# How "Native" Is My "Native Anthropology"? Positionality and the Reception of the Anthropologist's Work in Her Own Community – A Reflexive Account

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Abstract: *The paper problematizes the issue of the positionality of an anthropologist and the resonance of her or his work. It is argued that this is especially challenging when an anthropologist is a "native", and it is his or her own minority community that reads the research results and reacts to them. The paper offers analyses of these issues using the example of the author's own long-time study of the community she comes from and the resonance her work has gained there. The paper also presents the results of reflexive work about the political relevance and ethical obligations of the author's work in the situation of the cultural hegemony of national culture over the minority she has been studying and comes from.*

Keywords: *native anthropology, anthropological reflexivity, Cieszyn Silesia, cultural hegemony, political relevance of anthropology*

The title paraphrases the question posed by the Indian-American scholar Kirin Narayan in her important paper originally published in 1993. It was entitled "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" and was an attempt to deconstruct the part of the discipline's colonial legacy which consisted in polarising Anthropologists (who study) and Others (who are studied). Those researchers who did not fit into such a model were named "native", "indigenous" or "insider", and were seen as dealing with "their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity" (Narayan 1993: 671).

The situation of East and Central European anthropologists does not really fit well into the model analysed by Narayan, because we have always tended to study our own folk cultures "at home", without a colonial context. But we should still consider the problems she tackled, especially the issue of the positionality of an anthropologist, an issue which is rarely problematised, at least in Polish anthropology, either by those of an ethnological (volkskundist) or those of a sociological background. Another problem that is scarcely reflected upon is the resonance of

an anthropologist's work. This is especially challenging when an anthropologist is a "native", and it is his or her own community that reads the research results and reacts to them.

I propose here to reflect on these issues using the example of my own long-time study of the community I come from and the resonance this work has gained. I am here not focusing on the theoretical and methodological problems of my research, but rather on its results, and the problems they cause for various audiences, including myself. Thus my idea is to do some reflexive work about the political relevance of my work in the situation of the cultural hegemony of the national culture over the minority I am studying.

My paper consists of four parts. In the first, I discuss the issue of "native" anthropology, problematising it and characterising my own position in the field. Next, I discuss my own research on Cieszyn Silesia. The third part presents an "ethnography" of my paper, namely an analysis of the reception of my Silesian book and its political uses. Finally, I refer to my last project, an oral-history documentary film, and the problems of various kinds that the work on it revealed. In the conclusions, I formulate the findings of my reflexive analysis and implications which may be of use for other "native" anthropological researchers.

### "Nativeness" Problematised

Traditionally, classical Western anthropology was meant to deal with "Other worlds". At a certain point, though, an alternative project appeared: studying one's own society, or "anthropology at home" (Jackson 1987). We can distinguish some types of such projects, mainly: insider anthropology, e.g. research by anthropologists coming from the dominant ethnic group carried out in their own society; and native anthropology, when researchers come from a minority ethnic group and study its members (Messerschmidt 1981: 13).

Polish (and also other East and Central European) traditional ethnographic studies of folk culture can be classed in the first category, namely insider anthropology: researchers came from the dominant ethnic group of the studied society. Yet, there were huge class and cultural differences between ethnographers who came from the post-landed gentry intelligentsia and the local folk of various regions. Also, most contemporary anthropological studies carried out in Poland can be classified as insider anthropology, but the issue of doing research in one's own society has not really been taken up, even in the situation when a member of a dominant ethnic group studied members of a cultural minority, like a Polish researcher studying Lemkos, Silesians or Roma. This of course resulted from the positivistic model of scientific inquiry, which prevented researchers from any reflexivity. It is only recently that some anthropologists have started to explore the problem (e.g. Pasieka and Sekerdej 2013; Krzyżowski 2009).

When a researcher is a member of a minority group him- or herself, she or he is more likely to raise this issue, as if out of a need to somehow "excuse" oneself (Królewski 2011; Kubica 2011b; Modnicka 2010). This situation should be counted in the second category, namely as "native" anthropology. It is here that my own undertaking can be located. In my case it is the study of the community I come from: Cieszyn Silesians. It is important to stress the minority character of the group I am studying and from which I come (in fact it is even twofold: ethnic and religious).

In socio-cultural anthropology, the research situation of "native" anthropologists has already been thoroughly discussed by authors from various milieus (e.g. Aguilar 2010; Bakalaki 1997; Brettell 1993; Fahim 1982; Hastrup 2008; Kuwayama 2004; Medicine 2001; Messerschmidt 2010; Narayan 1993; Wolcott 1999). Here I present the main issues of the discussion: general epistemological concerns, relevance for research practice and the reception of anthropological work.

