Introduction

Foreign visitors who came to admire Prague in the interwar years tended to treat the new capital city of Czechoslovakia as if it had suddenly appeared on the map of Europe. A French visitor noted that the city had been "barely starting to wake up from a three-hundred-year sleep" in the prewar and was then "promoted from one day to the next to the rank of capital city"; another that it was "reduced by the Austrian government to the secondary importance of a provincial city to become again a capital city in the restored state."[1] There was little mention of the process through which the city had gained this status. The year 1918 was presented as a new beginning with a clean slate, the only continuity being with the pre-Habsburg Czech past. As an American observer put it, "it seemed as though the spiritual exaltation of a nation freed after generations of struggle had lifted the people above the physical hardships of war."[2] Had this national enthusiasm really managed to do away with the consequences of a four-year-long devastating global conflict? How did the change from provincial center to capital city take place and how did it look like at street level?

This book scratches the surface beyond the grand narratives that make national histories stand outside history, with cities hibernating for three-hundred years and sudden political ruptures, to ground instead the transition from Empire to nation-state in urban streets. Viewed through that lens, it was more the war conditions that had rendered Prague a "sleeping beauty," amidst the silence and darkness of wartime streets. Fuel shortages, reduced public lighting, and police curfews quietly diminished urban activity. As one newspaper chronicler noted, "at 6 it turn[ed] lonely, at 8 completely dark; at 9 dead." Contrasting the stillness of empty streets with the prewar city noises of foggy winter nights ("signal whistles cutting through the air, horses galloping somewhere, loud and stifled cries"), he expressed the wish to "sleep away" the "night of the war."[3]

[1] *Comoedia*, October 6, 1930, 3; *Le Figaro*, February 29, 1928, 25.
[2] Ruth Crawford, "Pathfinding in Prague," *The Survey*, June 11, 1921, 327–328.
[3] *Prager Tagblatt*, January 27, 1918, 3; for the reference to sleeping beauty, see *Národní listy*, October 17, 1917, 1.

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Penetrating this "night of war" and its impact on urban life is necessary to understand the nature of the political transformation of 1918. October 28, day of the regime change, was only one among many ruptures in the city's streets. The war and immediate postwar were a period of great changes that took place gradually. Before the advent of the Czechoslovak republic, the war already reshaped conceptions of citizenship, and of belonging to the state. Conversely, not everything was neatly resolved in 1918, with the continuities in state practices and the effects of war lingering on. This book contends that larger sociopolitical transformations can best be captured by examining everyday sensorial experiences.[4] In times of upheaval, people looked at their city's streets to assess the type of state they were living in or find signs of the war they were living through. Was Austria–Hungary still a *Rechtsstaat* respecting the rights of its citizens? Were they still in a prosperous European city or one devoured by wartime shortages? Was the city still a civilized metropolis or becoming more rural? Were regular demonstrations the premise of revolution? Was the new capital city a democratic city? Was it a purely Czech city? Was the revolution already complete? The street revealed the truth behind discourses and representations, encapsulating hopes and dissatisfaction with the old state (Austria–Hungary) as well as the new state (Czechoslovakia). Both glorious war narratives and triumphant national liberation narratives were put in a stark light on the street. It was the place where the collision between the aspirations and reality of the wartime and postwar period was made tangible.

What were then the changes that took place in Prague's streets? In many ways, the business of Czechoslovak independence took place elsewhere, in London, Paris, or Washington, where émigré politicians promoted the dismantling of Austria–Hungary, on the battlefields in Russia, France, and Italy, where Czechoslovak legions fought on the Entente side, in the Vienna prisons where some Czech leaders spent most of the war.[5] Neither did Prague undergo major destruction or large-scale architectural renewals. The city's distinctive silhouette with the castle rising above the Vltava and its baroque and medieval monuments remained untouched

[4] For a similar approach to sensory history, see Stephanie Weismann, "Scents and Sensibilities: Interwar Lublin's Courtyards," *Contemporary European History* 30, no. 3 (2021): 335–350; Nicholas Kenny, *The Feel of the City: Experiences of Human Transformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

[5] On émigré politicians, see Karel Pichlík, *Bez legend: zahraniční odboj 1914–1918: zápas o československý program* (Prague: Panorama, 1991); on the legions, see Karel Pichlík, Bohumír Klípa, Jitka Zabloudilová, *Československí legionáři (1914–1920)* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1996); on Czech politicians imprisoned in Vienna see Mark Cornwall, "Traitors and the Meaning of Treason in Austria–Hungary's Great War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015): 113–134.

