

This project aims to address the interplay between identity or ethnic politics, political representation and policy formulation. Ethnic politics has been generally considered as politics of belonging, potentially leading to group confrontation, and conflict. The possibility that ethnic politics may, under particular circumstances, influence ideological representation, and be conducive to specific policy outcomes is undertheorized and empirically unexplored. This project rectifies this shortcoming in a novel, comparative and interdisciplinary perspective.

Evaluation of Democracy Research Group

Research team :

Jan ROVNY



Jan Rovny is an associate professor at Sciences Po, Center for European Studies and Compared Politics (CEE) and the Interdisciplinary Research Center for the Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP).

His research focuses on political competition in Europe with the aim of uncovering the ideological conflict lines in different countries. Recently, he works primarily on the effect of ethnic identity on political preferences and representation.

Paul LENORMAND



Paul Lenormand is doctor in history and associate researcher at the Centre d'Histoire (CHSP). He works as a research fellow at Services Historique de la Défense (SHD).

His research focuses on Central and Eastern Europe, with a special focus on the history of warfare and the Cold War. His dissertation's topic was: "Towards 'People's Army': assessing the impact of war and communism on the Czechoslovak military culture".

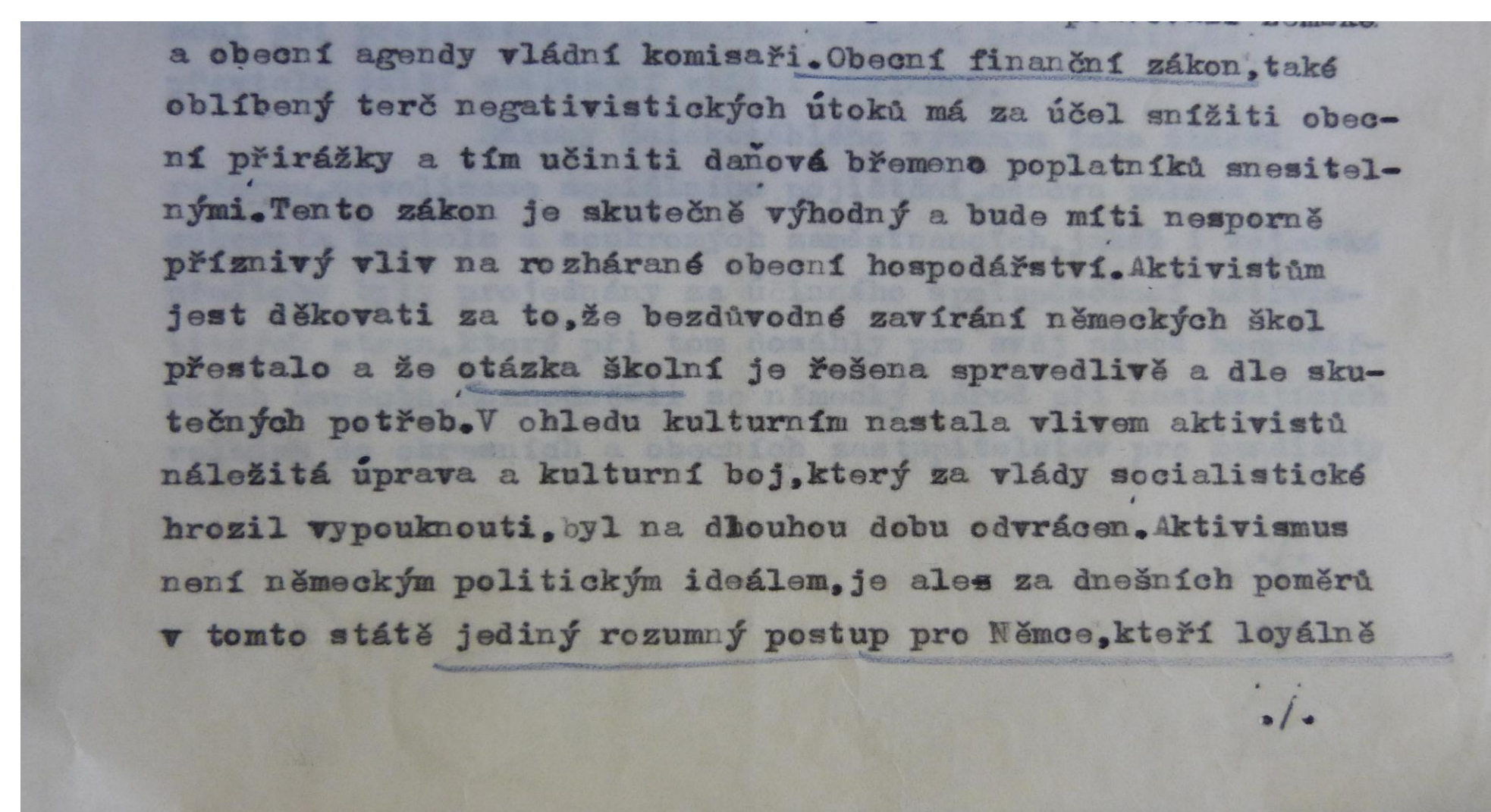
Theoretical Basis

The project aims to address the interplay between identity or ethnic politics, political representation and policy formulation. Ethnic politics has been generally considered as politics of belonging, potentially leading to group confrontation, and conflict. The possibility that ethnic politics may, under particular circumstances, influence ideological representation, and be conducive to specific policy outcomes is undertheorized and empirically unexplored. This project rectifies this shortcoming in a novel, comparative and interdisciplinary perspective. We seek to study the formation of political representation of Czech Germans in Interwar Czechoslovakia and Estonian Russian-speakers in today's Estonia. In particular, we seek to understand how ethnic minority status informs political competition and policy formation in the area of official language usage and education. We proceed through a multiplicity of methods from history and the social sciences — parliamentary speech database construction, public opinion data collection, and their quantitative statistical analyses, combined with historical archival research and elite interviews.

Volksfreund (social democratic newspaper)



