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“All Parties Treat Silesians Instrumentally”: On Political Representation at the Regional Level

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Abstract

The turn of the 20th century experienced an intensification of processes that strengthened Silesian identity, which became an important element of political debate in the region. This was reflected in the emergence of a growing number of entities that placed Silesian issues among their priority objectives and defined themselves as representatives of the interests of Silesia and Silesians. The aim of the study was to verify the political representative potential of groups in Upper Silesia. We accepted the hypothesis that the stronger the identity of a particular group (regional or national) the greater the probability that entities placing fundamental objectives strictly within the scope of regional issues should enjoy broad support in the region, and such entities consequently should be perceived as political representatives of the group. A study conducted using the categorized interview method (N=54) proves quite clearly that Silesians are unable to identify entities on the regional political scene that could represent them sufficiently. The determinants of this state of affairs are found not only in the negative actions of political entities but also in the absence of a clear vision of representation, which could constitute a basis for the formulated expectations of Silesians.

Keywords: political representation; Silesians; electoral behavior; regionalism

The cultural and identity-related separateness of the inhabitants of Silesia is conditioned by its complicated history, which makes this area a special place. The region's frontier nature, multiculturalism, as well as its centuries-long independence from changing national centers have influenced the shaping of Silesian identity. For this reason, it is worth noting the turning points in the history of this region. It was a part of the Polish state established in the late 10th century (Maleczyński 1961). However, this was by no means an indication of stability with regard to the nationality of the region. The medieval process of feudal fragmentation determined the way individual Silesian duchies were governed. Czechia was one of the most favorable partners for cooperation. In the first half of the 14th century, the Silesian rulers of the Piast dynasty paid the homage to the Czech king. The situation changed two centuries later, when the childless Czech king Ludwik Jagiellonian was killed at the battle of Mohacz. As a result, the Czech crown passed into the hands of the Habsburgs, which meant that they also embraced leadership over Silesia.

Three wars (the so-called Silesian wars), fought in the 18th century between Prussia and Austria, were crucial for the fate of Silesia. They were an expression of the aspirations of both powers to rule this region. As a result, Lower Silesia and most of Upper Silesia fell to Prussia. Austria received the lands of the former Duchies of Cieszyn and Opava, henceforth called Austrian Silesia. This situation was maintained until the end of World War I, when Poland regained its independence.

However, the end of warfare and the creation of the independent Republic of Poland did not mean that the issue of Upper Silesia was resolved. The turn of the second decade of the 20th century was marked by the Polish-German and Polish-Czech-Slovakian border disputes (Muś 2016).

Eventually, under the influence of such events as the plebiscite in 1921 and the Silesian uprisings and armed conflicts on the Polish-Czechoslovak border, the international community approved the division of Upper Silesia between Poland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia (in relation to the so-called Austrian Silesia). The complex history of Upper Silesia's state affiliation was complemented by the incorporation of its western territories into Poland after World War II. In administrative terms, this meant the integration of Upper Silesia's lands into one country, but at the same time, this region has never constituted a coherent area after World War II. It may be exemplified by its belonging to several, and currently, to two, voivodships.

The medieval inhabitants of Silesia found themselves outside the state governed by the Jagiellonian dynasty, and subsequently outside the state cocreated by the nobility and elected kings. This situation meant that Silesians remained outside the Polish cultural and spiritual community for a long time. Their functioning within the Czech, Austrian, and later Prussian states exposed them to foreign cultures and social policy models. These influences resulted in difficulties in shaping the Polish elite in Silesia, as the basic condition for social advancement was inclusion in the German-speaking cultural circle (Siuciak 2011, 225). Thus, historically, the Silesians were, for the most part, subordinate to other national cultures. This fact consolidated the impression (felt also by Silesians themselves) that Silesians were being treated as the Other. We have adopted this category as an essential point of reference for the recognition of Silesian identity, a term difficult to precisely define. The complicated fate of Silesia and contemporary narratives have resulted in the increasing usage of the term "many Silesias" (Sekuła 2010). Aware of this inner diversity, we propose to look at identity above all as the opposite of universality. This approach makes it possible to expose an element of Silesians' sense of distinctiveness and otherness and to portray their self-identification as the outcome of how they perceive themselves and their community in relation to the surrounding world. In such an approach, the Us-versus-Them division is particularly useful and is enhanced by such elements as language (speech), history, tradition, and customs, all of which significantly strengthen the sense of distinctiveness.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, we have observed a strengthening of Silesian identity through the inclusion of their interests in programs and objectives of the emerging social and political organizations. Their activity initiated a public discussion on the identity of Silesians, including their national identification. In the 21st century, Silesian nationality became an important topic in the public space. At the same time, the scope of expectations of Silesians toward the central government put Silesian identity in the limelight of discussion not only in southern Poland but also in other areas of the country (Turska-Kawa 2013).

Silesia is a vast geographical area with, as shown above, a rich and varied history. In this article we will focus our attention on Upper Silesia, but not in its entirety. Firstly, we have taken the contemporary administrative division as a point of reference. Upper Silesia includes the lands that currently (since January 1, 1999) belong to the Silesian and Opole voivodships of Poland, as well as areas incorporated into the Czech Republic. Being aware of this fact, in the empirical part of the article we will focus our attention only on the lands of Upper Silesia that belong to the Silesian Voivodeship. However, by doing this we do not intend to propagate the division into Upper Silesia and Opole Silesia, especially since the historical capital of Upper Silesia is Opole. Our decision concerning the territorial scope of the research derives only from the fact that since 1950 (i.e., the moment the Katowice and Opole Voivodships were created) a progressive autonomization (nonidenticalness) of both areas' interests can be observed. This is exemplified by the successful efforts of the sociopolitical elites and inhabitants of the Opole region to create a separate voivodeship at the end of the 20th century. Secondly, we also excluded from our research the so-called Austrian Silesia due to its different political history, which was reflected in the sociocultural dimension (Glajcar 2013). Third, in the Silesian Voivodeship, there were significant changes in the sense of Silesian-ness in the first decade of the 21st century, as evidenced by the results of the 2011 census. In this survey, for the first time, Polish citizens had the opportunity to express complex ethnic-national identities. It turned out that the Silesian identity was declared by almost 847,000

people, of which 376,000 declared it to be their only identity. This constituted more than twice as many people compared to the 2002 census (when it was possible to indicate only one identity)—then, Silesianness was declared by slightly more than 173,000 people. More importantly, however, the results of the 2011 census showed that over 85% of people declaring their Silesian identity live in the Silesian Voivodeship, and only slightly more than 12% in the Opolskie Voivodeship (where among non-Polish identities, the German identity dominates) (GUS 2015). Fourth, the results of the census were also reflected in electoral behavior. In 2010, in the regional elections to the Sejmik of the Silesian Voivodeship, its representatives for the first time introduced a group that promoted regional autonomy. This is considered one of the many proofs indicating the attractiveness of such initiatives in the Silesian Voivodeship. At the same time, however, Michał Smolorz's (2012) observation that the attributes of contemporary Silesian regionalism are largely the result of media creation seems very compelling.