Some anthropologists are very sceptical about the very project of "native" anthropology. Kirsten Hastrup believes that the basic standards of scholarship also comprise reading the literature on the study area, including local knowledge. "But it belongs to another register of knowledge, because both types of understanding should be measured according to other scales of values. As theoretical knowledge, anthropology is the opposite of the practical mode of knowledge that is the basis of the normal social experience in the social world. (...) There is no way to talk simultaneously from the position of the anthropologist and a native. Speaking from inside and outside at the same time is logically impossible" (Hastrup 2008: 171). Hastrup believes that inscribed in anthropology is the "process of 'making foreign'", that is of looking at the studied cultural reality from a distance and that there is none of this when we examine our own society (Hastrup 2008: 171). Thus, in this formulation "native" anthropology as a project is something that is dubious, if not impossible.

There are also other problems: Takami Kuwayama warns that using the concept of "native" anthropology may strengthen cultural essentialism, but claims that it is still a useful concept to show the workings of the world system of anthropology (Kuwayama 2004). He points out that the differentiation between "native" and non-"native" should be considered in terms of three components: 1. the culture used as point of reference in ethnographic observations; 2. the assumed audience (readers); 3. the language in which research results are written up. "Nativeness" is thus a complex issue, not only a matter of an anthropologist's biography, but rather of point of reference in research and writing up.

The problem may be seen quite differently. It is believed that formal education in the field of anthropology provides "natives" with a "comparative perspective in the study of their own people", as Harry F. Wolcott put it. According to him, the roots of the comparative perspective come from the social sciences, and not from

researchers' biographies. What actually makes the projects of "native" anthropologists "sufficiently different", Wolcott argues, is the nature of their "indigenous community", which differs from the dominant model in terms of ethnicity, region or class (Wolcott 1999: 155). It is important, however, for researchers to have previous experience of foreignness. Pierre Bourdieu wrote about the genesis of his research on the celibacy of French peasants, which enabled him to formulate a theory of symbolic violence: "When I worked in Kabylia, in a world that is foreign to me, I thought that it would be good to create a kind of *Tristes tropiques* in reverse (...) it means to observe the effects that could produce in me objectification of the world in which I am a native. (...) I made the effort to go beyond the usual explanations that were accepted by both residents and journalists" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 157). The objectification of the world in which one is a native can be difficult, but an anthropological education and an experience of alienation, which allow one to go beyond the categories of one's own culture and reduce ethnocentrism, can be helpful in achieving this. As Anthony Jackson puts it, "doing anthropology at home is of benefit when the researcher has prior experience of fieldwork abroad before turning homewards, since this aids the 'distantiation' process that is necessary if <u>we</u> are to see ourselves as others see <u>us</u>" (Jackson 1984: 14).

Narayan deconstructed the very concept of "native" anthropology, instead proposing "that at this historical moment we might more profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations. The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux. Factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status" (Narayan 1993: 671-2). Though I agree with Narayan, I think that we, Eastern and Central European anthropologists, should draw benefit from the discussion of "native" anthropology and think over the situation of studying our own cultural reality, the positionality of a "native" anthropologist and the reception of his or her findings in the studied community.

There are obvious advantages of research as a "native" anthropologist: easy contact with informants, lack of linguistic problems and understanding of nonverbal communication, not yielding to hidden stereotyping, good access to certain aspects of the studied culture, especially to its emotional dimension, and finally, understanding cultural subtleties (see Aguilar 1981, Hastrup 2008). In addition to these obvious advantages, attention is also drawn to the disadvantages of "native" anthropologists' studies: by participating in the everyday life of the phenomena they are studying, they may be reluctant to analyse them; they lack distance to formulate questions; their interlocutors assume that the researchers know the rules and will follow them; the anthropologists are immediately placed in some social category; and they have a tendency to apply preconceived notions (Aguilar 1981).

There is still one important point that I am yet to raise. It has been pointed out that the activities of "native" anthropologists are politically oriented to the benefit of a studied community, aiming to increase its pride and ability to resist oppression (Kuwayama 2004). Kuwayama also points to the fact that researchers from minority groups are often accused of a lack of objectivism, because they represent the political interests of their groups. But this, he argues, is rather because the public sympathises with the dominant model. Researchers of the mainstream of society are usually considered "objective" and "neutral", due to a sympathy on the part of the audience. The researchers of the minority are often seen as "subjective" or "biased", because they do not have the sympathy of the majority. He concludes that "'objectivity' is another name for domination of the weaker by the stronger" (Kuwayama 2004: 21).