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by material damage. Yet, zooming in on the moving reel of the streets, one can uncover the many aspects of urban life transformed by war and regime change: the look of the city's streets, their sounds, smells, and all the more ephemeral parts of the city's appearance beyond its architecture.

The present study charts the trajectories of Prague from 1914 to 1920 in its relation to war and revolution. It does so by focusing on the streetscapes, the sensorial texture of the city, from the posters plastered on walls, to the shop windows' displays (or lack thereof amidst shortages), the badges worn by passersby, and the crowds gathering for protest or celebration. Entering the war in 1914 as one of the main regional centers of the Habsburg monarchy, Prague became in 1918 the capital of a new republican country, born from the postwar treaties. Through the prism of the changing physiognomy of the city, I seek to uncover the elaboration of new relations between the state(s) and its citizens. From the surprise of the mobilization days to the support for the war effort of the first few war years, the cityscape bears witness to the slow deterioration of the home front (in crisis by 1917 onward), the collapse of state authority in 1918, and finally the mixture of hope, violence, and uncertainty, which characterized the first years of the Czechoslovak Republic.

From War to Revolution in Austria–Hungary

The recent historiography of the First World War has produced a revised image of the conflict, not only dominated by military developments on the Western front, but better integrating the East and the South geographically and civilians' experiences thematically.[6] Taking empires rather than nation-states as frames puts the weakening of the imperial world order at the center of the global war experience.[7] This changed world order was most clearly perceptible in the collapse of the Russian, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires, which had ruled over large parts of Europe and the Middle East for centuries. The shift of focus eastward also implied a shift in the center of gravity of the war. The more mobile nature of the fronts and the more dramatic experiences of civilians in the East meant that strong dichotomies between the fighting front and the home front were less operative there than in countries like France and

[6] Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle, "Geographies of Mobilization and Territories of Belligerence during the First World War," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 71, no. 1 (2016): 37–60; on the cultural history of World War I, see John Horne, "End of a Paradigm? The Cultural History of the Great War," *Past & Present* 242, no. 1 (February 2019): 155–192.

[7] Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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Britain.[8] Moreover, as has been shown for the Ottoman Empire, the destructive impact of war on society was crucial in explaining imperial dissolution.[9] Exploring developments on the Austro–Hungarian home front, as this book does, does not simply enrich our picture of the war experience in one of the major belligerents, it elucidates the monarchy's demise and the reordering of this part of Europe.

In the story of the Habsburg Empire's last war, the home front did not merely play a supporting role. Exhaustion, the breakdown of supply routes, and growing discontent had a huge impact on the monarchy's eventual defeat. Nationally separate historiographies had viewed war as a mere prelude to independence and focused mostly on the actions of national politicians in creating nation-states.[10] Scholars have recently reassessed the role of the war experience of civilian populations in this region in explaining the empire's demise. Through increased military encroachments in daily life, displacement, and provisioning difficulties, Central European civilians were profoundly affected by the war Austria–Hungary was fighting.[11] The blurring of the boundaries between combatants and noncombatants, between spaces that could become frontlines or put under military control and those away from direct combat created a plurality of home front experiences – none of them sealed off from the war's impact.[12] The strains imposed by war on Habsburg society were the main factors leading to the Empire's dissolution in 1918.[13] Food shortages had reached unsustainable

[8] Even this is debatable as new work has shown see Alex Dowdall, *Communities under Fire: Urban Life at the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Laurent Dornel and Stéphane Le Bras, eds., *Les fronts intérieurs européens. L'arrière en guerre (1914–1920)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018).

[9] Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[10] On the legacies of these narratives: John Deak, "The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War," *The Journal of Modern History*, 86 (2014), 336–380. For a revised account of the monarchy's collapse: Pieter Judson, "'Where our commonality is necessary…': Rethinking the End of the Habsburg Monarchy," *Austrian History Yearbook*, 48 (2017): 1–21.

[11] On refugees: Francesco Frizzera, *Cittadini dimezzati: I profughi trentini in Austria-Ungheria e in Italia (1914–1919)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018); on the provisioning crisis: Rudolf Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life and Working-Class Politics in Bohemia during World War I* (New York: Berghahn, 2016); on the military administration: John Deak and Jonathan Gumz, "How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy's Internal War, 1914–1918," *American Historical Review*, 122, no. 5 (2017): 1105–1136.

