, whose structurization is rooted in the emergence of modern, capitalist and formally egalitarian societies.

That does not mean, however, that people of earlier (ie. premodern) centuries had not already talked about nations (*natio* in Latin) – with a content that does not match today's notion of nation and nationality; therefore, they had referred to categories that we do not experience today. Similarly, conflicts between people speaking different languages or following different customs have a history that is longer than the period starting only from the 18th and 19th centuries, even if it would be misleading to call these premodern conflicts as nationalist tensions.

¹ ANDERSON, Benedict R. Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London, 1991; GELLNER, Ernest. Nations and Nationalism. New Perspectives on the Past. Oxford, 1983; GYÁNI, Gábor. Relatív történelem. Budapest, 2007; HANÁK, Péter. A nemzeti identitás konstrukciója és problémái. In Múlt és Jövő, 1997, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 4-7; HOBBSAWM, Eric. Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In HOBBSAWM, Eric – RANGER, Terence (eds.). The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1-14; SMITH, Anthony D. Ethnic Persistence and National Transformation. In The British Journal of Sociology, 1984, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 452-461; SMITH, Anthony D. National identity. London, 1991; SZŰCS, Jenő. Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról. In Történelmi Szemle, 1981, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 313-359.

This study addresses such premodern conflicts: ie. rhetorical debates and positional struggles among groups identified themselves as German, Hungarian and Slavic-Slovak ones in medieval and early modern towns of Upper Hungary.² For avoiding the misleading term of ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’, the most appropriate naming seems to be the phrase ‘vernacular conflicts’, so henceforth this them will be deployed below, wherever possible.³

Therefore, premodern vernacular conflicts (detected primarily within urban communities) is currently quite under-conceptualized and separated from modern national conflicts. This can be viewed as an undesirable consequence of several (in itself not objectionable) academic trends. First, since nationalism is conceptualized (rightly) as modern phenomena, even inter-ethnic boundary-making and intercultural conflicts – in a broad sense – tend to be linked to the development of industrial-civil societies; thus, research programmes exploring intercultural conflicts tend to be constrained to modern centuries, while the possibility of comparison of intergroup conflicts from different historical eras is given secondary importance. Yet, according to this paper, such *longue durée* comparisons can significantly contribute to the understanding of contemporary social processes, precisely by elucidating on differences and similarities between premodern vernacular and modern ethnic or national conflicts.

Secondly, interdisciplinarity has brought history, political science, and sociology closer together – which is a welcome academic trend in itself – but in the meantime, primary analytical methodologies of political or social sciences are quite connected to modernity, so outspokenly interdisciplinary approaches (with cultural anthropological, ethnographic, quantitative or discourse analysis) are not suitable to scrutinize the premodern world. Meanwhile, through their

² The term “Upper Hungary” has a narrow and a broad geographical demarcation; this study uses this term in a broad sense, “which includes the counties along the Carpathians from Pozsony [Bratislava] to Máramaros [Maramureș, RO]”. CZUCZOR, Gergely – FOGARASI, János. *A magyar nyelv szótára*. Volume 2. Pest, 1864, p. 771.

³ As the age discussed here is before the time of emergence of modern language norms and mother tongue education, it seems appropriate to avoid the notion “mother tongue” or “national language” – which presupposes categories already codified – and to propose the term vernacular instead. Related to this, see definitions of vernacular language, such as “the totality of the means of expression and common linguistic characteristics of speakers of different dialects”, or another definition: “in contrast to literary language, the language used by the people” KISS, Jenő. *Népryelv és népryelv kutatás*. In *Magyar Nyelvőr*, 2005, vol. 129, no. 4, pp. 397-419. When speaking about vernacular groups and vernacular conflicts, the uncoherent utilization of ‘nation’ or ‘nationality’ can be avoided, whose meaning had undergone changes between the premodern and modern ages, and thus their use is “inherently polyphonic”. (ERDŐS, Zoltán. *A premodern nemzetfogalom szerkezeti vázlata: historiográfiai megközelítés*. Kézirat. [Structural outline of the premodern concept of nation: a historiographical approach. Manuscript.] Pécs, 2017, p. 15.) Nevertheless, we have very little precise knowledge on boundary-making practices of vernacular groups, or on intermixtures, like e.g. mixed marriages. Nevertheless, even the use of term nationality could also be articulated and argued, though there has been repeated criticism of its deployment in relation with premodern historical epochs. SZÚCS, Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról; DOMENOVÁ, Marcela. To ethnic situation and immigration in Prešov until the end of the 16th century (selected issues). In *Res Gestae. Czasopismo Historyczne*, 2018, vol. 6, pp. 129-142.

contact with history, both sociology and political science have developed an interest in earlier ages.⁴ But this interest is limited by the lack of the kind of data and resources (such as population movement data, statistical data collection, survey data) that are quite vital for cultivating these disciplines; in addition, academic vocabulary of sociology or political sciences is also difficult to apply to premodern relations.

One of the main motivations behind this study is to strengthen the relationship between research on modern and premodern intergroup conflicts: in what sense are they different, or what makes them different, when conflicts caused by modern nationalisms are compared with conflicts of German citizens with the Slovak merchant Stanko Vilhelmovič within the medieval town Kremnica in the 15th century? (See below their story.) Or when the Hungarian and Slovak groups of inhabitants of 17th-century Krupina sparked a regular struggle and uprising against the German government of the town? Or when guild regulations were enacted not allowing members of other vernacular nation to enter the guild?

When analysing these issues, the study attempts to conceptualize structural differences and similarities between the conflicts of the premodern and modern ages; structural differences mean this case, which motives of modern nationalisms – where interest-related, emotional (sociocultural) and cognitive (ideological) motives can also be detected – can be revealed in premodern conflicts.⁵ Based on these, one of the conclusions of the study, offered here in advance, is that the behaviour of vernacular groups of medieval and early modern towns was not only driven by material motives – as so often mentioned – but also some socio-cultural motives were present, such as a sense of cultural distance and even xenophobia. According to it, the existence of interest-based and emotional motives are the similarities between premodern and modern intercultural conflicts. Yet, conflicts of premodern ages show a significant structural difference from modern nationalism. This difference is defined by this study as a lack of cognitive (intellectual) motive: it includes the lack of creating ideology or narratives around situational conflicts, and the lack of institutionalizing (and hence, broadening) the situational conflict over time and space via resilient narratives about inherently separated nations.

⁴ In one of the basic works of historical sociology, Philip Abrams argued for the full integration of history and sociology. ABRAMS, Philip. *Historical Sociology*. Ithaca, 1982.

⁵ As a conceptual approach of tracing back nationalism and modern national identity to these three motives, see KOLLAI, István. Nemzeti identitás: felülről épített vagy alulról épülő? A nacionalizmusok kialakulásának társadalmi kölcsönhatásokra alapuló modellezése. In *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 2020, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 31-50. According to this concept, an individual's social behaviour can be described by the interrelated interplay of motives of self-interested homo economicus, of socio-culturally rooted homo sociologicus, and of homo philosophicus seeking to understand the surrounding world. Simplifying it, these can be called interest-related, socio-cultural (emotional), and cognitive (intellectual) motives. Similar variety of motives can be detected in formation of cleavages within national communities, in the emergence of political and ideological sides: BENCZES, István – SZABÓ, Krisztina. An Economic Understanding of Populism: A Conceptual Framework of the Demand and the Supply Side of Populism. In *Political Studies Review*. Available on the Internet: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14789299221109449>>.