Being aware of the fact that political representation constitutes an important research challenge for contemporary political scientists, especially in view of the difficulties in providing an unambiguous definition thereof and the diversity of approaches to the problem, we decided to take a closer look at this issue in the context of the broadly understood Silesian problem. As pointed out above, since the turn of the 20th century, the processes of strengthening Silesian identity have become an important element of political debate in the region. This was reflected in the creation of a growing number of associations which placed Silesian issues among their priority objectives. These entities began to define their role in terms of representing the interests of Silesia and Silesians. Striving to implement this agenda, some organizations (associations and parties) began applying for seats in representative bodies at the local, regional, and national levels. In this context, we decided to investigate how the Silesians evaluate the quality of representation of their interests (regarding the region and its inhabitants) on the political level. The fundamental research question is whether regional groups meet the expectations of Silesians in terms of political representation. Therefore, we adopted a hypothesis that the stronger the identity of a specific group (regional or national), the greater the probability that parties and associations in which fundamental objectives evolve around regional issues should enjoy broad support in the region, and consequently they should be perceived as political representatives of such a group.

The article will first start from an analysis of political representation as a phenomenon characterizing contemporary democracies. In the part that follows we will present a brief description of the regional political scene, drawing attention to those entities which in the last local government election in 2018 aspired to the role of political representatives of Silesians. Next, we will present the results of empirical research, which will enable the verification of the adopted research hypothesis. The results will also allow us to present conclusions as to how the mechanism of political representation works in the context of making sure the interests of Silesians are satisfied.

Representation: Between an Idea and Reality

The problem of representation itself has been described extensively in the literature on the subject (e.g., Fenichel Pitkin 1972; Manin 1997; Judge 1999; Urbinati 2006; Runciman and Vieira 2008; Shapiro et al. 2009; Saward 2010). However, venturing into the concept of representation means climbing a slippery slope. First, as Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès notes, “all is representation in the social state. It is found everywhere in the private order as in the public order [. . .]. I would even say that representation is confounded with the very essence of social life” (Sewell 1994, 93). The ubiquity of representation may become a significant constraint on understanding what it is in reality.

Secondly, in modern democracies, the relevance of representation does not raise any doubts. For democracy, representation is a constitutive idea and practice. After all, representative democracy is the dominant model of the most well-known political regimes. It is difficult to imagine contemporary democracies in a form that is different than representative. Views emphasizing the oligarchic nature of representation and its consequent incompatibility with democracy are few and far

between (Contogeorgis 2017), as are suggestions calling for far-reaching caution in seeking links between representation and democracy (Shapiro 2003). These opinions are rather an expression of classical democracy being perceived as an ideal, or the result of an excessive focus on the fact that representation and democracy have developed independently of each other over a long time. Meanwhile, as Davide Plotke notes, “the opposite of representation is not participation. The opposite of representation is exclusion. And the opposite of participation is abstention. Rather than opposing participation to representation, we should try to improve representative practices and forms to make them more open, effective, and fair. Representation is not an unfortunate compromise between an ideal of direct democracy and messy modern realities. Representation is crucial in constituting democratic practices” (1997, 19). It can even be said that representation appears to be the basis for the full enjoyment of citizenship. It is therefore an instrument that aims at the empowerment of modern societies. But does it really fulfill such a role?

Thirdly and finally, the concept of representation is characterized by a multiplicity of meanings. Representatives may perceive it differently than those they represent. Moreover, there may be discrepancies between the two groups in terms of how representation is understood. David Runciman and Mónica Brito Vieira (2008, 6) point to three possibilities for interpreting representation: (1) as a pictorial representation in which the representatives act in place of the represented, and therefore there must be similarity between the two entities; (2) as a theatrical representation in which the representatives must interpret the expectations of the represented, speaking and acting in their name; and (3) as a juridical representation in which the representatives act in the name of those they represent, with their consent and on their behalf. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1972), in turn, distinguishes between four types of representation (formalistic, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive). Jarosław Szymanek (2014) points to even more different types of approaches and meanings of representation in the field of Polish political science. It turns out, therefore, that representation, being a commonly known phenomenon, due to its multifacetedness and omnipresence, poses enormous problems of a definitional nature. Everybody talks about representation, not always understanding it in the same way. If, in addition, representation is considered in a political context, the space in which it operates becomes even more complicated.

In a situation where the noun *representation* causes interpretational difficulties, it is worth referring to the adjective *representative* (Szymanek 2013, 58). Assigning the characteristics of representativeness to someone means that they perceive a reflection of the characteristics of another subject. Of course, similarities can take different forms. Similarities expressed in a formal manner, in the institutionalized selection process, are easiest to point out and hence are mentioned most often. Therefore, in democratic regimes, elections are the basic mechanism for creating representation.

This means that a specific relationship is created between the represented and the representative. The latter embodies the represented thanks to the granted mandate. However, the manner, form, and scope of this embodiment can be very diverse. But this does not change the fact that within the representation relation a peculiar paradox occurs, namely, that of a simultaneous absence and presence of the represented entity (Wojtasik 2019). The second similarity is that features that are easily discernible for an external observer that concern the represented subject and the representative (demographic, social, national, and cultural) are being exposed. In this case, the representative entity will be the one that has external features similar to the entity that is to be represented (e.g., women should be represented by women and the Silesians by Silesians) (Young 2000, 148–153). Finally, a similarity that is least frequent (due to identification problems) is a similarity based on volition, that is, ways of perceiving reality, factual (and not only statistically proven) convergence of views or behaviors (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 380–382). As we can see, not only the noun *representation* but also the adjective *representative* can take on different meanings.

Regardless of what constitutes the basis for an idea of the representativeness of a given subject, representation itself is a relationship between two subjects in which one commits to act in the name

and on behalf of the other in relation to a third subject or in a specific situation. Representation thus understood is a constitutive element of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Every democratic authority is representative in the light of constitutional provisions. At the same time, however, no legislation can guarantee citizens the feeling that the people they elect will actually act in their names and on their behalf. The sense of representation therefore lies in the actual, and not merely procedural aspects, linking of the two entities.

