

III A characterization of the Opolskie province. Cultural diversity as a distinctive feature

This chapter is devoted to a characterization of the Opolskie province as a separate region, with a particular focus on the region's history of multiculturalism, its changes after 1944, and the present state of its ethnic diversity. The final part of the chapter will be devoted to relations between the multiculturalism of the region and the quality of governance as perceived by other researchers.

The Opolskie province is Poland's most diversified region in terms of ethnicity (Barwiński 2006). At the same time, with respect to its ethnic constitution, Poland is one of the most homogeneous countries in Europe (cf. Alesina et al. 2003; Fearon 2003), which puts these deliberations on the dynamics of changes in ethnic diversity in a rather specific light. In our research, an example of a multicultural region is a province where 88 % of inhabitants declare their identification with the majority group. From this perspective, the phenomenon of the imagined "multiculturalism" of Silesia, including the Opolskie province, is the consequence of the contrast between the discourse on the ethnic "purity" of Poland initiated in the 1950s and the fact of minority groups' identification with other nationalities or ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the multiculturalism of the Opole Region is an interesting research topic in the context of the ongoing debate on national and regional minorities in Poland (Barwiński 2014; 2016; 2017; Łodziński 2016; Rykała 2014; Rykała and Sobczyński 2016), the influence of ethnic diversity on social and political life (Putnam 2007; Schaeffer 2013), as well as the historical tradition of multiculturalism of this part of Europe.

1 The Opolskie province as a region

The administrative reform conducted in Poland in 1999 resulted in the establishment of 16 provinces which replaced the previous arrangement of 49 provinces (introduced in 1975). The Opolskie province existed as an administrative region both before and after the reform. What changed, however, was the area of the province. In comparison to its territory before 1999, the Opolskie province was enlarged by the communes of Dobrodzień, Olesno, Gorzów Śląski, Praszka, Radłów, and Rudniki, which had belonged to the Częstochowskie province before the reform. Two of these communes – Praszka and Rudniki – do not belong to the historical territory of Silesia. This and the fact that a part of the territory of

the Opolskie province belongs to the historical territory of Lower Silesia provoked a debate – in both the academic and local/regional politics – whether the Opolskie province should remain on the administrative map of Poland or should be liquidated and divided between the Śląskie province and Dolnośląskie province (Berlińska 1998; Habuda i Habuda 2014; Honka 2014; Lis 1998; Malarski 1998; Simonides 1998; Sokołowski 2014; Zaborowski 2009). Taking into consideration arguments concerning the province's economic and social functionality, in the contemporary debate, the Opolskie province is given as an example of a region that has become a “victim” of the administrative reform as a region whose territory is too small, which is poorly populated and insufficiently urbanized. Simultaneously, from the perspective of regional identity, it is one of a few regions whose inhabitants show strong regional identification, which manifested itself, among other things, in effective lobbying for the maintenance of the province on the administrative map of Poland after the territorial division reform (Geisler 2009).

Referring to arguments of a historical character, it should be noted that in the past Opole was an important center of state and ecclesiastical administration systems, and the region's territory referred to nowadays as Opole Silesia started to take shape in the 19th century after the establishment of the Opole District as an administrative unit of the Prussian state. After World War II Opole Silesia was administratively separated from Upper Silesia (simultaneously with the establishment of the Opolskie province in 1950). The creation of the Opolskie province was also the consequence of the division of the region's inhabitants into two distinctive groups: one in the industrialized part of Upper Silesia, and the other in the agricultural areas of Opole Silesia (Berlińska 1999; Geisler 2009). Moreover, unlike the present Dolnośląskie and Śląskie provinces, the Opolskie province was characterized by a high degree of cultural diversity. After the war it was inhabited by both the autochthonous Silesian population (as an indigenous ethnographic group within the “political” Polish nation), the German or Germanized Silesian population (which in its majority emigrated to Germany in the years 1956–58 and in the 1980s; cf. Korbel 1990; Kamusella 1999), people forcefully displaced from the areas of the Second Republic of Poland, and settlers from different parts of Poland. The migration processes created a new cultural and social situation that was quite different from that in the other parts of the so-called recovered territories of post-war Poland. The arguments presented above proved that the Opolskie province can be defined as a region not only in the sense of administrative division, but also as a culturally distinctive area.