It can be assumed that this lack of ideology is the reason why vernacular conflicts – sparked in premodern urban environment from time to time – have left no lasting memory in national historiography later, nor do they, as a series of historical events, show an organic connection with modern-age ethnic and national conflicts. Quite interestingly, national movements of the 18th and 19th centuries did not themselves build on the traditions of these earlier linguistic conflicts, and they did not elevate these conflicts in the ranks of their historical heroic antecedents; perhaps this is why these events have become half-forgotten.

Therefore, recalling them now may be interesting not only because of the conceptualization of vernacular conflicts, but also because a little-known dimension of German-Hungarian-Slovak urban life can be revealed.

The evolution of urban multilingualism

Urban multilingualism at the level of vernaculars had evolved from the coexistence of German, Hungarian and Slavic vernacular groups. Unfortunately, on the level of written sources, solely the fact of coexistence can be revealed, but we can not reconstruct its dynamics (ethnic proportions, assimilation, linguistic hierarchy). Therefore, the linguistic and ethnic circumstances under which the establishment and early development of the cities of Upper Hungary was conducted is a subject of debate. Hungarian academics consider sparse information from the first centuries of the Hungarian Middle Ages – for example, the designations “*silva Scepus*”, “*silva Zoulum*” by Anonymus – to be a reference to uninhabited areas (since they were not deforested); according to the Slovak historical interpretation, however, they are not understood as mere forests, but rather as royal hunting grounds.⁶ The Slavic origin of a huge number of names of settlements (even established by Germans) can indeed be considered as evidence of ancient Slavic-Slovak presence; the question is when did Slavs settle down: in parallel with or before the Germans’ immigration. This debate does not really influence the fact that, by the late Middle Ages, an increasingly developed German-founded urban network was surrounded by increasingly dense areas of Slavic villages.⁷ Exceptions to that include the region of Spiš (*Zips*), where German towns and villages formed a somewhat compact unity, and the county of *Šariš* (*Sáros*), where a – already utterly disappeared – northern bay of the Hungarian language border evolved; therefore, Hungarian villages also existed in the vicinity of Prešov (*Eperjes*).⁸ Thus, an insular presence of urban German population was typical – even if not exclusively –, surrounded by Slavic population, while the presence

⁶ RATKOŠ, Peter. Postavenie slovenskej národnosti v stredovekom Uhorsku. In RATKOŠ, Peter et al. Slováci a ich národný vývin. Bratislava, 1969, pp. 7-40.

⁷ MAREK, Miloš. Cudzie etniká na stredovekom Slovensku. Martin, 2006, 57-225. According to the author’s calculation, altogether 479 settlements can be indicated as German-populated by the end 14th century, most of them (38%) were erected in the first half of the 14th century. However they are concentrated in three regions (around the Little Carpathians, in the ‘Hauerland’ and in the region of Spiš), they did not constitute intact ethnic districts.

⁸ DOMENOVÁ, Marcela. Prešov. In ŠTEFÁNIK, Martin – LUKAČKA, Jan et al. Lexikón stredovekých miest na Slovensku. Bratislava, 2010, pp. 337-338.

of Hungarian language can not be excluded either. How did, in this situation, evolve the urban presence of vernacular languages?

The most frequently referred historical proof of the urban presence of Slavic language is the Decree of Louis the Great from 1381, issued in Žilina: this decree commanded Germans and Slavs to be present in town councils on a parity basis, after the local Slavs complained to the king, when visiting the city, that they had been ousted from the local government. Then, in the following two centuries, similar (often peaceful, often conflicting) moments of German-Slavic coexistence are documented/witnessed from many other towns, struggling to redistribute government positions between vernacular group,⁹ or re-regulate their proportional weight within confessional institutions.¹⁰ Within the city walls, we can conclude, separate vernacular groups were recorded, but very little is known about whether there was some mingling/intermixture through mixed marriages or assimilation; nor do we know whether belonging to a group was meant for a lifetime, or was rather situational. Unfortunately, not much can be known either about bilingualism, ie. how many spoke two or more languages.¹¹ Nevertheless, there are clear traces of the presence of spoken (vernacular) languages in everyday life. For example, it is indicated by names of public spaces, such as Slavic Street, Slavic Quarter and Hungarian Street, Hungarian Quarter (1411: *linea Sclavorum*, 1428: *Quartale Sclavorum*) in Prešov.¹² In addition, contemporary surnames can also indicate linguistic or territorial origin, where the name "Slovak" can be detected from late medieval urban environment.¹³ While taking

⁹ See e.g. the German-Slovak tension over municipal government positions within Trnava in the second half of the 15th century, which King Matthias settled by rules of coexistence among vernacular language groups on a parity basis in 1486. VARSÍK, Branislav. K sociálnym a národnostným bojom v mestách na Slovensku v stredoveku. In RATKOŠ, Peter et al. Slováci a ich národný vývin. Bratislava, 1969, pp. 41-72. Later in Trnava, because of Hungarians fleeing the Turks, German-Slovak-Hungarian debates had emerged over the town government in the first half of the 16th century, settled by means of a Royal Decree in 1551. RATKOŠ, Postavenie slovenskej národnosti v stredovekom Uhorsku; TIBENSKÝ, Ján. Chvály a obrany slovenského národa. Bratislava, 1965, pp. 20-23.

¹⁰ ULIČNÝ, Ferdinand. K výskumu národnostnej štruktúry stredovekých miest na Slovensku. In MARSINA, Richard (ed.). Národnostný vývoj miest na Slovensku do roku 1918. Martin, 1984. It depicts the separation of Slovaks from German communities within the parish – through having their own priests – in altogether ten towns in Upper Hungary, of which in three cases (Prešporok, Košice, Prešov) the presence of Hungarians – also having their own priests – can be detected, too.

¹¹ ŠEDIVÝ, Juraj. Jazyková a etnická pluralita v stredovekom Prešporoku/Bratislave – stredoveká realita alebo moderný obraz? In Forum Historiae, 2012, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 15-32.

¹² IVÁNYI, Béla. A középkori Eperjes magyarsága. Szeged, 1934, p. 32. Or in case of Prešporok, see street names in: MAREK, Cudzie etniká na stredovekom Slovensku, p. 51.