This is not about undermining the importance of elections for the formation of representative governments. However, a look at representation through the prism of elections is conducive to narrowing down the role of the representative, which is because the representative is most often perceived through the prism of its links with a specific territory. This is particularly visible whenever majority voting systems connected to single-mandate constituencies apply (Dalton, Farrell, and Mcallister 2011, 22–23), although this type of thinking is also true in proportional systems. It has far-reaching consequences. Even if the representative is formally a representative of the nation (people or citizens) or a representative of the regional community, the welfare of the electorate often turns out to be more important than the welfare of a larger, and thus less specific, community because of the possibility of reelection. For this reason, the representative focuses primarily on emphasizing the links with the constituency in which it was elected. In this way, there is often a gap between the formal and actual status of the representative. It is also much easier for a represented person to identify with someone connected with a particular territory than a person who has no or almost no connection with it. This leads to a situation where territorial interests (e.g., local investments, improvement of living conditions in the local community, etc.) have a dominant influence on the shaping of relations between the represented and the representatives.

The turn of the 20th century brought about a change in the traditional perception of political representation through the prism of territorial links. More and more importance was given to extraterritorial interests related to cultural, religious, or identity issues (Urbinati and Warren 2008, 389–391). On the one hand, this is reflected in the electoral area (e.g., the emergence of electoral competition entities representing the interests of various types of minorities), while on the other hand, it is also reflected in changes on a nonelectoral level. Proof of this is the involvement of citizens in public affairs through activity in social movements and civic associations, which claim to have the right to represent (defend) the interests of ethnic, national, religious or other groups that expose their own identity. Thanks to them, political debate becomes even more public and subjects the groups to the scrutiny of broad social masses (Urbinati 2005, 208–209).

The increase in the relevance of nonterritorial interests has not, of course, led to a weakening of the territorial factor in the shaping of representation relations (especially in the context of the electoral aspect). It is not uncommon for both interest groups to join forces. This happens first of all whenever a group with a strong identity, exposing its otherness, exists in a given territory and manifests itself by defining its position in the social space through the division of “us” and “them.” In this situation, one of the elements constituting identity may be a specific territory (region, local homeland, “my land,” or “the fatherland”) (Turska-Kawa and Haček 2017). At the same time, it should be noted that representation cannot be treated as a permanent system of reference. It, like society (Sztompka 1991), should be considered not as something that is but as something that becomes, that is subject to constant fluctuation. Representation is a process that involves a variety of social and behavioral situations in which a relationship between the representative and the represented is created. It should be noted that the interests that constitute one of the determinants of building representation relations may have different sources. As a result, depending on the situation, the mechanism of representation may concern various issues. At times priority will be given to territorial interests, while at other times extraterritorial matters will prevail, including strictly political ones. This reflects the polycentric arrangement within which modern societies operate. The formation of a modern model of representation is the result of a long-term process. During this time, four types of representation have emerged (Szymanek 2013, 84). They reflected the specificity of the era in which they appeared. The first one was the state in which the

representative was the owner of his function. This situation concerned in particular the period of dominance of hereditary monarchies. The second type provided for the representation of a specific political order by the members of the groups constituting that order. This was connected with the period when state assemblies functioned. The third type was based on an imperative mandate. Finally, in the fourth type, a concept of representation based on the free mandate model was established. The representative is not bound by the instructions of the entity being represented, although he/she needs to be empowered to do so. It should be guided by the interests of the represented, but it does not mean that the representative has to follow their instructions.

The concept of a free mandate has fundamentally influenced the actual functioning of the representation mechanism. It is worth mentioning that various types of elections are not only a way for the collective selection of representatives and a dynamic method of influencing the direction of governing, but they are also an element creating a division into those who govern and those who are governed (political power and citizens) (Urbinati 2006, 14). The latter aspect, especially in conditions of a democratic political culture deficit, may pose a direct threat to the proper shaping of representation relations. Its correct functioning requires trust and dialogue between the represented and the representative. Their deficit or defectiveness may lead to the representation being questioned. Such a situation is referred to as a crisis of representation. It reflects the gap (misunderstanding) between citizens and political elites (Manin 1997, 232) and can only be avoided if there is a specific relationship between the representative and the represented and when the former is truly guided by the interests of the latter and the latter is convinced that the former is doing the job properly. In this context, various theoretical concepts are pointed out. One of them is the theory of responsible government, which assumes that power is in the hands of the elected elite which is responsible toward the voters for the policies it implements. Responsibility is a guarantee of the proper role of the representative. Another is the theory of public opinion governments, which emphasizes the importance of convergence between the direction of policy pursued by governments and the expectations of public opinion. Thus, exercising power should consist in aggregating the demands and expectations formulated by the public opinion. The two theories mentioned above are linked by the concept of a thermostatic model of relations between society and political decision makers (Wlezién 1995). It assumes that not only do decision makers react to signals (demands and expectations) sent by the public, but the public also adjusts its preferences over time to changes taking place in at least some policy areas. Thus, it acts as a thermostat—thanks to its activity it maintains a balance.

The concept of society as a thermostat goes beyond a one-sided approach to representation relations. This is particularly important in the context of the free mandate model. Under this model, unlike an imperative mandate, the representative ceases to be primarily a reactive entity. As the one who is not bound by the instructions of the represented, it often takes the initiative, which emphasizes its proactivity in relation to the represented. As a consequence, this leads to a situation in which the represented identifies more with the representative than vice versa, by casting his or her vote for the latter in the elections.

In this context, it is necessary to draw attention to one more issue. The previous considerations concerning representation have focused on the relationship between the represented and the representative in the personal dimension. Meanwhile, contemporary democracies have a party character, which significantly modifies the traditional model of representation. On the one hand, political parties, acting as an intermediary link between the state and society, are *de facto* representatives. On the other hand, the emergence of political parties has corrected the traditional model of representation in the sense that the particular person to whom the status of a representative is attributed is usually a member of a party and through it represents the sovereign.