Kuwayama, like Narayan, writes that in post-colonial times "the traditional boundary between the coloniser/researcher and the colonised/researched has become increasingly blurred." "Natives" can read what others have written about them, and they can also write themselves. Their discourse, often representing ethnic nationalism, is confronted with the discourses of outsiders, especially from former colonising countries. Kuwayama concludes that in this situation a major task in contemporary anthropology is "the creation of a 'dialogic space' between the describer and the described, as well as among all the people concerned with the culture studied, without privileging one kind of discourse over another" (Kuwayama 2004: ix). This is a very good point, but Kuwayama has failed to take into account the situation of the cultural hegemony of the centre over minorities which makes a "native" anthropologist clash not only with the dominant party, but also with his or her own "native" folk, who adopt its perspective.

Narayan too refers to the issue of the reception of an anthropologist's work, suggesting focusing on "relations with the people we seek to represent in our texts", on whether they are instrumentalised or invited to dialogue and critique. Narayan proposes a more narrative style of anthropological texts, and translating professional jargon into the language of everyday life which would offer "native" audiences a more democratic share in an anthropological project. However, she did not reflect on the problems that may result from this. Judith Okely warns that if fieldwork is at home, "the anthropologist cannot escape being read or misread by a wide range of interested parties beyond the usual academic constituency" and "avoid the political consequences of his or her research" (Okely 1996: 26). The political implications of a "native" anthropologist's work are inevitable, and should be taken into account and even welcomed. They may concern the academic community, the dominant society and a minority group.

In my case, it was coming from multi-denominational Cieszyn Silesia to Catholic Krakow to study at university that gave me a sense of distance (as Wolcott put it); it was especially the constant necessity to explain my Lutheran background

to my colleagues and other people that made me think of myself as being different. On the other hand, my sociological and anthropological education helped me to realise the working of the cultural hegemony of Polishness and to appreciate my Silesianness. Both factors – the experience of being different and theoretical knowledge – produced an "objectivisation of the world in which I was a native", as Bourdieu put it. But at the same time, I still felt a Pole, though I often differed from my Polish colleagues in my opinions and ideas about various problems of a political and cultural nature.

Later, in the course of my various research projects, I was able to appreciate the advantages of my being a "native" (as Aquilar called them): I could "read" Silesian culture and have good access to its users, both Catholics and Lutherans, because I could communicate with them in Silesian, the language of the people "from here". And, as Narayan put it, "I often share an unspoken emotional understanding with the people with whom I work" (Narayan 1993: 674). But I have also experienced the negative aspects of the situation. It is particularly difficult when my interviewees assume that I should know the problems I am asking about, because I'm "from here". In this situation, it helped me to throw in a comment that I live in Krakow and may not be informed. On the other hand, anthropological theories help me to understand important problems and to analyse them (as Wolcott suggested). And still, there were often other factors that mattered more in research situations, especially my gender, class or education (as noted by Narayan). I believe that I was able to resolve the impossibility of "speaking from inside and outside at the same time" raised by Hastrup by writing in various genres: ethnographic and literary. As to Kuwayama's components of differentiation between "native" and not-"native": 1. the culture used as point of reference in ethnographic observation: there is no simple answer, it was Silesian and academic Polish, depending on the context and situation; 2. the assumed audience: primarily academic colleagues, but also Silesian compatriots; 3. the language in which the research results are written up: Polish (the language of academia and also of the public sphere in Silesia).

My research was to some extent politically motivated (in the way discussed by Kuwayama). Apart from the purposes of scientific inquiry, I wanted to enhance the status of Cieszyn Silesian culture. I am particularly concerned with the rebirth of the Cieszyn variety of the Silesian language and with its introduction to the public sphere as a "fully-fledged alternative to the hegemonic language", to use Tomas Hyland Eriksen's phrase (Eriksen 1992: 329). And above all I want to deconstruct the cultural hegemony of Polish nationalism-Catholicism, which is not just a political, but also an epistemological issue (I will elaborate on this in later sections).

## Cieszyn Silesia and my Research

I will begin by recalling the most important historical facts. Silesia has in its history been part of various states: the Polish Kingdom, the Czech Crown; later, together with it, coming under the rule of the Habsburgs (1526). The Duchy of Cieszyn has always been a unique country. One of the factors instrumental in this was religion: from the time of Reformation it was mainly Lutheran, but later the Counter-Reformation weakened local Lutheranism. Another was the economy: from the second half of the 18th century the region underwent intensive industrialisation. Cieszyn Silesia was cut in half and divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1920. In 1938, the Czechoslovak part was incorporated into Poland and in 1939 the whole region became a part of the German Reich, in 1945 the division between Poland and Czechoslovakia was restored.[1] Since 2004, and the EU accession of the Czech Republic and Poland, the state border has become less and less important, but the country, having being included in two different states for almost hundred years, is still culturally divided.