¹³ BANÍK, Anton Augustín. Ján Baltazár Magin a jeho politická, národná a kultúrna obrana Slovákov roku 1728. Trnava, 1936, p. 129. In his long, data-rich historical introduction to his book, Baník dates the appearance of the surname "Slovak" from 1375. Ratkoš recalls the appearance of the family name "Slovak" from 1444 in Bardejov, where it was held by one of the captains of the town („Nicolaus Czech et Slovak, stipendiarii supremi"). RATKOŠ, Postavenie slovenskej národnosti v stredovekom Uhorsku. In Prešov, tax registers include records of a number of surnames indicating nationalities: Toth, Thott, Zlowak, Polak, Polonik, Magyar, Nemett, and, in addition, Olaz, Lipsky, Sibenburger etc. About surnames of Prešov: IVÁNYI, A középkori Eperjes magyarsága; DOMENOVÁ, To ethnic situation and immigration in Prešov.

into account all the distorting and misleading effects, these surnames also seem to be suitable to draw some kind of “big trend” in the Middle Ages.¹⁴ Or even in the early modern age: at least this is assumed by Frederik Federmayer, a Slovak contemporary researcher of the history of cities, who analyses the surnames of the 1624 Bratislava census, obviously acknowledging that they cannot be treated as accurate statistical data.¹⁵ Existing language hierarchies also distort the picture for determining ethnic proportions: the everyday use of the German language seems to be much more widespread than the size of the community of native Germans. Perhaps this language usage out of prestige is the reason why the same town is mentioned in sources as being monolingual or multilingual alike. For example, Prešporok (Bratislava) was described as completely German by a visitor from further afield (Königsberg) in 1587: presumably all language groups used German in urban life – and even in representative spheres of private life –, while perhaps up to a third of the town population was originally non-native German at the time. In 1632, a Czech settler here had to make special efforts to find someone to baptise his son, who could speak Czech; and among the wills in this period, there are few in Hungarian or Latin, while there is no one in Slovak at all. All this suggests that non-German population represented a low proportion, and it is assumed that their linguistic presence was even less perceptible. Similarly, the prestige of German language is portrayed by travelogues such as that of trumpet player and composer Daniel G. Speer (1663 – 1707) from Breslau (Wrocław), who, in his adventurous travel accounts, writes about the mixed German-Slovak ethnic composition of Spiš towns, but highlighting the overwhelming German character of urban life: for example, members of town council of Levoča (Leutschau, Lőcse) had to wear German coats, shoes and hats as a sign of obeying municipal (German) law.¹⁶ Karl Julius Schröer, a 19th century philologist (1825 – 1900), also pointed out – based on personal experiences, but presumably also as a trend often characteristic of earlier historical eras – that non-German middle class in Upper Hungary preferred to use German as a language of prestige, which was given a special taste by Slovakisms and Hungarianisms mixed into it.¹⁷ Thus, each vernacular might have had a certain social function of its own, and this was not only true for the German language: in Trnava, where the majority of the guilds were established by Slovaks, town documents on economic issues were also written

¹⁴ Analysing personal and family names only provides a slight chance for a speculative reconstruction. The tax register of Prešov from 1428 seems very suitable for such analysis, as names were not written in a uniform language in it, but even personal names were written in Slavic, German or Hungarian – this obviously refers to their nationality. IVÁNYI, A középkori Eperjes magyarsága, p. 5. Nevertheless, many researchers caution against the methodology of name analysis (DOMENOVÁ, To ethnic situation and immigration in Prešov).

¹⁵ FEDERMAYER, Frederik. Rody starého Prešporka. Bratislava, 2003, pp. 45-46. According to this analysis, Prešporok (Bratislava) had a German population of 63%, a Hungarian population of 20% and a Slovak population of 16%.

¹⁶ SPEER, Daniel. Magyar Simplicissimus. Miskolc, 1998. Speer writes about the region of Spiš that its inhabitants are “completely German, mixed with Slovaks, and their morals and customs are largely German” (Chapter XIII).

¹⁷ SCHRÖER, Karl Julius. Beitrag zu einem Wörterbuche der deutschen Mundarten des ungrisches Berglandes. Wien, 1858, p. 224.

primarily in Slovak; as if Slovak was the “language of craftsmen”.¹⁸ In the same region, there were professions considered to be “Hungarian” (such as bootmakers and button makers), for which Hungarian-language guild regulations were issued even if a guild was not established by Hungarians - as a clear sign of social representative functions of languages.¹⁹ This situation-dependent employment of language suggests that the problematics of boundary lines between confronting linguistic groups needs to be treated very carefully - as belonging to a group might have not been self-evident but also situative.

The development of the neighbouring Czech vernacular also certainly influenced the usage of the Slavic-Slovak language in the Carpathians. Dynastic and other relations between the Czech Kingdom and Hungary implicitly strengthened the *raison d'être* of the Slavic-Slovak dialects in Upper Hungary (while the identification of these dialects with the Czech language probably hindered the local Slavic population in developing their own regional linguistic self-awareness and identity).²⁰ For example, the Czech language is present among the contemporary Hungarian army, and even Hungarian royal authorities maintained correspondence in Czech with some towns having a partly Slavic-Slovak population.²¹

Some milestones of cultural history also exemplify the fact that the Slovak language, or its Bohemized version, was present in Upper-Hungary. Such is the Czech-Latin “Pressburger Dictionary” from the 14th century, which, although written in Czech land, may not have come to Prešporok by accident: in his introduction, the author, the Czech master Claretus, discusses Slavs living in Hungary and, with rebuke, encourages them to use their language.²² Another curiosity of cultural history is the letter of extortion written by robbery-military groups dominating the area of Bardejov, written to the town in contemporary Slovak, threatening citizens with revenge for the execution, as robbers, of soldiers originating from their groups. Apparently, they would not have written it in contemporary Slovak if they had not expected the townspeople to be able to read it. But the most compact reminiscence of usage of vernacular Slovak within urban community is the ‘Book of Žilina’ (*Žilinská kniha*) from the 14th - 15th century, containing - besides other legal documents - the Czech-Slovak translation of the Magdeburg Law. However its precise lingual categorization can be a subject of debate, it is a

¹⁸ Meanwhile, town protocols of Trnava were kept in Hungarian and German, in addition to Latin. Among guild certificates, there were more in Slovak than in German or Hungarian. KIRÁLY, Péter. Az 1648. évi latin-magyar-szlovák szótár. In *Magyar Nyelv*, 1985, vol. 81, no. 1, pp. 29-42.

¹⁹ ŠPIESZ, Anton. Slovenský element v remeselnej výrobe miest a mestečiek v období neskorého feudalizmu. In MARSINA, Richard (ed.). *Národnostný vývoj miest na Slovensku do roku 1918*. Martin, 1984, pp. 175-187.

²⁰ SZALATNAI, Rezső. *A szlovák irodalom története*. Budapest, 1964.

²¹ For example, the Royal Chancellery maintained correspondence with the town of Trnava in Czech, and mercenary soldiers of King Matthias sent a letter to Balázs Magyar in Czech-Slovak language. KNIEZSA, István. *Stredoveké české listiny*. Budapest, 1952.

²² FLAJŠHANS, Václav. Klaret a jeho družina. Slovníky veršované. Praha, 1926, p. 26; SZÁDECZKY, Lajos. A XV. sz. cseh rablók két levele Bártfa városához. In *Magyar Történelmi Tár*, 1882, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 202-203; DONGÓ, Gy. Géza. Fenygető levél a husszitáktól. In *Adalékok Zemplén-VármegyeTörténetéhez*, 1900, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 123-124.

proof of evidence that Slavic elements were not only present in cities, but playing active role in public and economic life.²³

The long-standing, decade-long presence of the Czech Hussites raises the question in itself: to what extent has their militant groups' gaining ground changed ethnic relations within the Upper-Hungarian urban landscape? Historiography tends to assume a decline of the urban German element due to Hussite invasions and conquests, however, this is an assumption coming from the "anti-Germanism" of the Hussites; their impact on urban population conditions or language usage can only be demonstrated in exceptional cases.²⁴ One such exception is the case of Trnava: when the town was occupied by the Hussites in 1432 German patricians had to flee, and after their return in 1435 they could no longer restore their previous dominance. In 1436, King Sigismund granted everyone the right to settle here freely, without ethnic constraints so that the town could be repopulated, becoming already a settlement of mixed German-Slovak population.²⁵ However, sources do not indicate a huge number of similar local tendencies.