At present the Opolskie province covers the area of 9412 km² and is populated by 990,000 people²⁵. It is located in the south-western part of Poland. Its southern boundary runs along the state border between Poland and the Czech Republic. It is one of the most permanent administrative borders in Europe²⁶. The Opolskie province borders on the Dolnośląskie province to the west, the Śląskie province to the east, as well as the Łódzkie province and the Wielkopolskie province to the north. It is the smallest province in Poland with respect to its area and population. The city of Opole is the seat of the provincial authorities. Besides Opole inhabited by 128,000 people, the most populous towns are Kędzierzyn-Koźle and Nysa with 62,000 and 44,000 inhabitants respectively. The province is divided into 11 districts and one municipal district (Opole) as well as 71 communes (3 urban communes, 33 urban-rural communes, and 35 rural communes).

Analyzing the region with respect to minority group, we can divide the province into two parts: the eastern part with a considerable percentage of Germans and Silesians, and the western part, practically without any larger groups representing ethnic minorities. This phenomenon is illustrated in Map. 2.

As it has already been mentioned, in comparison to the other provinces in Poland, the Opolskie province is the smallest and the least populous (see Tab. 6). However, in terms of some life quality indexes, it stands out among the other Polish provinces (see Tab. 7). Despite the relatively low average level of material wealth, the region's inhabitants enjoy some of the highest life conditions and social well-being indexes in Poland²⁷.

As regards the data concerning selected governance quality indexes, what draws attention is first of all the lowest percentage of women – councillors of the provincial assembly. It is only 10 %, while the average for Poland is 25 %. There are more women in commune councils (30 % as compared to the national average of 27.5 %). The level of education of commune councillors (40.4 % of councillors with higher education) also places the region above the national average of 36 %.

25 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/opole/pl/defaultstronaopisowa/1163/1/1/18w_05.pdf (Accessed 20 March 2019).

26 Its course was established in 1763 under the Treaty of Hubertsburg ending the Third Silesian War (and the Seven Years' War). Although the course of the border did not change with time, the states that it separated did. In the past the territory of the present Opolskie Province was held by Prussia, the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and eventually Poland.

27 Social well-being is "the absence of a sense of loneliness; a sense of being loved and respected; having friends" (Czapiński and Panek 2015: 436).

Tab. 6: The Opolskie province against a background of the other Polish provinces in terms of the basic geographic and demographic data

Province	Area (km ²)	Population ('000)	Urbanization index (%)	Internal and external migration balance per 1000 people
Mazowieckie	35 558	5365.9	64.3	2.4
Wielkopolskie	29826	3481.6	54.7	0.3
Lubelskie	25122	2133.3	46.4	-1.9
Warmińsko-mazurskie	24173	1436.4	59	-2.1
Zachodniopomorskie	22892	1708.2	68.5	-0.6
Podlaskie	20187	1186.6	60.6	-1.1
Dolnośląskie	19947	2903.7	69	1
Pomorskie	18310	2315.6	64.2	1.5
Łódzkie	18219	2485.3	62.9	-0.6
Kujawsko-pomorskie	17972	2083.9	59.5	-0.8
Podkarpackie	17846	2127.7	41.2	-0.8
Małopolskie	15183	3382.3	48.4	1.1
Lubuskie	13988	1017.4	64.9	-0.8
Śląskie	12333	4559.2	77	-1
Świętokrzyskie	11711	1252.9	44.6	-1.4
Opolskie	9412 (16)	996.1 (16)	51.9 (12)	-1.4 (13)

Source: *Rocznik Statystyczny Województw*, GUS, Warszawa 2017; *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań statystycznych z lat 2012–2016*, GUS, Warszawa 2016.

The province is one of the regions where the percentage of people using public administration services over the internet is the lowest (see Tab. 8).

2 The place of the Opolskie province in the European Governance Quality Index

As a starting point in an analysis of the position of the Opolskie province on the European map of good governance, it is worth taking into account its specific character as it was perceived by the region's elites and inhabitants during the period of fight for the continued existence of the province during the period of preparing the administrative reform of 1998. The research conducted by sociologists from the University of Opole shows that at that time both the elites and ordinary inhabitants created an image of the Opolskie province in

Tab. 7: Selected life quality indexes for the Opolskie province

Index	Value	Place in ranking (1-the best ranked unit out of 16 provinces)	Average value for Poland
Ability to communicate in English	19.8 %	6	19.9
Access to internet	61.8 %	10	64.8
Average net personal income	1408.81 zlotys	10	1549
Percentage of households using external assistance	12 %	13	9.7 %
Living conditions of households (synthetic measure)	0.364	2	no data
Percentage of town/city inhabitants very satisfied or satisfied with their place of living	60.6 %	5	58.4 %
Percentage of people sensitive to damage to public goods	56.5 %	5	51.9 %
Civilization level	-0.08	11	no data
Social well-being	0.16	1	no data
Material wealth	-0.16	12	no data
Social pathologies	0.03	10	no data
Social capital	0.00	8	no data
Physical well-being	-0.05	13	no data
Percentage of children in <i>crèches</i> (day care centers)*	12.5 %	2	8.6 %
Unemployment rate*	9.0	9	8.2
Matura examination success rate*	77.6	12	78.5 %
Percentage of children aged 3–5 attending kindergartens*	89.7	2	84.7
Average gross salary*	4144.91 zlotys	7	4527.89