[12] Maureen Healy, "Introductory Remarks: Space, Chronology and the Habsburg Home Fronts," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 24, no. 2 (2017): 176–184.

[13] The pioneering study of Maureen Healy on Vienna highlights the centrality of food issues to explain the collapse, Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); On Tyrol, see, among others, Oswald Überegger, *Der andere Krieg: die Tiroler Militärgerichtsbarkeit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 2002). On Styria see Martin Moll, *Die Steiermark im Ersten Weltkrieg: Der Kampf des Hinterlandes ums*

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levels by 1917, and the popular protests, which multiplied in the last two years of the conflict, put cities at the center of the struggles, thus creating an "inner front."[14] Austria–Hungary did not lose the war primarily on the battlefields, but rather in the streets of Vienna, Budapest, and Prague, as well as smaller towns.

Prague offers an interesting case study of the Habsburg home front in three respects: it was the second largest urban area after Vienna in the Austrian half of the Empire (which suffered more from the food crisis), the largest center of Czech-speakers in the monarchy, and it remained distant from the main battlefields throughout the war. In the older narratives of decline and liberation, Czechs have been portrayed, positively or negatively, depending on the viewpoint, as the "naturally" anti-Habsburg destroyers of the Empire. As Richard Lein has emphasized, this picture served both the Czechs building their new country and the Austrians looking for someone to blame for defeat and loss. This Austrian version of the "stab in the back" myth was then reinforced by studies focusing rather on the minority of Czechs who fought for the liquidation of the Empire (often from abroad), but without much attention to the war experience of ordinary citizens in the Bohemian Lands.[15] This book distances itself from narratives about Czech attitudes in high politics or soldiers fighting in foreign armies to focus on the impact of war as an all-encompassing social reality. In Czech popular memory, the First World War is often perceived as a foreign war, detached from the concerns of the Czechs.[16] Yet, men from Prague and all the Bohemian lands fought in the uniform of the Austro–Hungarian Empire while requisitions and shortages plagued civilians. Clearly, war was not a "cold" element without effect on everyday lives.

Neither did the war's profound impact stop with the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic or the signing of the Villa Giusti armistice

Überleben 1914–1918 (Vienna: Styria, 2014). See the articles in the special issue: Tamara Scheer and Nancy Wingfield, "Habsburg Home Fronts during the Great War," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 24, no. 2 (2017).

[14] The term is used in the classic study: Horst Haselsteiner, Richard Plaschka, and Arnold Suppan, *Innere Front: Militärassistenz, Widerstand und Umsturz in der Donaumonarchie 1918*, 2 vols (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1974).

[15] Richard Lein, *Pflichterfüllung oder Hochverrat? Die tschechischen Soldaten Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2011); on Czech soldiers' morale, see Jiří Hutečka, *Men under Fire: Motivation, Morale, and Masculinity among Czech Soldiers in the Great War, 1914–1918* (New York: Berghahn, 2019); on the Czech population overall, see Etienne Boisserie *Les Tchèques dans la Grande Guerre. "Nous ne croyons plus aucune promesse"* (Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2017).

[16] Otto Urban, "La guerre 1914–18 dans la mémoire tchèque," in Maurice Godé, Jacques Le Rider, and Françoise Mayer (eds.), *Allemands, Juifs et Tchèques à Prague 1890–1924* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1996), 115–124.

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between Austria–Hungary and Italy.[17] This study does not end in 1918, but instead, prolongs the analysis until the end of 1920. For Prague residents, war conditions persisted well into the postwar period. The battles that the young Czechoslovak state fought for its borders in Slovakia and in the German-speaking borderlands meant that the city remained a home front, the stage of patriotic demonstrations, and the new destination for Slovak refugees. Violence permeated through society both in everyday interactions between citizens, between national groups, or against the state, which struggled to maintain public order.[18] Finally, food shortages and restrictive government measures continued to be the defining features of everyday lives. The long awaited "peace" and "victory" turned for some into disappointment. The immediate aftermath was not a new beginning, but still profoundly shaped by the war.