The activity of political parties translates into the practical dimension of representation principle implementation. By mediating between society and the state, their role is not only to transfer the demands of society to state policy. Much more often, by creating and promoting political programs, they make society aware of the relevance of certain issues. Therefore, contemporary parties do not

so much play the role of subjects ready to follow instructions (although this aspect of their activity has not disappeared and still plays an important role), but instead they “help” society to discover its real needs. In this case, the usefulness of the abovementioned thermostatic model is revealed. It perfectly reflects the specificity of the functioning of contemporary party representation, within which a proactive attitude of the representative comes to the fore, whereas reactivity constitutes a complementary element. Such an image is fostered by the professionalisation of contemporary politics. The citizen is unable to grasp the multitude of issues and all the mechanisms governing political life. It creates space for specialized entities (e.g., political parties and lobby groups), which strive to represent groups with specific needs and interests. This does not mean, of course, that their actions will be positively evaluated by those they represent. There are many studies on the convergence and divergence between public opinion preferences and the political line implemented by decision makers (e.g., Brettschneider 1996; Monroe 1998). However, this does not necessarily mean that the latter do not take into account the expectations and demands of society. Therefore, we do not propose surveys that could prove this convergence. It seems more appropriate to resort to interviews. Not only do they make it possible to determine certain dependencies, but above all they reveal the motivations for adopting certain attitudes and views by those represented.

The above comments lead to the conclusion that representation is a lofty idea, which in political reality often takes on different forms. The fact that it is influenced by many factors determines its multifacetedness. This is reflected primarily in the perception and approach that two sides of the representation relationship have toward each other. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the empirical part of this article.

The Silesian Political Scene: An Outline

In the sociopolitical space of Silesia there exist more or less formalized associations and other initiatives in which Upper Silesian regionalism is manifested. It is understood as a bottom-up aspiration to strengthen the position of Silesians who identify themselves with the land of their ancestors and have a developed awareness of common culture and tradition. Referring to the findings of Małgorzata Myśliwiec (2014), three groups of these associations can be identified, depending on their objectives. The first group includes those that strive to strengthen the position of Silesians within the existing legal framework. The activity of such associations focuses on promoting Silesian culture and is not concerned with aspiring to political representation in representative bodies. The second group includes associations working for Upper Silesian regionalism, which, without questioning the legal system established in the state, assume the role of political representatives. The third group includes groups seeking to obtain the status of political representatives while pursuing to change the existing legal status, which would lead to the legal empowerment of the Silesians and, as a result, the dissemination of their culture.

Being aware of the multitude of entities that declare Silesian identity in their message, it is worth noting three entities that have clearly marked their presence on the regional political scene from the perspective of the main political event in the region in 2018—the local government elections. They include two relatively new political parties (Ślōnzoki Razem [Silesians Together; ŚR] and Śląska Partia Regionalna [Silesian Regional Party; ŚPR]) and one association (Ruch Autonomii Śląska [Movement for Silesian Autonomy; RAŚ]), which are extremely recognizable due to the activities they undertake and the controversies they stir on the national arena in relation to the goals they pursue. These associations, regardless of their organizational form, show features characteristic of regional parties. Firstly, their activities are limited to a strictly defined region and represent the interests of the group living there (in this case Silesians). Secondly, their electoral activity is concentrated in a given region (Upper Silesia), and the assumption is that obtaining a mandate as a representative is based primarily on the support expressed by the people living there, that is, Silesians (Urwin 1983). Of course, in the context of political choices, the interests of Silesia are also taken up by state wide political parties applying for seats in the region. However, the

abovementioned entities, unlike statewide parties, have as their priority, for statutory purposes, activities for the benefit of Silesia and its inhabitants.

Ruch Autonomii Śląska (RAŚ) was established in 1990 as a cross-party association. It postulates the reestablishment of the pre-war autonomy of Upper Silesia. Following Western European regionalism, the RAŚ proposes the introduction of strong autonomous provinces in Poland, financially independent from the central authority and with the power to independently decide on their affairs. In addition to the community objectives (including deepening of the regional identity, participation in the integration of all those living in Silesia, as well as shaping and developing their active citizenship), the RAŚ proposes a number of changes to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which aim at introducing the autonomy of regions with the appropriate scope of legislation (autonomous provinces with separate statutes) and the protection and respect for their cultural heritage. The RAŚ has repeatedly run in the elections, both to the Sejm (the lower house of the parliament of Poland) and to the Sejmik (the regional assemblies) of the Silesian and Opole Voivodeship. It managed to win 3 seats in 2010 and 4 seats in 2014 in the Sejmik of the Silesian Voivodeship. In 1991, it also won 2 seats in the Sejm (PKW *n.d.*).

Until 2017, the RAŚ was the only institutionalized form aspiring to the role of a regional political representation of the Silesians, despite lacking a political party status. Later two political initiatives appeared. The first one was the Ślōnzoki Razem party, which formulated its main goals by making references to Silesian identity. The initiators commented: “Only the existence of a strong, conscious Silesian nationality will make it possible to introduce further political demands. For today, we do not want to judge whether this goal will be the codetermination of both the Upper Silesian voivodeships and a strong representation of Ślōnzoki (not Silesians) in the Polish Sejm, or autonomy, or the independent Republic of Silesia, as we want to be the voice of the will of the Silesian nation” (Ślōnzoki Razem *n.d.*). However, the objectives are mostly formulated in the relation to Silesian culture (language, regional education, and self-determination). For many years the initiators were the core of similar activities in Silesia, which they considered ineffective and insufficient to achieve the intended effect. Thus, there was an incentive to create a political party. The party undertakes few actions of political nature as from the very beginning politics was supposed to be only a mean to achieve cultural goals. In the 2018 elections it won 3.28% of the vote, failing to exceed the electoral threshold (PKW *n.d.*).

In April 2018, the Śląska Partia Regionalna (ŚPR) was officially founded. The main statutory objectives of the ŚPR include, among others, broadening and strengthening self-government by transferring certain legislative powers to the regions and decentralizing financing; creating optimal conditions for preserving and protecting the identity of Silesians; protection of Silesian cultural heritage; improving the quality of Silesian life; and raising the level of education in the region. Its establishment—a few months before the local government elections—made it clear that the party’s goal was electoral. Despite a very active campaign, the party did not cross the electoral threshold, gaining 3.1% of the support (PKW *n.d.*).

To complement the picture given above, it should be stressed that in the political space, at the regional level, national political parties hold a dominant position. At the election level, they compete for influence in the region both in regional and national elections, as well as in elections to the European Parliament. As far as election promises are concerned, representatives of particular groups emphasize the importance of the region within the Polish state. Such rhetoric is also reinforced by personnel decisions. For example, in the last parliamentary elections (2018), the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość party (Law and Justice; PiS), which has been ruling Poland since 2015, proposed the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki as its candidate for the Sejm in an electoral district located in the Silesian Voivodeship. However, the main nationwide parties are not keen to support any demands for the regionalisation of Poland, including the autonomy of the Silesian Voivodeship. One of the most well-known reactions to such a demand was one included in a document of the same party from 2011, in which Silesian autonomists were referred to as “the camouflaged German option” (*Polska Times* 2011; Muś and Mazalik 2019, 159–177). The statement stirred up a big media frenzy around this issue,

which influenced the dynamics of the discussion. However, as Piotr Kocyba and Rafał Riedel note, “Whilst the attitude of the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość party representatives seems to be fairly consistent, other groups and actors on the political scene are showing a certain [. . .] variability in this respect which depends on the prevailing situation” (2015, 269).