Source: the authors' own work based on *Diagnoza Społeczna 2015* (Czapiński i Panek 2015) and Local Data Bank (*). The data from Diagnosis come from 2015, the data from the Local Data Bank – from 2017.

opposition to the Katowickie province, to which the Opole Region was to be joined within the scope of Poland's administrative division into 12 provinces. According to the stereotype developed in that period the Opole Region was perceived as a thrifty and law-abiding region with a road network of good quality,

Tab. 8: The position of the Opolskie province in comparison to the other provinces with respect to selected governance quality indexes (data for 2016; in %)

Province	Percentage of women among commune councillors	Percentage of women in the provincial assembly	Percentage of councillors with higher education	Percentage of people using the internet on a regular basis	Percentage of people using public administration services over the internet in the past 12 months
Zachodnio-pomorskie	1 (33.2)	5 (30)	2 (42.2)	1 (76.5)	5 (32.5)
Lubuskie	2 (33.1)	5 (30)	5 (40.1)	8 (69.4)	15 (22.9)
Dolnośląskie	3 (32.3)	8 (25)	3 (40.4)	7 (70)	8 (27.1)
Warmińsko-mazurskie	4 (32.1)	1 (40)	8 (37.7)	13 (66.9)	14 (25)
Opolskie	5 (29.9)	16 (10)	3 (40.4)	5 (71.5)	11 (26)
Pomorskie	6 (29.7)	11 (18.2)	7 (38)	3 (72.9)	4 (32.9)
Kujawsko-pomorskie	7 (28.5)	14 (15.2)	14 (33.1)	12 (67.3)	12 (25.6)
Mazowieckie	7 (28.5)	3 (37.3)	12 (33.4)	2 (74.3)	2 (36.4)
Śląskie	9 (28.2)	2 (37.8)	1 (43.1)	4 (71.9)	1 (36.7)
Łódzkie	10 (27.9)	4 (30.3)	13 (33.2)	14 (66.2)	10 (26.5)
Wielkopolskie	11 (26.1)	9 (23)	6 (38.4)	10 (68)	8 (27.1)
Świętokrzyskie	12 (25.7)	15 (13.3)	9 (36.6)	16 (62.4)	16 (22.6)
Małopolskie	13 (24.6)	12 (17.9)	11 (35.2)	6 (70.4)	3 (34.8)
Lubelskie	14 (24.2)	10 (21.2)	16 (29.1)	15 (64.5)	6 (28.5)
Podlaskie	15 (23.8)	13 (16.7)	15 (30)	11 (67.6)	7 (27.9)
Podkarpackie	16 (19.4)	7 (27.3)	10 (35.6)	9 (68.5)	13 (25.5)

Subsequently in every field: the place in the ranking of provinces, in parentheses: the absolute value
 Source: *Rocznik Statystyczny Województw*, GUS, Warszawa 2017; *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań statystycznych z lat 2012–2016*, GUS, Warszawa 2016.

efficient work organization, better looking towns and villages, and a political culture characterized by dialogue and readiness for compromise. The excellent example of the last quality was to be the peaceful coexistence of representatives of various cultures, not only the German one but also that of the former eastern borderlands (Berlińska and Nijakowski 2001: 27–33). This image became an essential component of the ideology of the burgeoning regional movement and an argument for the preservation of the Opolskie province that was presented to the central authorities in the form of various expert opinions and reports

(ibidem: 46). However, as Borys Cymbrowski notes, despite attempts to build a positive image of the multicultural and harmonious Opole Region, the end of the 1990s marked the beginning of a visible fight between the German minority and the Polish majority in the field of collective memory. The fight involved conflicts about monuments of German soldiers and former German names of towns and villages (especially those given in the years 1935–1936) being reinstated by particular communities. These issues caused strong divisions in the regional community of the province (Cymbrowski 2006; see also Kosmala 2005). Thus, in the opinion of regional elites, the Opolskie province – at least at the end of the 20th century – was a modern region characterized by a high level of political, labor, and civic culture and a positive implementation of a policy of multiculturalism.