The ethnic composition of many Upper-Hungarian towns became increasingly colourful also due to the appearance of Hungarians fleeing the Turks; about their proportion we also know little, the process can be reconstructed rather on the basis of individual life paths.²⁶ Nevertheless, the phenomenon probably involved masses of people, which is evidenced, for example, by a royal decree of 1531, under which Trnava had to make empty flats available to refugees.²⁷

In addition to the multitude of external influences affecting German-speaking urban communities, a fact should not be ignored, namely that German communities themselves needed other language communities (originally living outside their towns) to host, for demographic reasons. A general finding of European urban history that – probably for reasons of lifestyle and hygiene – towns could not reproduce their own population, and continuous immigration was needed for their survival.²⁸ This phenomenon in the European mental history is also confirmed by researchers of Hungarian urbanism, for example regarding Buda or

²³ CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav. *Kniha Žilinská*. Bratislava, 1934; KUCHAR, Rudolf. *Žilinská právna kniha*. Bratislava, 2009.

²⁴ MIŠIANIK, Jan. *Pohľady do staršej slovenskej literatúry*. Bratislava, 1974. The ideological impact of Hussitism is introduced through Latin tractates by ŠMATLÁK, Stanislav. *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry od stredoveku po súčasnosť*. Bratislava, 1988, p. 102. According to Šmatlák, influence of the Hussites on the lingual development of Slovak language can hardly be detected. Similarly: SZIKLAY, László. *A szlovák irodalom története*. Budapest, 1962. It is also worth noting that the Hussite devastation also affected the countryside, so their proportional impact on urban and rural population is difficult to judge.

²⁵ ŽUDEL, Juraj. *Osídlenie Slovenska v neskorom stredoveku*. Bratislava, 2010, p. 132.

²⁶ BESSENYEI, József. *Menekültek...: A kereskedelem helyzete Magyarországon 1526 után, Bornemissza Tamás és a budai menekültek működésének tükrében*. Budapest, Miskolc, 2007.

²⁷ VLACHOVIČ, Jozef. *Národnostné boje v mestách na Slovensku v 16. a 17. storočí*. In RATKOŠ, Peter et al. *Slováci a ich národný vývin*. Bratislava, 1969, pp. 73-91 (p. 76).

²⁸ LORENZ, Ottokar. *Lehrbuch der gesamten wissenschaftlichen Genealogie. Stammbaum und Ahnentafel in ihren geschichtlichen, sociologischen und naturwissenschaftlichen Bedeutung*. Berlin, 1898, p. 487.

Košice.²⁹ All this meant a slow but continuous change of population: In Prešporok, bourgeois families of the 1500s disappeared by 1680, and families holding the highest functions in town government after 1700 were not yet present in the town in 1624.³⁰ The fact that this did not mean a change in linguistic conditions in the case of Prešporok is partly due to the fact that Lower Austria provided the city with a huge hinterland to receive immigrants from, and local German patrician families were not only Carpathian German but a significant proportion of them were of German and Austrian descent.³¹ In towns located not in the proximity of massive German rural population – eg. in Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina or the mining towns – either a surplus population from remote German areas appeared in towns, or the labour force of surrounding peoples was needed; thus the appearance of Slovak people in these towns was gradually self-evident. In the county of Šariš, where a more populous Hungarian community lived at the time, a similar migration process took place in the direction of Prešov, ensuring a strong Hungarian presence there for a long time.³²

Hence, towns becoming multilingual, created patterns of coexistence and conflicts simultaneously. As a consequence, in the language use of mining towns or in the region Spiš, both the appearance of German loanwords in the Slovak language and the appearance of Slovakisms in the German language could be detected.³³ In the spelling of names, the suffixes -ova, -owa appear in German texts, and the suffix -in in Slovak ones.³⁴ Bilingualism can be detected also in songs.³⁵ Nor is the frequently-mentioned segregation of vernacular groups by districts or streets is to be understood strictly. According to the tax register of the town of Prešov for year 1428, most Hungarians actually lived in the Quartale Hungarorum, but there is no district without Hungarian population.³⁶ We also know that Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos – renowned Hungarian writer of historical verses – bought a house in the Slovak street when he moved to the town of Košice, where his neighbour was actually also Hungarian.³⁷ Thus, the phenomenon called groupism by Roger Brubaker also seems to be true for these premodern ages: the practice of creating

²⁹ KUBINYI, András. Budai és pesti polgárok családi összeköttetései a Jagelló-korban. In *Levéltári Közlemények*, 1966, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 227-291; GRANASZTÓL, György. *Kassa társadalma a 16. század derekán. A városi élet keretei a feudális kori Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2012.

³⁰ FEDERMAYER, Rody starého Prešporoka, pp. 43-44.

³¹ FEDERMAYER, Rody starého Prešporoka, pp. 42-43; MAREK, Miloš. Vplyv prisťahovalectva na etnické pomery stredovekých miest na Slovensku. In *Mesto a dejiny*, 2013, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 6-24 (p. 9).

³² As the entire tax register of Prešov from 1428 confirms, about one-sixth of the town population was Hungarian. IVÁNYI, A középkori Eperjes magyarsága, p. 6.

³³ DORULA, Ján. *O slovensko-nemeckom spolunažívaní v 16 - 18. storočí*. Bratislava, 2014.

³⁴ DORULA, Ján. *O slovensko-nemeckých jazykových vzťahov v 17. storočí*. In DORULA, Ján (ed.). *Z histórie slovensko-nemeckých vzťahov*. Bratislava, 2008, pp. 7-95.

³⁵ URBANCOVÁ, Hana. *K typológii slovensko-nemeckých vzťahov v tradičnom piesňovom repertoári*. In DORULA, Ján (ed.). *Z histórie slovensko-nemeckých vzťahov*. Bratislava, 2008, pp. 152-183.

³⁶ IVÁNYI, A középkori Eperjes magyarsága, p. 5.

³⁷ SZIKLAY, László. *A szlovák históriás énekek problémájához*. In *Filológiai Közlöny*, 1956, vol. 2, no. 1-2, pp. 113-124; KEMÉNY, Lajos. *Ifj. Tinódi Sebestyén családja*. In *Századok*, 1901, vol. 35, no. 7, pp. 655-657.

ethnic groups existed in such a way that the ethnic content behind it was far from clear: it was neither homogeneous nor constant, and they could not be clearly demarcated from each other.³⁸

Interest-related and emotional (sociocultural) motives of vernacular conflicts

A strong interest-based motive for language-based struggles is quite clearly illustrated in sources: that was a way through which language groups not previously represented in town governments or church life wanted to get representation. Their system of arguments was accordingly clear and 'down-to-earth', they simply referred to their urban presence or economic role. The privilege of the Slavs of Žilina in 1381 also includes these two arguments – i.e. the number of Slavs and their economic usefulness –, offered as reasons for why they should be elevated to town government, and there is no strong mention of their ancestry being older than that of the Germans or of some kind of collective cultural right.³⁹ Guild regulations requiring a monolingual membership also imply a utilitarian motive of protecting market positions; and there are quite a few examples of these.⁴⁰ One of the most serious urban conflicts in the late medieval Upper Hungary was the miners' uprising in Banská Bystrica in 1525 – 1526, which was also mainly due to "class conflicts" caused by early mining capitalism (wage struggles, inflationary tensions), and not, say, the confrontation of Slovak miners to German patricians, as most of the miners were German.⁴¹ As far as scarce medieval and early modern sources allow us to reconstruct the dynamics of multi-lingual urban micro-cosmoses, confrontations had often evolved here for very tangible objective reasons, and then they took the form of formally linguistic conflicts. These conflicts of interest between social classes could not turn into pure linguistic conflicts often,

³⁸ BRUBAKER, Roger. Ethnicity without groups. In *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie/Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*, 2002, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 163-189.