I started my research on the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia in the late 1970s with a historical-sociological study of the social bonds of the Cieszyn Silesian Lutheran community (Kubica 1996). I returned to research my own "native" region in the 1990s, carrying out several projects: both historical and ethnographic. They dealt with various problems that attracted my attention, addressing local concerns as well as problems inspired by anthropological theory. One of these was the analysis of autobiographies of pro-Polish activists (from the 1848 Revolutions until the interwar period) to look for the ethical dimension of identity. Another one consisted in dialogues with local political and cultural activists about the categories of being-from-here ("stela" in Silesian), and not-from-here ("nie stela"), which started to be politicised then. I monitored public rituals of various sorts and scrutinised their changes, as well as examining the cultural landscape and its religious dimension. All these studies were based on thorough research on the economic and social history of the region. Furthermore, I investigated several problems concerning the Lutheran community: its ethos and how it has changed; rituals and concepts of death and dying, also from a historical perspective; the autobiographies of Lutherans and how their religion was written about; another topic was to find out how women were presented in those texts, and finally, an interview with a gay Lutheran about what it means to be a minority within a minority. I also wrote about topics subject to concealment in the multicultural context that I came across in my research and private life; another topic was the social memory of World War II, when Silesians were subjected to forced labour, imprisonment, or conscription to the German Army. I have published several papers on these topics over the

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1   For a historical overview, see the Polish-Czech-German volume: Bahlecke, Joachim, Dan Gawrecki, and Ryszard Kaczmarek 2011.

years, and later, together with some new articles, several texts of prose and photographs, composed a volume called *Śląskość i protestantyzm. Antropologiczne studia o Śląsku Cieszynskim, proza, fotografia* [Silesianness and Protestantism. Anthropological studies on Cieszyn Silesia, prose, photography] (Kubica 2011a).

My projects were based on various classical and contemporary anthropological and sociological theories. I would like to refer here to only some of them. I found especially useful the Gellnerian distinction between "wild" and "garden" cultures. According to this theory, some cultures develop spontaneously as part of human life: as a system of shared values and norms. These "systems passed down naturally from generation to generation without conscious intention, supervision, care, regrow without special fertilization" (Gellner 1991: 65). Therefore, one can learn a wild culture only through living in it, being brought up in it. It is not formulated in the form of "rules", but learned through experience. Some wild cultures, Gellner claims, become garden ones, and those that do not see a chance for this give up and do not produce nationalism. My historical analysis of the narratives of pro-Polish activists in Cieszyn Silesia showed that, until the first half of the nineteenth century, the only higher culture there was German. Silesians, with the education they received, came under the influence of German language and culture. They felt German. The 1848 Revolutions and consequent greater social mobility brought with them, as it was called, a "national awakening". Educated Silesians noticed that their Germanness was "false" and that they had to return to their "cultural roots". But particularly important here is the fact that they called their roots Polish and mystified this construction. Nationalism required everyone to be involved in some kind of moral community. Silesia did not constitute such a community, so the choice was between Polish and German culture (and also the Czech one in some areas). Moreover, the choice was between two different sets of values. Germanness was connected with progress, the future and pragmatism, and Polishness with tradition, authenticity, selflessness and honour. These were the two moral horizons between which Silesians oscillated (see Kubica 2011c).

Another important concept in my theoretical vocabulary is that of Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony. According to him, this emerges from the variety of activities and ideas that are rooted in the experience of the class that have historically shaped the meaning of the world. The dominance of elites becomes natural by a diverse set of strategies in the field of culture. Culture structures the human perception and experience in such a profound way that the hegemonic vision is accepted as absolute truth by the whole society. The common-sense outlook of subaltern people remains vague and fragmented, and only in specific historical conditions may it become a hotbed of resistance against hegemony (see Lears 1985; Crehan 2002; Petrusauskaite and Schröder 2010).

The Polish culture transmitted through education and promoted in the media is based on the history of "the Polish nation", by which it is the Catholic gentry-

intelligentsia dominant group that is meant. Hegemony is evident in the acceptance of the dominant role of Polish Catholic intellectual elites by Cieszyn Silesians. They feel their distinctiveness, emphasise being "from-here" and consider Silesian language an important element of their identity (see Kubica 2011d). But they call it a "dialect" (or "po naszymu" – our way) and do not believe that it should be specially cultivated. Speaking Silesian in public is not adopted, because this may indicate that a person is not educated and does not know literary Polish. Social memory worships only the victims of World War II who are in line with the Polish martyrological-heroic ethos, and many Silesians who were killed serving in the German army are not memorialised in any way, with their memory preserved only by family and friends (see Kubica 2011e).