Integrating the postwar into this story also sheds light on the revolutionary moment of 1918–1919. Earlier interpretations underlined the great impact of the Russian revolutionary model, but the calls for revolution all across Europe were grounded in local conditions.[19] The unrest and instability of these years in East Central Europe have been too easily labeled as "nationalistic" or "Bolshevik." These labels themselves were mobilized in political battles at the time and need to be historicized.[20] In Prague, the last years of the war and the first years of its aftermath were characterized by an unprecedented number of demonstrations, riots, and strikes. What did this revolutionary movement stand for? Citizens everywhere (from Britain to Japan), as a result of direct or indirect participation in the war, expected a form of reciprocity for their sacrifice. They also considered as legitimate a renewed engagement with the state and heightened participation in politics. In exploring the revolutionary spirit in Prague in 1918–1919, this book will contribute to a better understanding of this moment of instability in Europe.

This transitional period is also particularly important to understand the process of the Empire's collapse and its interwar legacy. The

[17] On the war not ending in 1918, see Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

[18] There is a large historiography on violence in postwar societies. For the Bohemian Lands, see Ota Konrád, Rudolf Kučera, *Paths out of the Apocalypse: Physical Violence in the Fall and Renewal of Central Europe, 1914–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[19] See Eliza Ablovatski, *Revolution and Political Violence in Central Europe: The Deluge of 1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); On Germany, see Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[20] Marco Bresciani, "The Battle for Post-Habsburg Trieste/Trst: State Transition, Social Unrest, and Political Radicalism (1918–1923)," *Austrian History Yearbook*, 52 (2021): 182–200.

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disintegration of the monarchy did not mean the immediate disappearance of imperial structures and cultures. New studies on the adaptations of local societies to the Habsburg successor nation-states underline institutional and personal continuities.[21] This historiography on postimperial transitions very productively focuses on "peripheries" or liminal spaces, highlighting regional and local developments and their tension with national narratives emerging from the centers. Dominique Reill's work on Fiume, for example, illuminates all the contradictions of the postwar order and the survival of imperial frameworks and mindsets. Her book demonstrates the potential of approaching the reconfigurations of sovereignty through the everyday.[22] The emphasis on local contexts refines the broad picture of postwar East Central Europe drawn from the new capital cities.[23] My goal is to show that the story was more complicated, even at the heart of the new order. Czechoslovakia and Prague constituted, in many ways, models for the new nation-state creations, and yet cracks existed in this façade. The case of Prague shows that the question of how to navigate the postimperial state was just as central and fraught in the capital city as for other Central Europeans. Prague's streetscapes offer a different image than official discourses – one that highlights tensions, aspirations, and continuities.

Patriotism, State Legitimacy, Citizenship

The relation of ordinary citizens to the state amidst war, empire collapse, and revolution is at the heart of this book. This stems in part from the notion that starting with the nation, as is usual in East Central Europe, does not permit to adequately understand the process of

[21] On local societies in the transition and continuities, see the work of Gábor Egry and his Nepostrans project team (http://1918local.eu/). For example, Gábor Egry, "Negotiating Post-Imperial Transitions: Local Societies and Nationalizing States in East Central Europe," in Paul Miller and Claire Morelon (eds.), *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918* (New York: Berghahn, 2018), 15–42; on the challenges of the nationalizing state in another postimperial borderland, see Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization's Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[22] Dominique Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); On another hotspot of the postwar order, see Marcus Payk, "Emblems of Sovereignty: The Internationalization of Danzig and the Polish Post Office Dispute, 1919–1925," in Marcus Payk and Roberta Pergher (eds.), *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Polities after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 215–235; on sovereignty and the 1919 moment, see Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

[23] Another strand of the historiography explores the legacies of Habsburg collapse at the international level: Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley (eds.), *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

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imperial collapse. This study argues that nation-states are not born out of nationalism. Revisionist historians of the Late Habsburg Empire have transformed our conception of nationality politics in Austria–Hungary.[24] The population of the Bohemian lands was not neatly divided into anti-Habsburg Czechs and pro-Habsburg Germans-first, because national identities themselves were not fixed realities but often contingent.[25] Second, nation and empire were not opposites in late imperial Austria and nationalists had worked firmly within the institutional framework of the Empire in the prewar period.[26] This historiography enables a fresh look at developments in wartime, which implied an intensification of relations between the state and its citizens.