Police Report



Group Identity



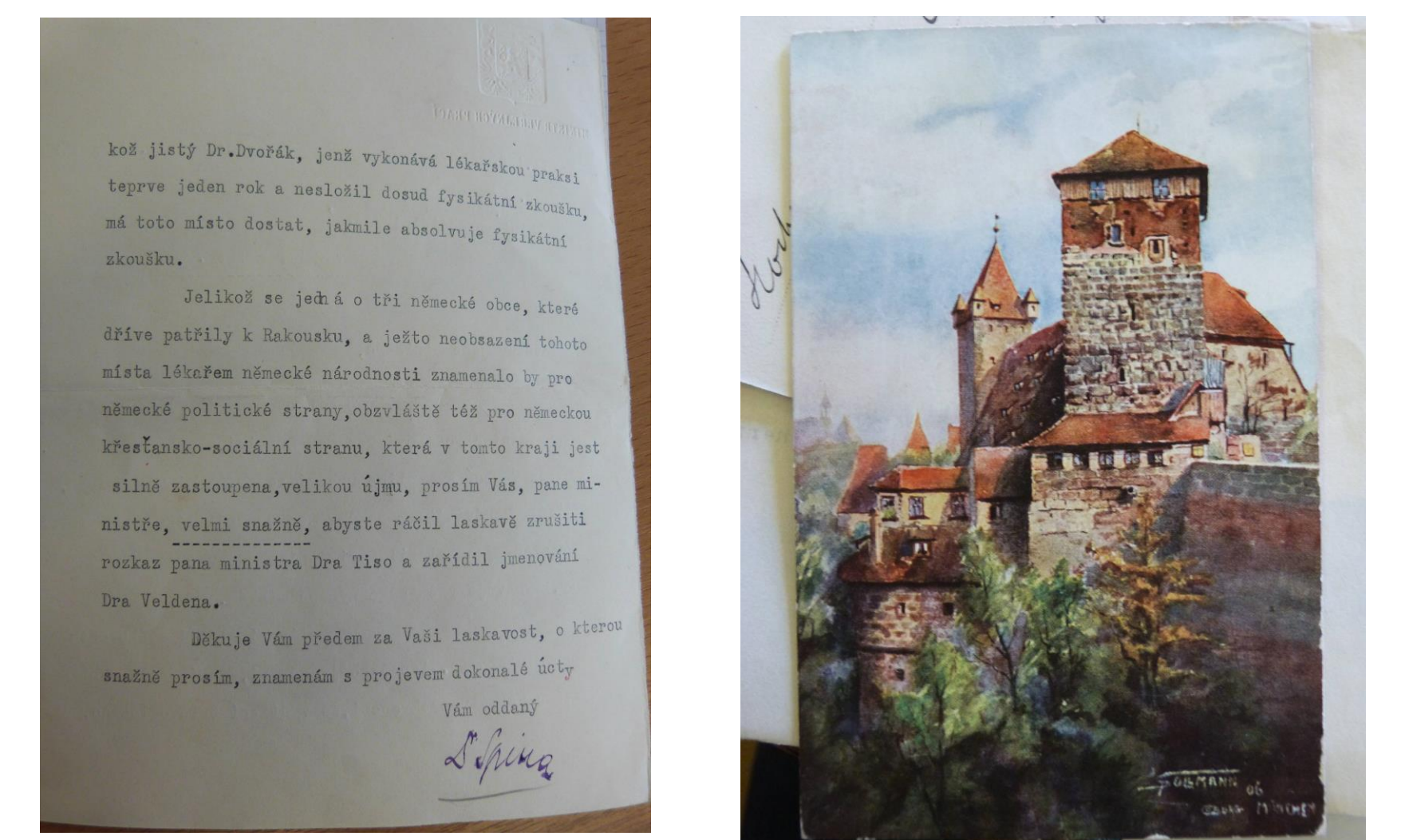
Results

The cases studied exemplify the circumstantial nature of ethnic preferences -- a topic that is overlooked by the literature on both political preference formation, and on ethnic politics. It shows that while Sudeten Germans preferred to not belong to the Czechoslovak state, once this question was taken off the table by exogenous factors (peace conference, treaty with Austria, the Locarno process), the dominant minority representatives turned towards the search for ethnic group maintenance within the status quo. This leads to two developments. First, the vast majority of Sudeten German voters consistently support those parties that presented moderate cooperative solutions. Second, these elites seek inclusive policy changes, particularly in the areas of equitable access to native language schooling, to civil service jobs, and to government tenders. It is of course difficult to assess whether all of these ethnic requests are just, or whether they simply aim at re-establishing the primacy of the ethnic minority.

Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that, despite the details of the political give and take, the primary aim of the moderate ethnic elites is to make their group symbolically, as well as practically equal citizens and co-owners of state they live in. This goal, that in today's language may be labeled as 'multicultural,' is, however, not inherent to the group, it is but an outcome of their current minority status. As circumstances change, political preferences change with them. As the possibility to escape from minority status becomes increasingly realistic, the cooperative moderates lose political support to the ethnic extremists who seek to redress ethnic grievances more radically -- by ending the group's minority status. The moderates are torn between their original cooperative aims, and the radicalization of their group, struggling to adapt to the new discourse.

Archival evidence at our disposal suggested that German-speaking ministers -- Ludwig Czech and Franz Spina in particular -- and their subordinates supported a relatively national-blind public policy. They were well aware of the weaknesses of multinational Czechoslovakia, but rather than undermining the state, they used its resources in the form of law, and public funding to support and protect the German minority from a complete Czech monopoly over the state. They were both rational, as the most extreme Czech nationalists would have prospered in an entirely radical German environment, and culturally inclined to do so, having been socialized in an era of transnational cooperation.

Spina's letter and post card



Bilingual unemployment ID card