To sum up, in my book I analysed the problem of Silesianness as a wild culture in a Gellnerian sense. I tried to reveal what has been covered by the dominant Polish-centred meta-narrative, and discredited as illegitimate, unjust, non-independent or fragmented. I treated Silesianness as an independent category, at least potentially. My theoretical position was also a clear political stance.

On the other hand, I tried to show that in Poland, Catholicism is a kind of a cultural norm not only in public discourse, but also in academic reflections on religion. The religious pluralism of Cieszyn Silesia reveals this problem. I also focused on the political dimension of religious communities. Multi-denominationalism is not merely a religious phenomenon, but is also important in local-level politics, and is a basis of a true pluralism of the public sphere and civil society (see Kubica 2011b). This theoretical statement also has obvious consequences.

### The Reception and Political Consequences of my "Native Anthropology"

My Silesian book was published in 2011 by the Jagiellonian University Press and a few months later there was an additional printing, which is quite rare for an academic book. The reception of the volume and its political meaning were quite interesting. Let me summarise them.

Some time after the book was published, I was approached by the leader of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (RAŚ), Jerzy Gorzelik. This group is quite popular in Upper Silesia and Gorzelik was then a member of the Silesian Province board. But RAŚ has a rather limited influence both in Cieszyn Silesia and among Lutherans. Gorzelik proposed that we collaborate, basing this proposition on an understanding that our ideas about the importance of Silesianness are quite similar. RAŚ organised several meetings to discuss my book with the general public. The first one took place in Katowice, the capital of Upper Silesia, and was co-organised by the Polish Lutheran Association and a local bishop. The gathering was quite well attended. At it, I not only tackled the problems of Silesian Protestants being in a difficult position in Poland, in a situation which can be described as Catholic

"ethno-clericalism" (Perica 2002). I also raised other issues: such as women in the Polish Lutheran Church not being ordained, and the situation of gays and lesbians being concealed. The discussion proved that the first issue was really catchy and the public eager to discuss it. The second appeared in a less formal gathering during a dinner with a female member of the Church synod, who was not an enthusiast of women pastors. The third did not come up at all. There were also two other meetings: in Bielsko-Biała and Cieszyn, with rather limited audiences. Gorzelik's idea to attract more people with my help did not really work, and Cieszyn Silesians remain generally indifferent to his political message. But my name became associated with RAŚ.

I also had several other meetings: in my hometown, Ustroń, in the local museum; in neighbouring Wisła, in a public library; and in other places. These occasions, as well as letters and personal meetings with readers of my book, made me realise that it was quite significant for many people. It had some importance. I would venture the observation that it made people think about their Silesian identity and, perhaps, gave them intellectual instruments to construct it, and to name their own doubts towards the dominant discourse of Polishness. It was a kind of a trigger for their own reflexivity and identity work.

Apart from this positive resonance, there were also critical reactions to my work. A good example might be the negative comments to the interview I gave to the Polish website Interia. I had been approached by a young Lutheran from Cieszyn Silesia who worked in Krakow. She told me that she was constantly treated as a freak by her Catholic colleagues, and would like me to explain to the wider public who we, Cieszyn Lutherans, were. I tried my best to meet this demand: demonstrating doctrinal and organisational differences between Catholicism and Lutheranism, and giving a historical overview of Silesian Protestantism. The editor of the site put as the title of the interview "Protestant Cieszyn Silesia." After some time, I learned that the interview had been republished by a Cieszyn website and had provoked heated comments.[2] The main problem, in my opinion, laid in the title. What was acceptable in Warsaw or Krakow was impossible in Cieszyn: "Protestant Cieszyn Silesia" might for some readers mean that local Catholics are not important (or not "from-there"), or that Cieszyn Silesia is not Polish (because not Catholic), etc. The comments revealed the negative emotions of Catholics, who were probably accustomed to the dominant position of Catholicism in Polish society and could not stand a region being called "Protestant". My interview, which simply reported several issues, launched negative reactions, even hatred, very far from the regular inter-denominational "political correctness" successfully practised in the region.

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2   It is still to be consulted: http://facet.interia.pl/meskie-tematy/news-protestancki-slask-cieszynski,nId,450562. http://gazetacodzienna.pl/article/kultura/dr-kubica-heller-o-protestanckim-slasku-cieszynskim-cz-i-wywiad. Both accessed September 21, 2015.