Methods

The study was conducted using the categorized interview method (N=54). Each interview had the same structure and consisted of three parts. Part one questioned the identity of Silesian people as well as their system of values and culture. Their analysis is not part of these considerations, but it was an important element of cognitive analysis in the context of questions about political representation. In this part we asked questions that were related to the essence of Silesian identity, as expressed by Silesians’ identification with the region. Some examples include the following: Is Silesianness trendy? What do young people find attractive in Silesianness? Who is a Silesian? What are the most important values for you as a Silesian? What is the place of religion in Silesian identity? Part two of the interview was aimed at diagnosing the knowledge of the regional political scene and expectations toward its actors. We asked for opinions on regional political parties, politicians, and the sense of representation of one’s own interests. Part three of the interview included sociodemographic data, such as gender, age, place of residence (urban versus rural). In this part (intentionally moved to the end of the interview) we also asked about electoral behavior in the last local government elections in 2018. Such a structure of the interview was meant to minimize the respondents’ potential concerns about the political context of the survey. The experience of the authors of this project indicates that such concerns could arise due to the constant presence of political discourse in Silesia and disputes between supporters of particular groups who fought to a more or less radical extent for the autonomy of this area.

The analysis of the interview proceeded in three directions. First of all, we tried to quantify the individual answers in order to determine answer trends. Secondly, an important part of the research was the so-called cognitive analysis (Beatty and Willis 2007), which constituted a qualitative study of the respondent’s statements. A common feature of all types of cognitive interviews is that the respondent is induced to make an additional statement related to an answer to the questionnaire. This statement is treated as a source of information about cognitive processes taking place under the influence of the question posed in the questionnaire. This information is the basis for assessment of the question. Cognitive processes were revealed through two techniques: thinking aloud and probing (i.e., a technique involving the use of in-depth questions). Thirdly, the interview technique used allowed us to include in the analysis emotions and attitudes toward a given issue triggered by particular questions.

The research was carried out between January and April 2019 by trained interviewers in conditions ensuring comfort of expression and an absence of time constraints. The choice of respondents was purposeful and took into account the category of their place of residence (subregion of province, city, or village) and age. Individuals were reached by the snowball sampling method. People meeting the criteria received a direct invitation to participate in the interview. The interview took place in the respondent’s house. The interviewers were persons who were not directly related to the research project. They were trained only in the context of the interview objectives in order to minimize their influence on the content of the answers. When making an appointment, the interviewer ensured that the interview was fully anonymous and that its objectives were purely scientific. The interview lasted an average of 3 hours.

Research Sample

The group was selected on a quota-stratified sampling so as to ensure representation of all subregions of the voivodeship: Częstochowa (6), Bytom (5), Sosnowiec (8), Gliwice (6), Katowice

(9), Tychy (5), Rybnik (7), and Bielsko-Biała (8). Representation of each subregion in the sample was proportionate to its population (figures corresponding to population size are provided in brackets above). The control quotas were gender, place of residence (urban versus rural), and age. The control question that decided about the admission to the next part of the interview was, “Do you feel Silesian?” We assumed that the discussion about Silesia, identity, and electoral behavior should be based not so much on the formal place of residence or the number of years spent in Silesia but on a sense of connection with the region. Therefore, each of the participants—in accordance with the interview procedure—answered this question in the affirmative.

The survey included 26 women (48.1%) and 28 men (51.9%). Among the participants, four persons were under the age of 24 (7.4%), five in the age range of 25–34 (9.3%), and the age categories 35–44, 45–54, and over 65 each had 11 persons (20.4%), while the age group 55–64 was represented by 12 persons (22.2%). Everyone declared the place of birth in Silesia.

Results

In the first part of the interview, when discussing identity and cultural issues, the respondents were willing to talk about Silesia and Silesianness, and their attitude could be considered as positive. The emotions reported most often included pride, ambition, dignity, openness, trust in the Silesians, and humor. However, when we asked the first question about issues pertaining to the political representation, in most cases the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee clearly deteriorated. Many people categorically said they did not want to talk about politics and wished to withdraw from the interview. The interviewers managed to convince most of the respondents to remain, through seven withdrew. Among the remaining interviewees, 35 (64.8%) declared that they were unable to identify any entity on the regional political scene that could represent their interests as Silesians (table 1). Such an opinion was mostly expressed by older people over 45 years of age. Probing questions showed that in many cases the sense of lack of representation is linked to the general reluctance of respondents toward politics.¹ Many people were of the opinion that Silesia and the Silesians are a bargaining piece for the election campaign and are simply treated by parties as objects. The same parties then fail to follow up on their promises with concrete actions.²

Despite the encouragement of the interviewers, one in five people were unable to state whether the regional political scene has an entity that satisfactorily represents their interests (20.4%). Individual votes were given to the following parties: Śląska Partia Regionalna (9.3%), Ślonzoki Razem (1.9%), Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People’s Party; PSL) (1.9%), and the Ruch Autonomii Śląska (1.9%). However, the respondents were unable to justify their choice. In the case of ŚPR, three persons stressed that their vote was a credit of trust for a new entity on the regional political scene.³

Almost two out of five respondents (38.8%) declared that they did not know any politician who were active in the region (table 2). Their answers were followed by negative emotions, which were expressed in the following additional comments they made.⁴ Among those that provided names, the ranking was as follows: Kazimierz Kutz⁵ (1929–2018) (16.7%), Borys Budka⁶ (11.1%), Jerzy Gorzelik⁷ (5.6%), Jerzy Buzek⁸ (5.6%), Marek Krzakała⁹ (3.7%), and Małgorzata Myśliwiec¹⁰ (3.7%); earning one vote each (1.9%), Zbigniew Religa,¹¹ Wojciech Korfanty¹² (1873–1939), Marek Plura,¹³ Jan Rzymelka,¹⁴ Jerzy Ziętek (1901–1985),¹⁵ Wojciech Kiljańczyk,¹⁶ and Jan Olbrycht.¹⁷ 16 respondents indicated two politicians and eight indicated three. These were single indications of rather local activists or names repeated from the list. Among the indicated politicians, the majority were evaluated positively (62.1%) but every fourth respondent who indicated a politician had a negative opinion (24.1%). Others provided names but were unable to clearly formulate their attitude toward a given politician (13.8%). The highest level of awareness was shown by respondents aged 35–54 (table 2). Positive opinions were reflected in statements, which were often defensive¹⁸ or negative.¹⁹