³⁹ TIBENSKÝ, Chvály a obrany slovenského národa, pp. 16-17. Varsik assumes that representation in the Žilina town government became important for local Slavs because of the opening of the Vratislav-Košice trade route, moreover, the town was granted the right to hold annual markets (1357) and then to levy customs for goods transported on the Vratislav-Košice route (1364). VARSÍK, K sociálnym a národnostným bojom v mestách na Slovensku v stredoveku, pp. 57-59.

⁴⁰ A recent Slovak overview of the topic: ŠMERINGAIOVÁ, Paulína. Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy v 15. – 18. storočí. In *Slavica Slovaca*, 2018, vol. 53, no. 3-4, pp. 42-47. Guild statutes tended to be unambiguously "exclusionary" when they explicitly prohibit the appearance of another nationality in the guilds. In 1481, it was declared in the statute of the guild of butchers in Banská Bystrica that "it is prohibited to recruit in any Slovak or Hungarian"; the guild of Slovak fabric manufacturers in Trenčín did the same with Hungarians. TIBENSKÝ, Chvály a obrany slovenského národa, p. 23. The statute of shoemakers in Kremnica in 1508 expressly regulates that only German-born members may be recruited. PECNÍKOVÁ, Iveta. Kremnické cechy a ich sociálna starostlivosť v 15. a 16. storočí. In *Kremnický letopis*, 2007, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 5-7. (Pecníková assumes that this exclusion may have softened in practice over a long period of cohabitation.) There is an example of the opposite: according to the guild regulations of gunpowder manufacturers in Košice, all "foreign young masters who have learned their craft fairly, be they German, Hungarian or Slovak (*Tót*) nations, can join the guild". KEMÉNY, Lajos. A kassai puskaporgyártók czéhszabályzata a XVIII-ik századból. In *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 1911, vol. 12, pp. 118-121.

⁴¹ RATKOŠ, Peter. *Povstanie baníkov na Slovensku roku 1525 – 1526*. Bratislava, 1963.

because, for example, the Germans were also present in the lowest strata who tried to oppose the patriciate.⁴² The fact that patrician-plebeian conflicts were significantly strong in Prešporok having a mostly German population,⁴³ is an indirect evidence that even in linguistically mixed towns, we can rightly look for interest-based motives in the background of similar movements.

However, this does not necessarily mean a complete lack of socio-cultural motives in the process shaping societal space – even if their importance cannot even compare with that of interest-based motives –, since there were rather serious trends in language-based segregation in urban public life, and we have seen examples of this in church life, town governments, or a segregation by place of residence. Only a few existing sources remained to serve as material for exploring such relationships of sufficient depth; and also researchers' attention was connected rather inconsistently to this topic.⁴⁴ Yet, academic literature reveals a kind of stigmatizing speech that came to the surface during debates in towns, which was both a sign of, and fuel for, a sense of cultural distance between language groups. In Banská Štiavnica, for example, in 1621, in some tense atmosphere due to some tax increase, the German Royal Mining Officer Ruprecht Schwender called a dissatisfied miner a Slavic beast („du bist ein windischer Schelm“). „Then, all miners raged and they took Schwender with great noise to the Mining Judge, claiming that he had said that the “Wend (Slovak) workers were all Schelms”. There, the Officer had to explain his actions; and, as a recompense, the court specifically stated that Slovak miners were honest.⁴⁵ Spiral interactions between interest-based motives – measurable in materiality – and socio-cultural (emotional) motives – manifested in a sense of cultural distance – can also be revealed in one of the bloodiest vernacular conflicts of the era, which took place in the town of Krupina (Hungarian: *Korpona*, German: *Karpfen*). These tensions were triggered by the renewal of town privileges in 1517 – delivered originally by King Béla IV –, when a half-sentence was added to the text: only a German person can be accepted as authentic in testimony.⁴⁶ The German government's attempt to marginalize the Hungarian and Slovak population eventually led to more serious and open internal discord: in 1598, the (presumably predominantly Hungarian and Slovak) citizenry wanted to set up a twenty-four-member auxiliary body next to

⁴² For Bratislava, see FEDERMAYER, Rody starého Prešporoka. The first data on German miners in the mining towns, PÉCH, Antal. *Alsó Magyarország bányamívelésének története*. Volume 1. Budapest, 1884, p. 359. Furthermore: RATKOŠ, *Povstanie baníkov na Slovensku roku 1525 – 1526*.

⁴³ In Prešporok (Bratislava), there was also a clash between the urban poor and patricians, sparked by the town's own judge, Ulrich Rauchenwarter, against citizens dissatisfied with him. SZEGHYOVÁ, Blanka. *Coexistence of Diversities: Social, Ethnic and Religious Frontiers and Identities in Early Modern Hungarian Towns*. In KLUSÁKOVÁ, Luďa – TEULIÈRES, Laure (eds.). *Frontiers and Identities. III. Cities in Regions and Nations*. Pisa, 2008, pp. 121-135.

⁴⁴ For an overview of Hungarian and Slovak historiography on urban research, especially regarding mining towns, see: LACKO, Miroslav. *Príspevok k archontológii Vrchného inšpektorského úradu v Smolníku do roku 1788*. In LACKO, Miroslav (ed.). *Montánna história: Ročenka o dejinách baníctva a hutníctva*. Limbach, 2011, pp. 94-195.

⁴⁵ PÉCH, Antal. *Alsó Magyarország bányamívelésének története*. Volume 2. Budapest, 1887, p. 171.

⁴⁶ VLACHOVIČ, *Národnostné boje v mestách na Slovensku v 16. a 17. storočí*.

the magistrate, but the town government rejected this request.⁴⁷ From then on, data is found for ongoing conflicts in Krupina, where the Hungarian and Slovak populations, forming a rather close alliance, faced the German town government. Along the heated tensions, a regular Slovak-Hungarian uprising was eventually sparked against the German town government, in which both Slovak and Hungarian leaders died.