The regional stereotype was based to some extent on reality, which can be proved by a regularly conducted research on the quality of governance in regions. The research is prepared and conducted by scholars from the Quality of Government Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden. An assessment of the quality of governance in particular regions is based on telephone interviews conducted with their inhabitants in their native languages. Thus, the resultant index is based on citizens' perception. Respondents are asked to give their opinions on the functioning of the public administration system (education, health care, and justice) with respect to the following three dimensions of the quality of governance: service quality, impartiality, and corruption (Charron, Dijkstra & Lapuente 2012: 5). So far the research has been carried out three times. Consequently, we have access to data for the province from different periods. In 2010 and 2013 the Opolskie province scored the most points among the 16 provinces, and in the latest edition of the research in 2017 it was in the second place, behind the Pomorskie province (see tab. 9).

A detailed picture of the places of the Opolskie province in the ranking for the year 2017 is available on the website of the European Commission. It presents assessments of particular regions with respect to the following three dimensions of the quality of governance: the quality of provided services, impartiality, and corruption. With the average score of 42.88 (on a 0–100 scale), the Opolskie province received the most points in the category of the impartiality of the functioning of the public administration system (54.8)²⁸. Additionally, the region was compared to 15 other European regions (out of 202 participating in the ranking)

28 See Scorecards – Interactive Tool: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/quality_of_governance#2.

Tab. 9: The scores of the Polish regions achieved in the European Governance Quality Index in the successive editions of the research (the scale from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates the lowest quality, and 100 – the highest quality)

Province	2010	2013	2017
Opolskie	47.08	47.04	42.88
Warmińsko-mazurskie	45.98	42.46	41.88
Świętokrzyskie	43.40	38.23	38.22
Łódzkie	42.61	37.30	34.97
Podkarpackie	42.43	36.94	35.71
Pomorskie	42.36	43.84	46.46
Zachodniopomorskie	41.97	41.67	41.36
Małopolskie	41.85	41.24	40.59
Lubelskie	41.47	39.04	35.60
Lubuskie	40.93	43.69	40.42
Kujawsko-pomorskie	40.53	46.33	41.99
Podlaskie	40.42	44.31	39.44
Mazowieckie	39.66	36.48	37.98
Wielkopolskie	39.55	39.42	39.26
Dolnośląskie	37.35	34.47	38.85
Śląskie	37.28	34.52	38.89

Source: Charron, Dijkstra & Lapuente (2010; 2013; 2017).

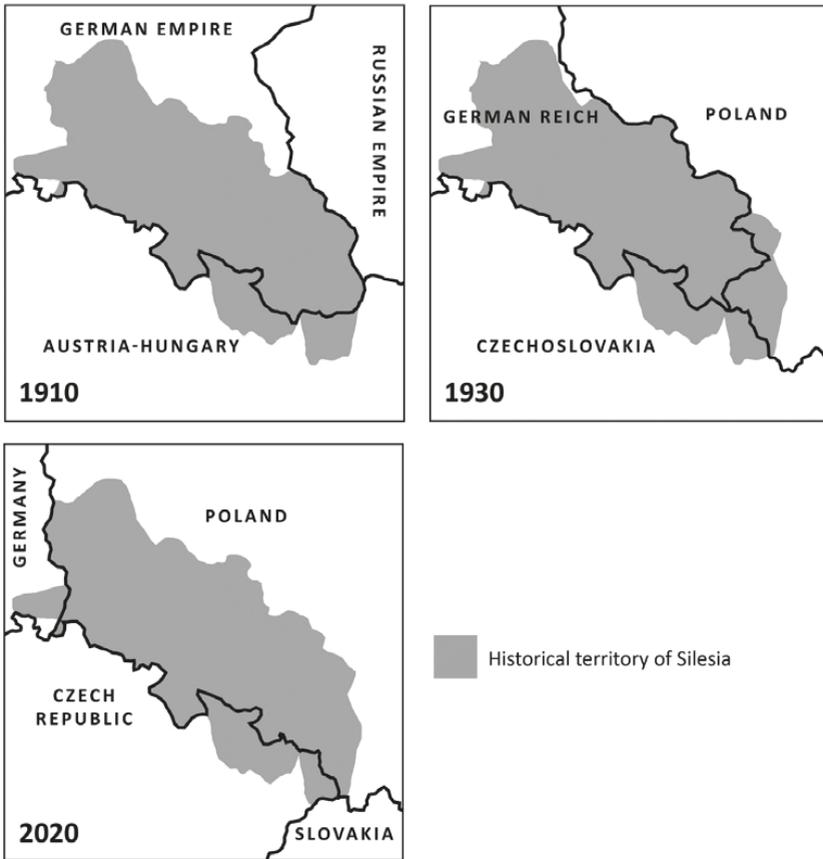
with similar GDP per capita. The conclusion was that the assessment of the quality of governance in the Opolskie province was higher than those in other regions with a similar level of wealth. It means that the assessment of the quality of governance in the Opolskie province may be influenced by some additional factors, not necessarily ones related to the economic position of its inhabitants.