Half of respondents could not indicate any regional political party (50.0%) (table 3). In many cases, frustration grew among those who had not yet been able to answer the questions asked in the

Table 1. Quantitative distribution of respondents' opinions about the political group that could represent them

	<i>There is no such group</i>		<i>I don't know</i>		Śląska Partia Regionalna		Ślōnzoki Razem		RAŚ		PSL		Total	
	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount
< 24	5.7	2	18.2	2	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	7.4	4
25-34	8.6	3	9.1	1	20.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	9.3	5
35-44	8.6	3	27.3	3	40.0	2	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	1	20.4	11
45-54	25.7	9	9.1	1	20.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0,0	0	20.4	11
55-64	28.6	10	18.2	2	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0,0	0	22.2	12
>65	22.9	8	18.2	2	20.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0,0	0	20.4	11
Total	100.0	35	100.0	11	100.0	5	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	54

Source: Analysis is based on the authors' conducted research.

Table 2. Quantitative distribution of indications of politicians who are actively involved in the region

	<i>I don't know any</i>		<i>I know at least one</i>	
	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount
<24	13.6	3	0.0	1
25–34	18.2	3	6.3	2
35–44	9.1	2	28.1	9
45–54	4.5	1	31.2	10
55–64	27.3	6	18.7	6
>65	27.3	6	15.6	5
Total	100.0	21	100.0	33

Source: Analysis is based on the authors' conducted research.

Table 3. Quantitative distribution of indications of regional political parties

	<i>I don't know any</i>		<i>I know at least one</i>	
	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount
<24	11.1	3	3.7	1
25–34	11.1	3	7.4	2
35–44	11.1	3	29.6	8
45–54	11.1	3	29.6	8
55–64	29.6	8	14.8	4
>65	25.9	7	14.8	4
Total	100.0	27	100.0	27

Source: Analysis is based on the authors' conducted research.

political area. Many people justified themselves with the statements.²⁰ The rest indicated one, two, or three parties. Therefore, the Ruch Autonomii Śląska (formally not a party) was recognized by more than half of the respondents and the Śląska Partia Regionalna by a third (27%), while the remaining respondents indicated Ślōnzoki Razem (17%). Party ratings were evenly distributed—most people positively evaluated the party they had chosen (40%).²¹ Slightly fewer respondents failed to show a distinct attitude and were not able to clearly evaluate the indicated group (36%). Every fourth person assessed it negatively (24%).²²

It is worth emphasizing that many people spoke with regret that the situation of the regional representation could look completely different if the parties did not fight with each other but joined forces for the good of Silesia.²³

Respondents were asked to formulate possible expectations toward regional political parties. Nearly every eight people were unable to formulate any expectations (13%, or 1–2 people in each age group). Justifying their opinion, they stressed that they are not interested in politics or have no faith in political parties.²⁴ The others pointed to one or two main expectations. Among all the indications, one in three related to the protection of the economic interests of Silesia (33.3%).²⁵ Nearly every fourth person expressed the need to protect the culture of Silesia (23%).²⁶ A similar

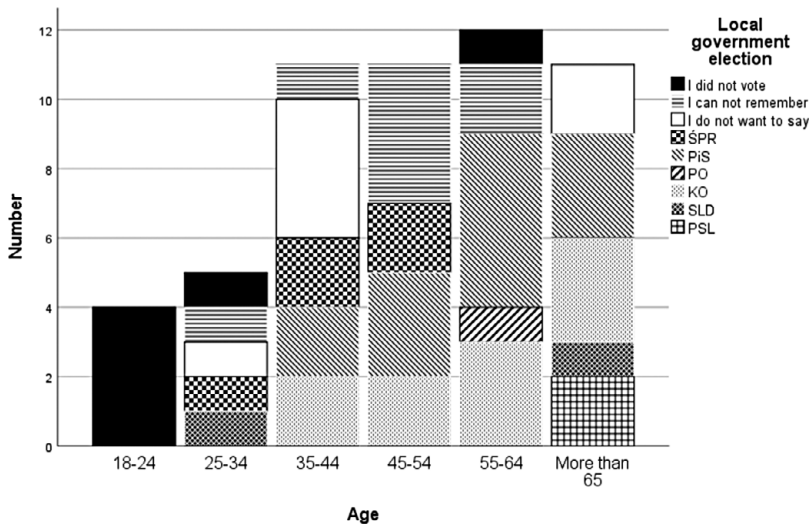


Diagram 1. Electoral behavior in local government elections in 2018.

number of respondents (11.7%) indicated the need to protect mines,²⁷ to promote Silesia,²⁸ and to improve of the quality of life of Silesian people.²⁹ The expectation of verifying the true image of Silesia in Poland (5%) was also indicated.³⁰ Interestingly, many statements showed the need for a national representation of Silesia.³¹

Regional parties in the local government elections of 2018 (diagram 1) were supported by only five people (9.3%). What is important, all these votes were cast for one entity, the Śląska Partia Regionalna, established just before the last local government elections. Most Silesians declared their support for parliamentary parties: one in four supported Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (24.1%) and one in five supported the Koalicja Obywatelska (Civic Coalition; KO) (20.4%). Two votes were cast for the Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (3.7%) and the Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance; SLD) (3.7%). Interestingly, a relatively large percentage of respondents was unable to recall who they voted for (14.8%). The sample also included seven persons who refused to answer (13.0%). Every ninth person was passive in local government elections; the youngest Silesians dominated this group.