While the vernacular nature of conflicts in Krupina can be easily recognised, the process remains unknown through which groupings and self- and external classifications took place according to vernaculars within the urban population there. Thus, only one of the dimensions of conflicts can be revealed, namely that they had a vernacular symbolism and that the use of this symbolism by the parties further strengthened conflicts or extended them to others. A good example of this is the blow-up between the German Gregor Launer and the Hungarian János Kapcsos, known from 1605, when the latter shouted at the former: „*You Germans have gambled away your king, you have been tainted by the dogs too!*”⁴⁸ The (then still German) council of the town took the insult bloodily seriously, sentencing the Hungarian insulter to death. A particularly interesting example on the spontaneous involvement into conflicts along lingual symbols is that the verdict was finally mitigated to cash penalty as a result of intervention of local Hungarian noble families. Then, a letter is available from 1610, written as a joint complaint by Hungarians and Slovaks fighting for their rights in Krupina, having been insulted by Germans saying that Slovaks and Hungarians did not have a king and would never have one; and saying that a German who had been hanging on the rope for three days is worth more than a hundred Slovaks.⁴⁹ The strife was finally ironed out by Palatine Juraj Thurzo through various (parity-type) solutions in 1611: he ordered the direct election of the town's Chief Judge by citizens instead of the senate, while, in addition to the six German members, three Hungarians and three Slovaks were given the right to join the senate. In addition, he ordered a “outer council” to be established, with eight Hungarian, eight German and eight Slovak members on it. Finally, in addition to the Germans, the Slovaks could also have a place in the church.⁵⁰

Compared to these above-mentioned open insults around the issue of dominating the urban leadership and public sphere, the exclusionary guild regulations can be regarded as less conspicuous, quieter, but more severe in their conflict-generating nature and in their effect on broadening the feeling of cultural

⁴⁷ CSERY, József. Korpona városának ismertetése. (Harmadik közlés.) In Magyar Tudományos Értekező, 1862, vol. 2, no. 5-6, pp. 399-436 (p. 436).

⁴⁸ MATUNÁK, Mihály. Adatok Korpona történetéhez. Korpona, 1902, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁹ MATUNÁK, Adatok Korpona történetéhez. This shows that numerous interest-based conflicts sparked the resistance of those left out of the town government: the council of Germans was accused of, among others, stealing urban plots, or selling urban goods among themselves cheaply. Yet, interest-based motives seem to be intertwined with sociocultural motives, reinforcing each other.

⁵⁰ MATUNÁK, Adatok Korpona történetéhez, pp. 11-14. In the spirit of all this, a Hungarian judge was elected in 1611, and a Slovak judge in 1612. CSERY, József. Korpona városának ismertetése. (Negyedik közlés.) In Győri történelmi és régészeti füzetek, 1863, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 322-337.

distance. Meanwhile market protection considerations had led to the exclusion of local non-native speakers, it allowed the join of people from distance, but of their own nationality. If, for example, the butchers of Banská Bystrica wanted to keep the Slovaks of the surrounding villages away from their own markets, why did they accept a German butcher coming from a distance? This attitude is, in some ways, far from the truly purely interest-based behaviour, which is embodied in the form of rational cooperation within professions (in the words of Émile Durkheim: „organic solidarity”) or rational competition. Rather, we are faced with another Durkheim category of solidarity, mechanical solidarity, in which the question of who is a member of a group is decided by culturally constructed and subjective motives. Such as origin, language skills, behavior, dress.⁵¹ Guild restrictions are just partly about interests; they seem to say something about the entanglement of interests and deep emotions, too, seeking a social stability and security through building an “own” community. What was considered “own”, was already the matter of decision of guild founders, leading us from the domain of objectivity towards the field of subjectivity.

The same kind of entanglement of interests and socio-cultural emotions can be revealed in reports of Hans Steinberger, an inspector sent from the Prague Royal Court to Banská Bystrica, who, summarizing his experiences in 1602 – 1604, stated with surprise that the majority of workers, technicians and labour inspectors involved in copper production were Slovak. And although he does not object to their work in the end, still he recommends *their replacement by Germans and Tyroleans*.⁵² Baron Prandreisz, a Royal Commissioner conducting an investigation in 1638, also made a rather unwelcome statement about an elderly Slovak smelter: „*there is only one old man, who survived himself, and is a malevolent Slovak smelter, who knows how to do his work if he wants to; the others are worth nothing*”. He would also recommend inviting Tyroleans to replace the local workforce.⁵³ Finally, in 1676, when the miner officers of Banská Štiavnica dismissed several miners and this was objected to by the Mining Chamber, they defended themselves by saying that those dismissed were elderly, unskilled workers who were otherwise Slovak and unwilling to convert to the Catholic faith. They were partially replaced by Tyrolean Germans, which created tensions between the Tyroleans and local citizens. As an attempt at attenuating these, a Decree (such as a ban on insulting verbally the Tyroleans) was issued in 1725.⁵⁴

The signs of this “tribal” behaviour – not being in accordance with a short-run material interest – are even more striking in cases where patricians do not want to let someone into their ranks, although wealth, connections, and influence would easily predestine a person for that. One example for that when selling houses to non-Germans was prohibited by local German leadership. It resulted

⁵¹ DURKHEIM, Émile. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Illinois, 1960, pp. 70-132.

⁵² VOZÁR, Jozef. *Národnostné zápasy v stredoslovenských mestách a slovenské národné povedomie od 16. do polovice 18. storočia*. In *Historický časopis*, 1980, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 554-577.

⁵³ The report of Baron Prandreisz is quoted by PÉCH, Alsó Magyarország bányamívelésének története, p. 381. It is worth emphasizing that there are no professional objections to the workers classified as “Slovaks” in his whole report.

⁵⁴ VOZÁR, *Národnostné zápasy v stredoslovenských mestách*, p. 566.

in such disputes like between a widow – Balthasar Faber’s wife – and the town of Kremnica: after looking for German buyers for nine years in vain, the widow started to sell her house to Hungarian or Slovak buyers. (Anyway, the house was not located in a central location, but in the suburbs).⁵⁵ After the prohibiting resolutions of the local patriciate, King Louis II in 1518 finally decided that the wife’s attempt was in accordance with law. Similarly, in Banská Bystrica, the renewed privilege of the town from 1524 stated that no one but persons of German blood (“*de parentibus Alemanorum*”) had the right to live in the main square.⁵⁶ Spectacularly interesting details are preserved from the similar case of Stanko Vilhelmovič, a wealthy Slovak merchant from Kremnica.⁵⁷ After acquiring a huge fortune, he wanted to buy a house in the main square of Kremnica – but local Germans struggled to prevent this, referring to his non-German origin. Through his connections, Stanko Vilhelmovič received support directly from King Ladislaus V, who granted his right to buy a house under a Decree in 1453. However, German patricians continued to act together and tried to impose a special tax on Stanko’s workshops and estates. King Ladislaus V intervened again, and under another Decree, in 1456, he defended again the person he had patronized. These Decrees emphasize Stanko’s patriotism, his services to the King and former rulers. Then, after King Ladislaus V had died, Stanko Vilhelmovič hurried to quickly have his privileges reinforced by the new king, Matthias, from whom he received it in 1459. What motivations had driven German patricians to fight so persistently with an extremely wealthy merchant with royal connections? Exploring the motivations accurately in retrospect would be difficult; what is for certain is that pure material interests and sheer emotions could have been behind the behaviour of Germans in Kremnica, eventually hard to demarcate these motives to each other, as entangling and merging in the protection of some sort of socially constructed perception of stability, order and prestige. Nevertheless, rapid or intense changes themselves, merely through their dynamics, proved to be able to increase cultural distrust and a sense of cultural distance. Due to a rapidly growing presence of previously insignificant language groups, the German-speaking population of Bardejov, for example, turned to King Ferdinand I, requesting him to ban any further settling down of Slovaks and Poles, which the King granted in 1530.⁵⁸

Finally, with the Slavic merchant marrying a German widow, the pressure to exclude him was eased. The fact that marriage plays this kind of community-building role is discussed by Hungarian historian András Kubinyi, presenting the case of Buda.⁵⁹ According to Kubinyi, German-Hungarian conflicts within the city government of Buda can actually be registered only from the dominance

⁵⁵ VARSÍK, K sociálnym a národnostným bojom v mestách na Slovensku v stredoveku, p. 69.