Later, there appeared a very critical comment about my book in an interview with a cultural activist who has been working in Cieszyn for some years: "I must admit that this book left me very disappointed. I believe that the formulation of Polishness in this work is extremely unfair. Yes, perhaps Poland has never been a good mother to these areas, but the permanent use of the term 'Polish nationalism' in a book which deals with the coexistence of peoples, cultures and religions is for me a complete misunderstanding. In reference to Polish nationality, it seems to me that this is largely unfair. If such works, such descriptions are being created, we still do not have an objective history. But after all it is an open, decisive voice in the cultural history of the region" (Bogusław Słupczyński in Drabik 2014: 121). It is very disappointing to see one's work misunderstood. In this case, the problem was with the very term "nationalism". In Polish, it has a very pejorative connotation (and usually refers to "others"), in contrast to "patriotism", which is an important virtue (of "us"). I was using the term in an anthropological sense, but the reader missed it.

Another dubious reaction to my book, or perhaps rather the lack of one, took place within the Lutheran Church. Apart from several meetings in parishes (organised together with RAŚ or not), the book did not receive much attention in the Church media. For instance, it was not reviewed by the major weekly *Zwiastun*. I tried to attract the attention of an editor who I know personally. She seemed very interested, but the review never appeared. I was later informed, by way of the "private" explanation of another person, that the editor-in-chief did not want to tackle any controversial matters and therefore did not want to publicise my ideas, which apparently were inconvenient for him. My book was also ignored by Cieszyn cultural institutions and the local branch of the Silesian University (despite my presenting it to several ethnologists there).

The only[3] quite critical opinion was expressed by an ethnologist coming from the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia but working on the Polish side, Jan Kajfosz. In one of his papers, he argued that because I researched only the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia, I was *de facto* grounding the division of the territory by the state border. He also presented the work of Jakub Grygar (see Grygar 2004), who carried out his fieldwork on the Czech side, in the same manner. According to Kajfosz, this amounted to a way to stabilise the division conceptually (Kajfosz 2013). In this critique, he was certainly right, though I did try to refer to both parts of the country when it was possible. Multi-sited fieldwork on both sides of the border would be the solution in this situation. In fact, I had planned such a project even before Kajfosz's criticism (see the next section).

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3    Another Cieszyn ethnologist, in his as yet unpublished book, mentions my works several times, but only in some minor points, and does not discuss my theoretical considerations, despite analysing the same problems (Studnicki, Grzegorz. 2016. *Śląsk Cieszyński: obrazy przeszłości a tożsamość miejsc i ludzi.* Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ).

Thus, if I were to summarise the reception that my anthropological work had, the image to emerge would not be a simple one. [4] I was very pleased by those readers who reported on the role my book played in their own "identity work" and reflexivity. But I also have to admit that they came from quite a limited social milieu: namely the Silesian intelligentsia, both local and emigrant. My book appeared to be a kind of consciousness-raising read to those who were already open to such a perspective. I had hoped that it would provoke a deeper discussion with agents of the discourse of Polishness, but this was not really the case. I was probably just labelled a supporter of RAŚ, and therefore anti-Polish, by the dominant Polonocentric circles of the area, and thus ignored.

To attract more attention to my ideas of the recreation of Cieszyn Silesia as a cultural entity (especially among the younger generation), I came up with a new project.

**"Everyday Life in the Shadow of a Border"**

Some time ago, I joined a group of feminist scholars and NGOs activists who were involved in a project consisting in collecting oral-history interviews with women deported from Poland to Soviet Ukraine after World War II and producing a documentary film.[5] I suggested carrying out a similar project in Cieszyn Silesia with autochthonous elderly women who could tell us about everyday life in a region cut in half by a state border. My idea was that the feminist perspective would help us to escape nationalistic hegemonies and folklorism, and recreate everyday Cieszyn Silesian culture through women's experiences, spoken about in the local Silesian language. Thus, we would be able to deconstruct the border and show that the culture on both sides of it is the same, and that people speak the same language. I wanted this to be a kind of performative action, creating Silesianness by talking about the border in women's lives. The resulting film would be shown in secondary schools on both sides of the border, as well as in cultural centres for regular audiences.

That was the idea. It was, in my opinion, quite simple. We managed to obtain funding from the European Network Memory and Solidarity, and started our project in September 2013 together with a Czech NGO partner. It took me quite some time to explain the local context to my Polish friends. I was helped by my colleague, the anthropologist Jakub Grygar. The Czech members of the project consisted mostly of autochthonous young activists with whom I could speak Si-

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4    There were two regular academic reviews in Polish sociological and ethnological journals (Kubik 2012; Pasieka 2012).

5    The film was entitled *Stacja kolejowa Krasne-Busk. Opowieści przesiedlonych kobiet*, Kraków 2012, and has Polish, Ukrainian, German and English subtitles.

lesian; they also knew Polish very well, because they were educated in that language at schools and later at universities in Poland. There was also one Czech participant from Prague, and a German – from Rostock. The language of our project was English.