3 The Opolskie province's history of multiculturalism

The greater part of the present Opolskie province belongs to the historic area of Upper Silesia. Opole Silesia started to emerge as a separate subregion in the 20th century. Therefore, it is from the perspective of the region's history that the multiculturalism of the Opolskie province should be perceived. One of the fundamental elements of research on the history of Upper Silesia is the conviction of its frontier character (Bialasiewicz 2002; Kisielewicz 2015; Kwiatek 2015; Trzcielińska-Polus and Opióła 2013). The frontieriness of Upper Silesia

comprises the legacy of the multi-ethnic settlement structure, the blending of the Polish, German and Czech cultures, as well as changes in the political and national affinities – from the Czech and Polish ones, through the Prussian and Austrian ones, to the Czechoslovakian, German and Polish ones.

However, in the case of research on national or ethnic identities in the long-term perspective, a basic methodological error consists in applying – to long periods of time and on the basis of various statistical data and historical sources – the same analytical categories and interpreting such data and sources ahistorically. In the case of the territory of the Opolskie province, which has been a border region for centuries, it is unjustified to apply the category of nationality in its modern meaning to data coming from the 19th century or maybe even from the period up to World War II (cf. Kokot 1973). The development of nations and nationalism as a sense of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1997) as well as the building of identification with such a community are processes that accelerated considerably in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the beginning they comprised elites, but simultaneously with the development of the press, the elimination of illiteracy, and the increasing access to high culture, they were influencing more and more groups of the population (Szacki 1997; Gelner 2009). In border areas where living next door to people speaking different languages or representing different faiths or denominations was a natural part of the local culture, national consciousness understood as a sense of being different from one's neighbor was developing the latest. National ideologies (the dominant German one, the Polish one, and the least dynamic Silesian one) appeared in the Opole Region as late as the second half of the 19th century. Interestingly, they were three projects competing simultaneously for the support of the local population. In many ethnographic and sociological studies conducted in the 20th century, the national – Polish or German – identity of the inhabitants of Silesia appears to be secondary to the regional identity expressed in the sense of “localness”, being a Silesian, “being a Silesian more than a Pole”, “being a Silesian more than a German”, etc., depending on the categories used by researchers (cf. e.g. Berlińska 1999; Kurczewski 2007). Actually, in various research Silesia and Silesians were analyzed as a disadvantaged social group, a peripheral culture, or an internal colony exploited economically by successive jurisdictions and treated as a territory to conquer and subdue, also culturally (Szmeja 2000; Geisler 2015). Piotr Madajczyk, who studied both the actions of the Third Reich authorities towards Poles and the actions of the Polish authorities towards Germans in Opole Silesia after World War II, observed that they had



Map 3. Border changes in Silesia. Source: the authors' own work

been conducted in accordance with the same pattern. The first step was to displace the clergy and elites representing the other national option; this was followed by the replacement of prayer books, the prohibition against church services in a particular language, and the change of geographical names, personal names and surnames (Madajczyk 1996).

This observation leads to the first conclusion according to which, with respect to the pre-war history of Opole Silesia, Polishness, Silesianness, and Germanness should be interpreted as ethnic identities (whether Silesians are an ethnic or national group – cf. Nijakowski 2004). In many districts the majority

of inhabitants were ethnic Poles the majority of whom, however, did not develop Polish national identity. Upper Silesia, including the Opole Region, is perceived in historical research as an area inhabited from the Middle Ages by the population speaking the Polish language. As a historical region, it remained successively under the jurisdiction of the Piast dynasty, the Czech crown, and Prussia. However, until the end of the 17th century the ethnic identification of the population had not constituted a “political problem”. The first organized assimilation project was the Prussian policy of Germanization launched in the middle of the 18th century during the reign of Friedrich II. Despite this policy, Prussian population registers from before World War I show that the area of Opole Silesia was dominated by the Polish speaking population. Looking for evidence for the historical Polishness of the region after World War II, Polish historians and political scientists quoted, among other things, Prussian statistics concerning the languages spoken at home or used in church services (e.g. Kokot 1973).

Nevertheless, the state of affairs looks different in the context of political science. In the 19th century, economically, culturally and socially disadvantaged, Polish speaking inhabitants of Upper Silesia could choose among the three competing national ideologies: German, Polish and Silesian. Germanization was an element of Prussia's repressive policy of unification. The Polish national ideology was a reaction to that policy (Berlińska 1998). At the end of the 19th century, in parallel to the aforementioned processes, Silesian separatism started to develop on the basis of the sense of Silesian – national or regional – identity (Madajczyk 2005). After Nazis came to power until the end of World War II Upper Silesia was the place of a policy of national assimilation and repressions against culturally different people.