⁵⁶ RATKOŠ, Povstanie baníkov na Slovensku roku 1525 – 1526, p. 293.

⁵⁷ The story of Stanko Vilhelmovič was processed by Pavol Križko (Pál Krizskó) already in 1885. KRIŽKO, Pavel. Stanislav Vilhelmovič, veľkokupec v XV. storočí. In KRIŽKO, Pavel. Z dejín banských miest na Slovensku. Bratislava, 1964, pp. 324-333; KRIZSKÓ, Pál. Egy körmöczbánai nagykereskedő a XV. században. In Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle, 1898, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 193-203.

⁵⁸ MAREK, Vplyv prisťahovalectva na etnické pomery stredovekých miest na Slovensku.

⁵⁹ KUBINYI, Budai és pesti polgárok családi összeköttetései a Jagelló-korban.

of the “new Germans” from Nuremberg, who ousted the former Germans being aware of maintaining connubial ties with Hungarian nobility. But even from this age, there is an example of passing the phantom borderline between vernacular groups through marriage: a man of Hungarian origin, László Farkas, after married someone from the Nuremberg-rooted patriciate, was accepted and acknowledged as “German”. Accepted to such extent, that the Germans in Buda made him the “German judge” of the city in the 1430s.

Similar trends emerged in Prešporok, where those Hungarians could in the first half of the 17th century get into the Senate who married Germans.⁶⁰ Interestingly, the above is complemented by the fact that, while the German leading class of mining towns, the *Waldbürgers*, allowed local people to join their ranks only through marriages, a South German newcomer, Ulrich Reutter, was able to join the *Waldbürgers* in Banská Štiavnica merely by purchasing real properties. Thus, instead of marrying, the purchase of real properties was sufficient for him to progress socially, since he was already from a “high place,” Nuremberg. Barbara Balážová, processing the life of Ulrich Reutter, points out that this kind of entry into the elite would not have been possible in, say, Nuremberg, where the existence of a family connection to patricians would have been also vital; however, this “forgotten” peripheral microcosmos of mining towns on the border of the Ottoman world gladly strengthened their connection with Nuremberg, a city superseding them in affluence, size, and prestige. Thus, by 1597, at the age of only thirty-three, Ulrich Reutter became the judge of Banská Štiavnica – he could not have dreamed of such a career in Nuremberg.⁶¹ This also points to motives behind the dynamics of relations between distant multilingual towns: citizens took into account the newcomer’s origin not only for socio-cultural reasons, but also for more objective interests, such as the strengthening of the cultural capital (i.e. the system of connections) of the town through the newcomer.

Lack of intellectual motives

Above-portrayed patterns of conflicts reveal that it would be an exaggeration to talk about mere conflicts of interest within medieval and early modern urban societies: socio-cultural – or, in other words, emotional – factors could also strengthened these conflicts, at least due to the cultural symbolisms of conflicts and their rhetoric representation in public discourse, being capable to activate somewhat passive feelings of cultural distance and to evolve vernacular segregation. Unless these two motives are differentiated from each other, internal contradictions may easily develop in academic literature, by simultaneously revealing some ethnic or linguistic motive in premodern conflicts, and stating that these conflicts were not ethnic in nature.

Finally, on the basis of case studies unfolding from sources, an attempt is made in this paper at defining the emotional (sociocultural) motive of conflicts – a motive that is commonly detected both in premodern vernacular conflicts and

⁶⁰ FEDERMAYER, Rody starého Prešporoka, p. 43.

⁶¹ BALÁŽOVÁ, Barbara. Medzi Prahou a Norimbergom, Viedňou a Banskou Štiavnicou: Ulrich Reutter a jeho svet okolo 1600. Bratislava, 2013, p. 8.

modern nationalist conflicts.⁶² As a final step of this conceptualizing research process, we also need to define, what is the difference between premodern and modern lingual conflicts, if both can be attributed with emotional and interest motives. According to the source, the difference can be grasped *in the lack of intellectual (cognitive) motives* in premodern vernacular conflicts, or at least a spectacular weakness and immaturity of it. When mentioning the lack of intellectual motives, we mean that no broader explanatory framing narrative, pointing beyond a given small community's geographical and time horizon, is observed to "stiffen", expand and escalate conflict situations in space and time. There is no stable, scientifically tuned (e.g. historical) explanation for aspirations behind conflicts – an aspect so characteristic of nationalisms. The faint emergence of such ideologizing explanations is nonetheless perceptible, for instance, when Germans and Slovaks as well as Hungarians accused each other of "having no king" during vernacular conflicts in Krupina – but these fragmented ideological arguments did not eventually turned into something systematic and mature, it was tied to the situation instead. Nevertheless, embedding a local conflict into broader ideological argumentation seemed to be more possible, when linked to national events. In the city of Buda, several vernacular conflicts coincided with dynastic conflicts or military campaigns that were currently dividing the country (1402, 1439 and 1526). In such circumstances, opposite language groups within a town more easily identified themselves or the "other" with a nationally opposing party, or with the "Hungarian" king or the "German" king, going to extremes in terms of distrust of each other. This temporary national framings around local tensions show something from the future power of nationalisms, however, just momentary and incidentally. For instance, after 1526, the Szapolyai party – opposing the

⁶² „it will also be plausible that the democratic movement in 1402 was also linked to the issue of nationality”. SALAMON, Ferencz. Budapest története. Volume 2. Budapest, 1885, p. 354, 359. Besides, Salamon discusses a phenomenon that we are trying to interpret here, in a somewhat simplistic way, as an interaction of interests and emotions (pp. 350-351). He highlights that, after defeating King Charles the Little, who was considered Italian, the supporters of King Sigismund took revenge of the entire Italian population of Buda. Similarly, the historian Jenő Szűcs analyses urban conflicts as arising along class conflicts, but meanwhile he also takes into account vernacular-ethnic cleavages, and his later oeuvre is strongly interested and aware of a kind of "capability to survive" among medieval vernacular-ethnic communities. His contemporary colleague, György Székely, addresses him with criticism for this "ethnically sensible" academic approach; but then, interestingly enough, Székely himself states that "at the beginning of the 15th century, the struggle within cities became more and more complicated by ethnic issues" (SZÉKELY, György. *A huszitizmus és a magyar nép*. [Hussitism and the Hungarian People.] In *Századok*, 1956, vol. 90, no. 3, p. 352. Highlighted in the original.) Moreover, he refers to the possibility of a conflict evolution model (which this study attempts to call as a conflict spiral). According to this, if economic tensions coincide somewhat with ethnic cleavages, they may articulate in the form of the latter, even in the mind of those involved. (SZÉKELY, *A huszitizmus és a magyar nép*, p. 353.) György Granasztói's interpretation on urban conflicts in Košice is similarly contradictory, when he states that they were not ethnically motivated, while his book captures a flood of complaints made by self-nominated representatives of ethnic groups towards the others. GRANASZTÓI, *Kassa társadalma a 16. század derekán*. Finally, Blanka Szeghyová, while stating that „competition was in most cases completely unrelated to ethnicity”, pointing out the role of ethnicity and ethnic rivalry in inter-group frontier formation. SZEGHYOVÁ, *Coexistence of Diversities*.