We began with the conceptualisation of our research, a methodological workshop and a historical overview, and later started to collect our filmed interviews. They were extremely interesting, but my initial idea to conduct them in Silesian did not work well. On the Polish side of the border, only the women from mountain villages spoke Silesian (or rather a Polish-Silesian mixture), while those from towns mostly spoke Polish. One of our interlocutors (a former teacher, a public figure) explained that when giving an interview she "automatically" spoke Polish. But when they got accustomed to us and when we insisted on speaking "po naszymu" they could do this well. On the Czech side of the border, the situation was quite similar. Our interlocutors were all educated in Polish schools, some of them were retired teachers and for them it was important to speak Polish, because it was also a political gesture. It was not easy to persuade them to speak "po naszymu". We decided also to have some representation of autochthonous people who felt Czech. We found such a person and asked our Czech colleague to carry out the interview. The person also knew "po naszymu", as all autochthonous inhabitants do, and she reflected about the issue of local language.

During our project, we had constant discussions in our Polish team about the problem of national identities, Silesian identity and multiculturalism. I realised that my Polish feminist colleagues were very open-minded and pluralistic, but they had problems in grasping the issue of the multi-layeredness of identity on both sides of a border; the Polish nationalistic attitudes of the Silesian minority on the Czech side; local Lutheranism, which was Polish and Silesian at the same time, etc. Multiculturalism, for them, meant rather the equal status of various national identifications and I continually had to explain to them complications of that sort on both sides of the border.

Our Czech partners, who were mostly autochthonous Silesians and who felt Polish, explained to us the specificity of the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia. They also told us about the local dialect being a kind of a continuum: with more Czech words in it on one side and more Polish on the other. The way of assessing one's national identity, they explained, depended on the share of Polish or Czech words in their Silesian. Another problem was connected with the fact that they could not stay with us all the time as they were also absorbed by their everyday obligations and other projects they were involved in. But we usually met at dinners and could then discuss our problems. The experience of the NGO's activity made us all "one family". Only our German colleague often felt rather uncomfortable, because she had the feeling that it was only because of her that we had to speak English, and was not very angry when we switched to Polish or Silesian, or Czech. She was,

however, quite receptive to the identity complications of our interlocutors.

While still in Cieszyn, we started the group work on editing our material, and choosing extracts to include in our film. We worked out several themes according to which we searched for interesting pieces of narratives. This began with my introduction in Silesian, and later there was a series of extracts from interviews. We had the idea of putting information about the names and state affiliations of our interlocutors at the very end to stress the similarity of their experiences and languages. We decided that Silesian would be the language of our film, and everything would be translated into Polish, Czech and English. We wanted to achieve an effect of equal linguistic distance to Czech and Polish, but were told by our partners that for Czech viewers it would be undistinguishable: they would perceive the language of our film as Polish, as they usually do not see a difference between Polish and Silesian.

The draft version, prepared later in Krakow, was shown to all the members of the project. As a response, many viewers pointed to its chaotic character and suggested some changes. We also had to consult the draft of our film with the sponsor, the European Network Memory and Solidarity. They were also not very happy with the results. Their main criticism was that we had virtually only Polish interlocutors and only one Czech, because they perceived nationality through language, and totally overlooked Silesianness and our attempts to present it as an autonomous culture. They suggested major changes and wanted us to do what we in fact wished to avoid: to show people's lives intertwined in "great History": wars, uprisings, crises, etc. We negotiated with them and came to some compromise. My conclusions from this discussion were that for them multiculturalism and pluralism again means a plurality of national cultures; women's experiences are not interesting; and common people's lives are not catchy, unless they are involved in History.

Later, we re-edited the whole material, added some animated sections showing the historical changes of the region's state affiliations and other problems, included stories about the Second World War, got rid of some "female topics" (love, food, etc.) and generally shortened it, putting it into chapters which each started with some introductions (narration + animation). The film has not yet been shown to its target audience.[6] I have only screened it to my Krakow sociology students, who liked it and appreciated its educational character. There were also some students from Cieszyn Silesia who found watching the film quite an emotional experience. One of them said, "It was as if I was listening to my grandma. I know the stories, but I have never thought of them as important. I have to record her too".