Visible in the current ethnic geography of the province (see Fig. 1), its clear division into the part inhabited by Germans and Silesians is the result of the aforementioned history of the settlement of the Polish and German speaking populations in Silesia before World War II. The area constituting at present the western part of the province was inhabited primarily by the German speaking population, and the Polish speaking minority underwent Germanization during the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. After World War II the inhabitants of these communes – regarded as Germans – were forcefully relocated to Germany. Their households were taken over by Poles relocated to the newly acquired western territories. Meanwhile, before the war the central and eastern parts of the province had been dominated by the Polish speaking population, which to a rather limited degree surrendered to the impact of Germany's national ideology. The majority of this population was not relocated, and the inflow of new settlers

to these communes was smaller. It was from this particular group of autochthonous Silesian inhabitants of the region that the German minority would develop after 1989.

The process of post-war migrations: the voluntary and forced relocation of citizens of pre-war Germany who did not want or were not able to prove their Polish roots and the settlement of Opole Silesia with the incoming ethnically Polish population was a long-lasting process and – contrary to the prevailing belief – lasted in fact until the 1980s. Its first stage was the mass and forced relocation of the German population conducted in the years 1945–1950. During the same period the Polish population was being forcefully relocated from the territories of pre-war Poland which, in consequence of the post-war changes of national borders, became a part of the Soviet Union. Besides relocated people, Opole Silesia became a destination also for settlers from so-called central Poland who, in fact, came from practically all rural areas of Poland suffering from overpopulation and poverty.

The second stage was the so-called family reunification campaign, i.e. a programme of organized migration of pre-war German citizens to Germany under the agreement entered into between the People's Republic of Poland and the German Democratic Republic. The programme was carried out in the years 1950–1952, and subsequently after 1956. In the years 1956–1970 193,000 people emigrated from Upper Silesia to Germany. The emigration process lasted until the end of the 1980s. In total, between 1956 and 1985 more than 400,000 Germans left Upper Silesia (Korbel 1990; Rauziński 1982).

It should be noted that the ethnic structure of the Opolskie province was also under the influence of other factors. Between the years 1950 and 1973 the average population growth rate in the districts with the majority of the autochthonous population was much lower than in the districts dominated by the incoming population. The main reason for this phenomenon was the demographic structure determined by the war, including the gender ratio (much more disadvantageous among the native population) and the age structure (Grodecka 1980). The result was a gradual reversal in the proportion of the number of settlers from the territories of pre-war Poland and people relocated from the eastern borderlands plus their descendants to the number of autochthonous inhabitants plus their descendants; in the 1980s and 1990s it was 2:1. Furthermore, it should be remembered that marriages between the native population and the incoming population were not rare occurrences as early as the 1950s. In the years 1950–1964 such marriages constituted 6.75 % of the total number of marriages. This rate continued to grow in the subsequent years (Kwaśniewski 1968).

During the whole era of the People's Republic of Poland and the first years of the Third Polish Republic official statistics and academic research did not refer to the German or Silesian ethnic identification of the inhabitants of Opole Silesia. Just the opposite, authorities and researchers emphasized their unequivocal Polish national orientation (e.g. referring to them as "native Poles", as opposed to Poles coming from other parts of the country; cf. e.g. Kowalski 1972; Jacher 1991). The disclosure of complicated national identities took place in connection with the by-election for a vacant seat in the Senate in 1990 (i.e. in parallel to the processes of democratization and pluralization) when a candidate representing the German minority was running for the first time for such a high office, and the establishment of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia in Stradunia, near Krapkowitz on 7 April 1990 (Berlińska 1999). It was at that time that researchers noticed and started to study the heterogeneity of the national consciousness of the province's inhabitants. According to Bogdan Cimała and Stanisław Senft (1994), the population that after the war decided to remain in Poland and acquire Polish citizenship can be divided into three groups. The first of them comprises members of the Association of Poles in Germany, who probably represented the strongest sense of Polishness. This group, however, constituted only a few percent of the total autochthonous population. The second group includes people who maintained connections with Polish culture, i.e. read the Polish press, participated in events organized by the Association of Poles in Germany. The historians mentioned above estimate that this group constituted 1/3 of the total autochthonous population. The decisive majority of the native population were people referred to by Germans as *labile Zwischenschicht*, and who referred to themselves as Upper Silesians or Silesians (Cimała and Senft 1994). In this group, it is possible to distinguish many variants of attitudes ranging from indifference through a sense of regional identity to a double or ambivalent identity. These communities were rather poorly susceptible to either German or Polish nationalistic campaigns conducted during the Silesian uprisings and later during the two decades between the World Wars. Naturally, their contacts with German culture were more frequent and stronger than with Polish culture as they were citizens of the Weimar Republic and subsequently the Third Reich.