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the study was to verify the representative potential of groups in Upper Silesia. We were interested in the quality of representation of Silesians' interests on the political level. We accepted the hypothesis that the stronger the identity of a particular group (regional or national) the greater the probability that parties and associations that put forward fundamental goals strictly in the realm of regional issues should enjoy broad support in the region, and consequently be perceived as the political representatives of such a group. The research shows quite clearly that Silesians are unable to identify any regional political entities that could represent them in a satisfactory manner. They cannot give specific reasons for the lack of representation, only general and generalizing explanations.³² The real reflection of this situation is the electoral preferences exhibited in the last local government elections—by far the largest pool of votes went to statewide parties. Such a situation may have several explanations. Firstly, the respondents had poor knowledge of the regional political scene. Apart from the 35–54 age group, every third or fourth person in the remaining age groups was unable to indicate any politician or group on the regional political scene. Some respondents even indicated historical figures, such as Kazimierz Kutz, who died in 2018, and Wojciech Korfanty,

who lived at the turn of the 19th century. Secondly, the lack of knowledge about regional political representation in conjunction with the historical suspicion of Silesian voters may result in a lack of interest in regional politics. Thirdly, the political programs of regional entities do not meet expectations of Silesian voters, which in the past were addressed exclusively by the state wide parties. Finally, as indicated by the research findings, Silesians are not able to formulate clear expectations regarding the satisfactory representation of their interests. Furthermore, any entity appearing on the regional political scene can not meet social expectations because they are not clearly defined. Many statements point to the disappointment and bitterness of the respondents, but there is no concrete cause for such emotions. This thesis is also supported by the result of the last local government elections, in which the new regional parties—*Ślōnzoki Razem* and *Śląska Partia Regionalna*—failed to cross the electoral threshold despite their active election campaigns. As a result, there may be serious difficulties in establishing new entities in the regional political scene as Silesians are unable to formulate interests and expectations clearly and collectively. An interesting summary was put forward in a statement made by one of the interlocutors (female, 45–54 years of age):

I don't know... Maybe these [regional] parties are more about cultural development. Thing is, I don't know if we can say that they represent the whole population of Silesia, if this population has different/various, so to speak, interests. [...] there would have to be some kind of an external enemy, something like this. Just like before the census in 2011, Kaczyński came here to Silesia and said that Silesians were a camouflaged German option, and this mobilized people to declare themselves as Silesians during the census. There would have to be one common interest or an external enemy. There are too many people and too many different interests which are contradictory. So, I don't think such [regional] parties would represent Silesia. Maybe more so if it were about teaching a dialect or other cultural things.

The survey was conducted with the use of the structured interview method, which allows for the observation of accompanying emotions and diagnosis of the respondents' feelings about the subject of analysis. The survey clearly showed that politics was a difficult subject for the respondents, as it aroused anger and disappointment. It is difficult to determine the reasons for such an attitude. Silesians used emotional language and spoke about politics very generally. Maybe, therefore, current perceptions are nothing more than a reflection of attitudes prevailing in the country—discouragement, negative rhetoric, and political struggles. It could also be a result of a poor level of knowledge and little interest in the regional political scene, covered up by verbal aggression.

Relating the survey results to age categories clearly shows that the most politically conscious group of respondents are people aged 35–44. These people are more likely to identify specific entities on the regional political scene. Younger people in this group are more likely to find satisfactory representation, but perhaps the difficulties of older people identifying the same are due to their ability to make more conscious and knowledge-based decisions. From a social point of view, this group is the most stable in their private and professional lives; therefore, they may have more time to engage in the public space. From the cultural point of view, it can be assumed that people aged 35–44 grew up at the turn of the 20th century (i.e., during the Silesian Renaissance).³³ This could have influenced the shaping of their attitudes. As a result, the Silesian identity became for them not only a private matter but also a point of reference in the public sphere. It is manifested in their relatively good understanding of the specificity of the regional political scene. However, this is not synonymous with them being able to find representatives.

The research proved the crisis of political representation at the regional level in the Silesia Voivodeship. However, it does not reject the political representation as such and consequently promote other forms of democratic policy implementation. The phenomenon of the crisis of representation in this case is multifaceted. First, Silesians have a problem with precisely defining their own interests and related expectations toward those who could represent them. Some of them consider protection of the region's economic interests to be a matter of utmost importance, while

others emphasize issues related to the cultural and identity spheres. However, Silesians identify neither issue area exclusively in the sense that only regional parties (or other forms of regional association) could effectively act as their representatives in institutions of public authority. As a result, during elections they often vote for candidates belonging to statewide parties. Not without significance is the fact that some people are critical of political issues altogether, which results in their detachment from these issues. As a result, they do not want to discuss representation, which is associated with politics and understood by them as a sphere teeming with struggle, dishonesty, and moral ambiguity.

Second, Silesians vaguely formulate expectations toward entities that could play the role of their representative. Referring to a concept of David Runciman and Mónica Brito Vieira (2008), they do not necessarily perceive representation in visual or theatrical terms. Rather, they accept a juridical model of representation. The problem is the lack of a clear idea about representation. They are unable to define clearly what they would expect from a representative. Such an attitude leaves the representative free to act, which, on the one hand, opens the door to implementation of the thermostat model of representation, and, on the other hand, exposes the representative to criticism from those whom he or she represents if they consider their interests are not properly protected.

Third, in the statements of the respondents, one can observe disbelief in the effectiveness of the activities of regional groups. Respondents seem to be convinced of the effectiveness of political actions primarily at the national level. In this case, a centralistic approach to perceiving political activity is noticeable, which may be a result of the influence that the political rivalry on the national arena has on Silesians. Consequently, for many of them, regional problems become secondary, which is not necessarily expressed verbally but rather in the context of electoral behaviors.

Fourth, the attitudes of the respondents clearly point to a lack of trust in representatives. Considering the party nature of the contemporary representative democracy, this may be a consequence of another phenomenon—the crisis of political parties. At the same time, the research also revealed deficiencies in democratic political culture. Respondents often used arguments reflecting their stereotypical way of thinking or directly declared a lack of interest in politics.

At the same time, it is noted that members of these groups also speak about the protection of regional interests, although—unlike regional parties—these objectives are not a priority for them. Therefore, based on the conducted research, it should be stated that there is no direct correlation between the strong identity of a regional or national group and the strengthening of the position of regional parties and associations. In Silesia, the representation of regional interests still constitutes only one (not necessarily the dominant) aspect of political competition. This does not mean, however, that the situation is not subject to change. After all, as noted earlier, contemporary societies function within a polycentric structure, which favors the fluctuation of needs, interests, and the expectations of them being met. Perhaps with time, the shaping of the mechanism of political representation in Silesia will be increasingly influenced by regional postulates, which will bring measurable benefits to regional groups.

The authors are aware of the constraints of the study, which may affect the results and their extrapolation. First, we are dealing with a small research sample. Its size makes it impossible to generalize conclusions across the entire population of Silesians. Insufficient data also makes it difficult to conduct quantitative analyses. However, due to the use of the observational and cognitive methods in the study, the authors deliberately decided to employ the interview method involving direct contact for an extended period of time. The obtained results have shown some interesting trends that have an exploratory value and encourage us to continue our research.