Though the film has not yet been shown to the general public, what was quite interesting was the production of it, which revealed further problems important

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6    The film is entitled in Silesian: *Żywobyci przi granicy. Babski godki z obu strón Olzy* [Everyday Life on a Border. Women's Stories from Both Sides of the Olza], and has Polish, Czech and English subtitles.

for a "native" anthropologist. These are connected with the conceptual framework we have at our disposal. It was only my cooperation with my Polish feminist colleagues and later discussion with the representative of our NGO sponsor that revealed to me the conceptual difficulty that Poles have in perceiving the phenomenon of mixed and multi-layered identities. Contemporary Poland is almost totally culturally homogenous, a trait strengthened by the fact that almost all Poles are Catholic (by faith or background), and all this is reinforced by education and the media which ground the discourse of Polishness. Even non-nationalistic activists and intellectuals therefore possess a "nationalistic epistemology."

## Conclusions

Only after my book was published and I was able to discuss its theses with a broader audience did I realise that my theorising about Silesianness using Gellnerian concepts was in a sense its own enactment. It was bringing Silesianness to life as a legitimised identification, or "academically baptised" identity. Gellner's theory, being halfway between constructivism and essentialism (Hroch 2003: 103), suits this purpose well. In particular, his metaphor of "wild culture" brings ontological significance to otherwise "unjust", or "regional" identification (as Silesianness is seen by Polonocentric history and sociology). It helped many people to construct their identity in this idiom.

I have also come to some conclusions as far as the position of a "native" anthropologist is concerned. She/he should be a "defender" of his/her community against hegemonic misunderstanding or misrepresentation made by researchers from a dominant group. In the case of Silesia, researchers often try to squeeze it into too tight a uniform of the concept of "private homeland", a sociological category invented by the Polish scholar Stanisław Ossowski (1984). This term may be applicable in the situation of regional or other minor identifications, but is misleading in the case of ethnic identity (even a not yet fully articulated one). Another example of misrepresentation consists in using Catholic concepts to describe the reality of Lutheranism. Catholicism is a kind of "norm" in Poland, and many religious terms are treated as "neutral", descriptive categories. The reality of another religious group is interpreted in terms of the dominant church. I pointed to these problems in my book (Kubica 2011b), and later my younger colleagues discussed them and coined the term "methodological Catholicism" (Pasieka and Sekerdej 2013). Another problem still is treating Silesian Lutherans as a minority in the same way as they are in the rest of Poland. Lutherans in Cieszyn Silesia are above all indigenous inhabitants; they are at home. A "native" anthropologist (as any other) should point out and criticise the mistakes of her or his colleagues, and draw attention to their simplifications or their tone of superiority. Unfortunately, such proceedings expose one to negative reactions in academia, and accusations

of carping and being "subjective".

On the other hand, a native anthropologist should also name certain problems which are concealed or erased from the social memory of his or her own community. This may bring negative reactions from compatriots, who may feel threatened. But it is necessary to trigger the process of "re-working" trauma and postmemory, especially when these emotions are seen as "improper" by a dominant group, as was the case of Silesian memory about World War II. And still another problem is connected with the working of the cultural hegemony of the centre on the minority, whose members do not recognise the problems a "native" anthropologist tries to name and analyse, because they have adopted the dominant point of view.

It is important that a "native" anthropologist makes his or her findings accessible to the general public (including the members of his or her own community). It is possible to write in a manner that is understandable to any educated reader who is engaged in the topic, but we have to remember that our analytical categories are quite often also used in popular language and may have different meanings. It is advisable to try various kinds of media to disseminate our results and theoretical ideas. A documentary film is a good option. But again we have to take into account that there will be various audiences watching it, who may have no prior knowledge of the problem.

Group work is a good laboratory for discovering preconceptions or hidden stereotypes, and the way outsiders understand the reality familiar to us. Such an experience helps an anthropologist to translate his or her "home" into categories known to others; and also to realise that it is a process that reveals subsequent layers of the complexity of the local context, and cannot be completed quickly and easy. The category of "nationalistic epistemology", which I coined for the purpose of this paper, reveals the way some people perceive cultural diversity: the major (sometimes only) instrument being national identities and/or perceiving history and the present day through the national perspective.

Certainly, the very concept of "native" anthropology should be treated with distance, as Narayan suggested, because we are all hybrid and complex, belonging to various worlds. But nevertheless ethnographers should reflect on what it means to study one's own community. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the situation, the apparent privileges and hidden traps, but even more important: what are one's moral obligations and responsibilities? A "native" anthropologist is assessed three times: by academia, by his or her own folk, and also by a dominant group.

As Narayan put it in her conclusions, "Writing texts that mix lively narrative and rigorous analysis involves enacting hybridity, regardless of our origin" (Narayan 1993: 682). I would add that it also involves enacting theory. Moreover still, researching one's own community inevitably involves more responsibility, ethical

sensitivity and political engagement. There is also more risk of failure and wrong reception, especially when readers do not want to acknowledge their own hybridity.

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