Another factor used to explain the appearance of people of German origin after 1989 was economic motivations for adopting a national identification. A declaration of German nationality made it possible to acquire a German passport and, consequently, the right to work in Germany, which was connected with

economic and social advancement. Another reason for changes in the national self-identification of the inhabitants of the Opolskie province was the ineffectiveness of the policy of Polonization pursued by the Polish authorities during the period of Stalinism. A number of factors caused a loss of Silesians' trust in Poland and Polishness embodied in the unfriendly local bureaucratic machine (schools, commune offices). They included hostility of the incoming population against the autochthonous population, discrimination against and persecution of many pre-war activists of the Association of Poles in Germany, filling administrative positions with representatives of the incoming population, or everyday discrimination of the local population because of its origin, as well as linguistic and cultural differences. The Polish United Workers' Party admitted having pursued its ineffective policy aimed at the native population of the areas incorporated into Poland after World War II in a resolution of its Central Committee adopted in 1960 (Strauchold 2005). This problem concerned not only Silesians but also Mazurians; the inclusion of these groups in the Polish nation was "an argument legitimizing the change of the western border" (Madajczyk and Berlińska 2008: 240).

The uniqueness of the ethnic geography of the Opolskie province against the background of Poland is reflected in regional and local politics. The German minority is well organized and politically empowered in the part of the province inhabited by Germans and Silesians; it is the key grouping in the provincial assembly as well as many commune and district councils (Fig. 2; see also Ganowicz and Opióła 2017). Furthermore, the only representative of national minorities sitting in the parliament is Ryszard Galla, representing the electoral committee of the German minority in the Opolskie electoral area and holding the seat constantly since 2005. Through its organizational representation – the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia – the German minority is also an actor of Polish-German public diplomacy, aiming to strengthen economic, social and cultural relations between the Opolskie province and Germany. A similar, though less comprehensive role is fulfilled by the Diocese of Opole and Caritas of the Diocese of Opole (Bartek 2015). The multiculturalism of the region is also reflected in regional strategic documents, although it appears that its potential is not fully utilized. In *The Development Strategy of the Opolskie province until 2020*, an extensive description of the region's multicultural character appears in the diagnostic part:

Nowadays the Opolskie province is inhabited in harmony by Silesians, Germans and the immigrant population of diversified regional origins, including people relocated from the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland [Borderlanders]. This

historically shaped multiculturalism of the Opolskie province, particularly the presence and initiative of the largest group of the German minority in Poland, constitutes a distinctive feature of the present image of the region and its significant characteristic against the background of the whole country ('Strategia' 2012: 28).

Although the SWOT analysis included in the strategy identifies cultural diversity as one of the strengths of the region, the potential offered by multiculturalism has not been utilized sufficiently enough at the level of objectives. Among 36 operational objectives formulated in the strategy, only one refers directly to multiculturalism.

4 The present state of multiculturalism in Opole Silesia

In view of the analyses presented above, it should be stated that at present the region's multiculturalism is shaped first of all by people of Polish, German and Silesian national identities. Regardless of these three nationalities, it is possible – and even advisable – to distinguish separate Polish ethnographic groups that are the outcome of post-war migrations and the blending of representatives of various ethnographic groups in the territories constituting settlement destinations (Masurians, natives of Greater Poland, Lesser Poland or the region of Lviv and Tarnopil). For these reasons, after the war the Opolskie province was the area where inhabitants with an integral national identity constituted a decisive minority. Following Antonina Kłoskowska (1996), who postulates that research on nationality should take into equal consideration the indicators of national identity and of cultural valence (cultural valence understood as adopting a given national culture and treating it as one's own), it is possible to distinguish the following dominant categories of the province's inhabitants:

- a) inhabitants manifesting an integral national identification (e.g. "I am Silesian") and a cultural bivalence (the adopted German and Polish cultures);
 - b) inhabitants manifesting an integral national identification ("I am either Polish or German") and a cultural bivalence ("more often Polish and Silesian"; "less often German and Silesian");
 - c) inhabitants manifesting a double national identification ("I am Silesian and Polish"; "I am German and Polish") and a cultural bivalence or ambivalence;
- Nevertheless, the process of post-war relocations resulted in the strengthening and, consequently, the present domination of the fourth category:

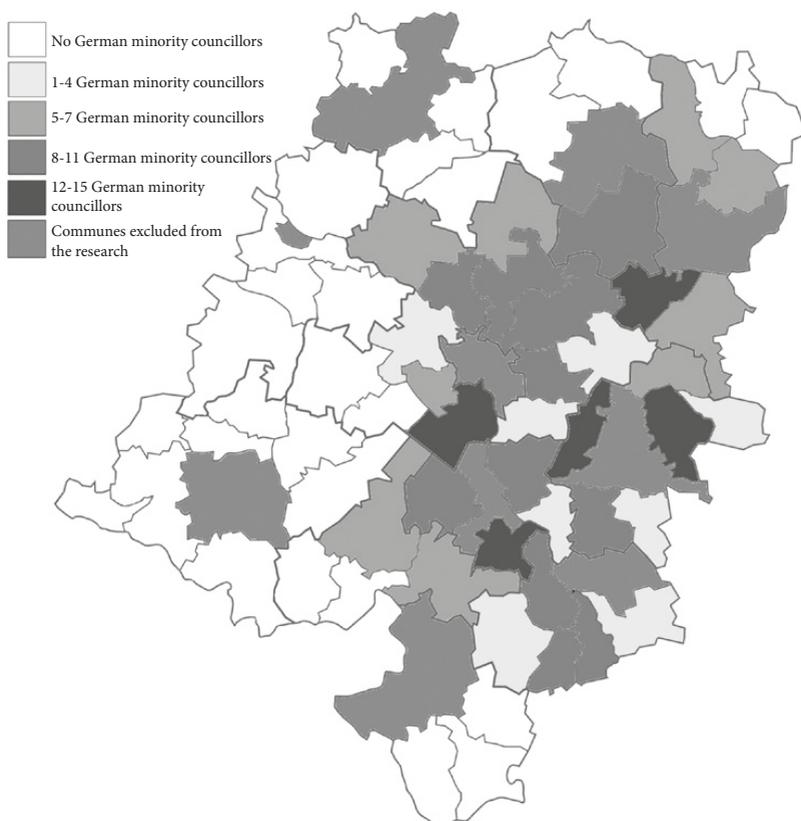


Fig. 3: The number of councillors representing the German minority in the commune councils of the Opolskie province during the term of office 2014–2018²⁹. Source: the authors' own work based on the data from the National Electoral Commission

d) inhabitants manifesting an integral national identification (“I am Polish”) and a cultural univalence (the adopted Polish culture).

The recent years have witnessed a dynamic increase in the number of people coming from Ukraine to the territory of the Opolskie province. This process is typical of the whole territory of Poland: according to estimates, approximately

29 All communes included in the research have councils consisting of 15 members (with the exception of the commune of Głuchołazy, which has 21 councillors).

2 million Ukrainians study, work and live in Poland. The Ukrainian population was not included in the latest census because the mass process of settlement immigration from Ukraine is a relatively new phenomenon. The outbreak of the war in Donbas in 2014 can be regarded as an event that accelerated this process. According to the data of the National Insurance Institution, in 2018 the number of Ukrainians in legal employment in the Opolskie province exceeded 14500 (Hanszke 2018). Meanwhile, according to the Provincial Labour Office, there were 64000 Ukrainians working legally in the Opolskie province in 2018 (Dimitrow 2019). In view of the fact that the number of Germans living in the province equaled 78000 in 2011 (according to the national census), the scale of migration from Ukraine strongly influences the academic discourse on the region's multiculturalism. In the case of our research, the influence of the presence of Ukrainians in the province on research results is ignored for two reasons. Firstly, the decisive majority of them have the status of foreigners, thus, naturally, they have no influence on many areas related to the quality of governance. Secondly, they live mostly in the largest urban centers, which are excluded from our research.

Summing up, let us present the ethnic structure of the Opolskie province. At the provincial level, the latest data come from the national census carried out in 2011. According to these data, the Opolskie province was inhabited by 895,000 people declaring Polish nationality³⁰, 106,000 people declaring Silesian nationality, and 78,000 declaring German nationality. Furthermore, the census failed to establish the identity of over 22,000 people. Also, the number of people of Romany nationality was established at around 200 (according to the estimates of the Provincial Office, there are between 1500 and 2000 Romanies in the province), and 2700 people declared nationality other than Polish, Silesian, German or Romany. In comparison to the data of the 2011 national census, because of demographic processes (migrations, population growth), the respective sizes of the Polish, Silesian, and German populations have decreased, and a group of foreigners of Ukrainian nationality has appeared. Its size is estimated at about 70,000 people. The total population of the province (including foreigners) amounts to over 1 million people.

30 In the case of persons declaring a double identification, they were classified as being of the first declared national identification.