Habsburgs – defined itself as Hungarian in a feudal privilege-related, territorial and linguistic aspect, and started to define German-speakers as groups favouring the Habsburgs; the role of language in forming group identity was thus unexpectedly – though only temporarily – unambiguously decisive.⁶³

This lack and weakness of intellectual motives can be traced back to roughly three reasons: firstly, because there was not much technical possibility to develop more structured collective ideologies before the time of book printing and writing; secondly, because there was no demand among pre-Enlightenment societies to construct moral explanations for arguing their claims over others, or for their primacy; and finally, the contemporary intelligentsia – which would have had perhaps the most means for framing conflicts ideologically – was not more seriously involved in these conflicts. To conclude the study, we will review these three reasons answering the question why urban conflicts, though full of interest and emotions, were lacking the intellectual aspect.

About the technical aspect of the evolution of the intellectual motive – like book printing or writing –, Benedict Anderson depicts in detail how mass literacy and “print capitalism” have brought both the opportunity and the need to organize communities along a single linguistic code system, that were already much larger than local communities, i.e. already imagined ones.⁶⁴ On the contrary, above-portrayed premodern urban conflicts are among personally visible groups, triggered by personally encountered experience about “the others”, forming circles of personally-known friends or enemies. These urban groups were not merely “imagined communities,” so there was probably little demand for narratives to construct them, or for setting one’s own community as a transcendent value, or for creating more abstract and symbolic enemies.

Finally, as mentioned above, the absence of contemporary intelligentsia in these debates is also quite striking, especially the absence of influential ecclesiastical intellectuals.⁶⁵ This intelligentsia represented the Latin culture, and they organized themselves into a territorially based “*natio academia*” as students studying at universities,⁶⁶ and then they became part of supranational church structures. Within the ecclesiastical structure of Upper Hungary, they did not particularly nurture any (for example, Slavic) sense of linguistic and ethnic sense of belonging together, but the territory-based Hungarian premodern patriotism was rather the decisive. It can be supported by murals of churches in historical Upper Hungary, where the perspectives of the clergy leading local communities was also taken into account, and where such surfaces were quite important as spaces of visibility influencing public thinking. On these wall surfaces, there is no trace of a cult of Slavic saints from the Middle Ages; the spectacular popularity

⁶³ CSEPREGI, Zoltán. *A reformáció nyelve. Tanulmányok a magyarországi reformáció első negyedszázadának vizsgálata alapján.* Budapest, 2013.

⁶⁴ ANDERSON, Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.

⁶⁵ Among the attempts to define the social strata of „intelligentsia”, see: KUBINYI, András. *Polgári értelmiség és hivatalnokrétege Budán és Pesten a Hunyadi- és Jagelló-korban.* In *Levélári Közlemények*, 1968, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 205-231.

⁶⁶ HARASZTI SZABÓ, Péter – KELÉNYI, Borbála – SZÖGI, László. *Magyarországi diákok a prágai és a krakkói egyetemeken 1348 – 1525. I. Kötet.* Budapest, 2016.

of St. Ladislaus can be highlighted, and this cult is supposed to have strong folk roots.⁶⁷ Thus, no Slavic commitment may be detected among the clergy in Upper Hungary. And even if we know of cases where a well-educated intellectual was one of the advocates in a conflict, religious motivations emerged behind it rather than any pre-nationalistic motive.⁶⁸

Perhaps it can also be said that the lack of intellectual motives did not only hinder the evolution of stable language-based boundary-making – extended in space and time – but also the symbolism of inter-group coexistence and intermixture remained immature. In the modern age, it is symbolized and created by *assimilation*, as a widely-comprehended phenomenon. Even if there was assimilation in the premodern age, this does not seem to have become part of the discourse on vernacular conflicts. In these conflicts, if the “other” language group was perceived as hostile one, each of their individual representatives were perceived as potential enemies. And when the need for linguistic and ethnic homogenization arose, it was formulated not in an intellectually moralizing form of assimilation – i.e. gaining souls in favour of ourselves – but in the most brutal form, visioning to abolish the other linguistic group. This is far from the idea of nationalist homogenization that builds on assimilation, on this unlethal form of mass destruction. Especially the historical elements of nationalist narratives have tried (are trying) to legitimize assimilation, usually by stating that everyone in a given territory belonged to us before, and homogenization only restores this state, so to speak.

There is not much trace of all this in the premodern age: when the need for linguistic homogenization arose, it meant a plan to assassinate or, at best, expel the other. This is how the Hungarian inhabitants did in Buda and Košice after 1526: after their relations with their German fellow citizens had deteriorated significantly, Germans were expelled from both cities.⁶⁹ At other times, the Hungarians also feared the Germans for the same reason.⁷⁰ A similar spirit seemed to prevail in the Diet in 1545: in their desperation that the Habsburg king (simply called German king at the time) did not launch an anti-Turkish military campaign, the Hungarians began to talk about switching to the Turks’ side and exterminating the “Germans and Czechs” in the city.⁷¹

When modern nationalisms of the 19th century began to develop and prevail, they no longer built on the traditions of these urban conflicts: the Slovak national movement defined itself as “mountainous” and peasant movement, while the Hungarian movement drew on a military-noble tradition. Thus, the already weak

⁶⁷ JÉKELY, Zsombor. A korai Szent László-ciklusok narratív rendszere és előképei. In KERNY, Terézia – MIKÓ, Árpád – SMOHAY, András (eds.). Szent László kora és kultusza. Tanulmánykötet Szent László tiszteletére. Székesfehérvár, 2019, pp. 78-101.

⁶⁸ SZÉKELY, György. A huszitizmus visszhangja Magyarországon népeiben. In A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Társadalmi-Történelmi Tudományok Osztályának Közleményei, 1954, vol. 5, no. 1-4, pp. 135-163.

⁶⁹ KUBINYI, Budai és pesti polgárok családi összeköttetései a Jagelló-korban.

⁷⁰ TESZELSZKY, Kees – TÓTH, Gergely. Magyar-német harc, avagy beszélgetés a császáriak és a magyarok között most fellángolt háborúról. Budapest, 2014.

⁷¹ FRAKNÓI, Vilmos. A magyar országgyűlések története I. Ferdinánd király alatt. 1526 – 1563. Volume 2. Budapest, 1875, p. 157.

bourgeois traditions have faded on both the Hungarian and Slovak sides, implying that they renounced from these microcosms of bourgeois ethos, both from patterns of coexistence and conflicts. It is quite telling/ meaningful that the Slovak national tradition still considers the life of the poor young lad, Juraj Jánošík, who became a legendary figure in the 19th century, as its own historically verifiable prefiguration, while we don't really know much about his commitment to the Slovak language or culture. Meanwhile, Stanko Vilhelmovič, a renowned merchant, who was openly and successfully assuming his own Slavic origins and was trading with kings, is a completely forgotten historical figure.

This kind of historical forgetting can in itself justify the recalling of vernacular conflicts of the towns of Upper Hungary (while we have also made detours to Buda, for example, so that a pan-Carpathian context can be perceived). However, a professional discussion of the topic can also be interesting because it can help to point out differences between premodern and modern linguistic conflicts, which makes the structure of modern conflicts and the importance of cognitive (intellectual) motives also easier to comprehend.

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