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Notes

- 1 *"I do not think that any politician represents the interests of anyone other than his or her own, especially in recent years", "I no longer trust politics", "No, but does any party represent anyone well in Poland at all?"*
- 2 *"All parties treat Silesians instrumentally", "All parties try to take away whatever they can during election campaigns. Let's start holding them accountable for what they promise", "Campaigns were often built around the Silesian issue, but our region never really saw any added value"*
- 3 *"ŚPR lost the elections, but time will tell, because they had good ideas", "It's a pity for the people involved in ŚPR because they all went down due to the negligence of a few. But maybe they will still get their game together if they understand what caused their defeat?", "It is difficult to assess the ŚPR, but I keep my fingers crossed that they will not be like the others."*
- 4 *If I have not heard of one, then it means that no one is able to represent Silesia with dignity and no one cares about the interests of Silesia, therefore no one should be called Silesian", "Like all politicians, they do nothing", "They can only steal, it is better not to remember them".*
- 5 Polish film, theatre and television director, screenwriter, publicist, writer, politician.
- 6 Lawyer, local government politician, member of the Sejm in the 7th, 8th and 9th term, chairman of the Platforma Obywatelska party (Civic Platform) from 2020.
- 7 Polish local government activist connected with Upper Silesia, chairman of the Ruch Autonomii Śląska.
- 8 Polish politician, since 2004 a member of the European Parliament, comes from Cieszyn Silesia.
- 9 Polish politician, translator (graduate of German studies), local government official. Born in Rybnik.
- 10 Political scientist, academic teacher, Upper Silesia process researcher, co-founder of the Śląska Partia Regionalna party.
- 11 Polish heart surgeon and politician, Minister of Health 2005-2007.
- 12 Polish national leader of Upper Silesia, one of the most important historical figures of Silesia associated with the struggle for its accession to Poland.
- 13 Disabled politician, psychotherapist, he chaired, among others, the Parliamentary Group for the Promotion of the Silesian Language. Supports Silesians' efforts to be recognised as an ethnic minority. Twice an author of MP bills to recognise the Silesian ethnolect as a regional language, which the Sejm did not adopt.
- 14 Polish politician, geologist. In 1989 he founded the Komitet Obywatelski Regionu Śląsko-Dąbrowskiego (*Silesian-Dąbrowa Region Citizens' Committee*) and the Związek Górnośląski (*Upper Silesian Union*).
- 15 Polish politician, local government activist, president of the Association of Silesian Uprising Veterans, associated with Katowice.
- 16 Social activist and local governmental employee connected with Rybnik
- 17 Polish politician, Member of the European Parliament since 2004, associated with Cieszyn Silesia.
- 18 *"(...) they want to do something, sometimes it doesn't work out, but I appreciate their involvement", "Maybe they are not the best, but they are there and we should support them", "They are one of us, I don't know if there are as many of them in Poland as there are here?"*
- 19 *"They do not represent the region apart from being present at official state ceremonies. I don't value any of them", "What good have they done besides stealing from us?", "Politicians like everyone else, it's a pity that Silesia has to pay for it".*
- 20 *"Politics is pointless, there is nothing to talk about", "I said I didn't want to talk about it", "The parties think only about how much to steal", "I don't feel ashamed that I don't know the names because they themselves failed with those names in these elections"*
- 21 *"RAŚ is a party that has changed the way it thinks about Silesia in recent years and laid the foundations for what can be called a modern Silesian identity - one that also has a political*

dimension". "These parties are ours, other regions do not have such representation, although it is probably far from perfect", "ŚPR had a false start in the previous local government elections last year, but it is a party with potential, which has a future, this is the way, the way of open regionalism"

- 22 "I have to say I can't give the activity of regional political parties a high score because RAŚ saw the myth of autonomy as the most important thing, and that is not the most important problem today. The problems are different, e.g. Silesia is losing its importance on a national scale. These parties are too weak regionally to go bigger", "They have little power, no one in Poland takes us into account", "They have too radical views and may harm Silesia".
- 23 "The worst thing is that all these parties fight each other, forgetting about Silesia", "They want to win the elections and not fight for the good of Silesia. Maybe if they merged, it would be beneficial, because they would have a common goal - the interest of Silesia and not that of their own"
- 24 "When I start to expect something, there will be only disappointment in the end", "There is nothing interesting in politics, only fraud and self-interest. Why get involved?", "What can you want? Everyone thinks about themselves. Politics is no different than anything else"
- 25 "Parties should defend the interests of companies operating in the region that originate and operate in Silesia. Silesian investments are our showcase", "They should take care of economic interests. Silesia is losing its importance in terms of GDP per capita, global product, in terms of investment attractiveness", "They should also take care not to close large companies that hire employees, Silesian employees, e.g. Opel. I work in the Opel factory in Gliwice, and recently a lot of people have been fired there. This is what our families and us should take care of"
- 26 "The parties should make sure that the money earned by Silesia stays in our region, promotes Silesian culture, cultivates the Silesian dialect", "If the parties do not fight for our culture, nobody will do it anymore"
- 27 "Mines are the showpiece of Silesia", "They should take care not to close mines, as this is Silesia's greatest wealth. That way jobs will be secured for Silesians"
- 28 "They should take care of their region, which means that it should not be overlooked or discriminated against. They should take care of good recognition. It seems to me that Silesia has a lot to offer to Poland", "We have a lot to show and this is also a very important argument encouraging people to come to Silesia and invest here", "As far as Silesian culture is concerned, I keep wondering, that whenever I go to the Czech Republic or Slovakia, I think about how I turn on their television and they have a programme there, where these different folk bands are shown and they are able to maintain and promote this traditional culture. And in our country, at least in Silesia, there is no such thing and I am just wondering why"
- 29 "They should be in the Sejm and through appropriate laws they should improve the life of people in Silesia", "For people, regardless of who they feel and who live here, this is the quality of everyday life"
- 30 "Silesian regional parties should first of all show the true image of Silesia, which is so false. Silesians are presented as people with a claiming attitude. Their message is that coal deposits are depleted, and now the Silesians want Warsaw to maintain them", "Poland thinks stereotypically about Silesia. Somebody should do something about this"
- 31 "Regional parties should participate in national political life in order to ensure a reasonable future, e.g. now that there are attempts to close down the mining industry", "What can we change here in Silesia, they must go to Warsaw"
- 32 Such as: "I do not think that any politician represents the interests of anyone other than his or her own" or "There is nothing interesting in politics, only fraud and self-interest"
- 33 Another term for what we call the Renaissance of Silesianness is the phrase "a fashion for Silesianness and everything that is broadly related to it", which appears in the literature on the subject (Wądołowski 2015, 29). It relates to an increased interest of "ordinary" people (in terms of attitudes and behaviors in the field of culture, as well as in everyday life) and representatives of

the world of science and the media in Silesian (Upper Silesian) issues, a phenomenon which has been observed for the last two decades.

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