My first aim is to dismantle the claim that national mobilization was the only plausible source of wartime social mobilization and that such a mobilization was thus rendered impossible in the multinational Habsburg Empire lacking a unified fatherland. The disappearance of Austria–Hungary in 1918 made all the efforts that sustained the monarchy at war seem vain and tended to obscure their very existence. However, a form of patriotism existed, which sustained the many actions of war relief on the home front. Which forms of local or social patriotism fueled the Habsburg war effort?

Patriotism is a key concept in this study that needs to be further defined. It is a flexible term that can account for different types of place-based attachment or allegiance to a political community without limiting it to the nation.[27] In the literature on the Habsburg Empire, the term is often used to refer to state patriotism and dynastic loyalty.[28] But a broader definition can account for the different types of *patria* Habsburg citizens

[24] On this revisionist history, see Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Gary Cohen, "Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867–1914," *Central European History* 40 (2007), 241–278.

[25] Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the nation: Activists on the language frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[26] Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*.

[27] James Bjork, "Flexible Fatherlands: 'Patriotism' among Polish-Speaking German Citizens during World War I;" *Central European History* 53, no. 1 (2020): 73.

[28] On loyalty as a useful category to study this region: Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky (eds.), *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Berghahn, 2007); Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1918–1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten* (München: Oldenbourg, 2004); Jana Osterkamp and Martin Schulze Wessel (eds.), *Exploring Loyalty* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017). On patriotism, see Daniel Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848–1916* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006); Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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were attached to. Schooling in Habsburg Austria promoted a "layered" version of patriotism, which imbricated local, national, and imperial patriotisms.[29] Local patriotism, attachment to the city or region, Prague in this case, could play an important role in a context of strong municipal autonomy. The different layers were encapsulated in the ambiguous term homeland (*domov*(*ina*)/*Heimat*) that could refer to the urban, provincial/regional, national, and imperial level. Local patriotism was malleable and could be merged into larger forms of patriotism (such as empire or nation-state).[30] I would like to suggest that transferring loyalty from the Habsburg Empire to the Czechoslovak Republic (sometimes perceived as "switching loyalties") could constitute a logical response for an individual attached to a local form of patriotism.

All of these patriotisms were successfully mobilized during the war, which required, of course, enrolment in the army and potential sacrifice of life, but also many efforts from the rest of society.[31] This book explores the workings of wartime patriotism not through identity but through practices: support for local soldiers, relief for war victims, and contribution to war causes. Unlike nationalism, patriotism does not suppose a firm identity attached to it, in this case Austrian identity, but stresses participation in something larger for the support of the polity. It can be especially observed in wartime, in the concrete actions undertaken to sustain the war effort. As Melissa Stockdale has argued for the Russian Empire, the link to one's fellow countrymen could act as a mobilizing factor for involvement in war relief. This "social patriotism could reinforce, supersede or outlive state patriotism."[32] In times of war, personal relationships can form the basis of patriotic actions.[33] Moving

[29] Scott Moore, *Teaching the Empire: Education and State Loyalty in Late Habsburg Austria* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2020).

[30] On local patriotism in Fiume, see Ivan Jeličić, "Redefining Fiumians: Flag Usage and the Ambiguities of the Nation-Building Process in the Former Habsburg-Hungarian corpus separatum, 1914–1924," *Contemporary European History* (2022): 1–20; on urban identities, see Catherine Horel, *Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire 1880–1914: Imagined Communities and Conflictual Encounters* (Budapest: CEU University Press, 2023).

[31] On patriotism and its use in wartime, see Pierre Purseigle, "*Au nom de la patrie*: Southern Identities and Patriotic Mobilisation in First World War France," *The English Historical Review* 138, no. 593 (2023), 773–805; Melissa Stockdale, *Mobilizing the Russian Nation: Patriotism and Citizenship in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Bjork, "Flexible Fatherlands": 71–93; Nico Wouters and Laurence van Ypersele, *Nations, Identities and the First World War: Shifting Loyalties to the Fatherland* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

[32] Stockdale, *Mobilizing the Russian Nation*, 107. On solidarity as fostered by both nationalism and patriotism, see Rogers Brubaker, "In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism," *Citizenship Studies*, 8 no. 2 (2004): 121.

[33] See Nick Stargardt's argument on the Nazi war effort: Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation under Arms, 1939–1945* (London: The Bodley Head, 2015).

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away from larger claims about identity and focusing instead on concrete acts of social engagement enables to understand the actions of groups such as the Sokols who promptly participated to the Austro–Hungarian war effort and then immediately volunteered for the new Czechoslovak state. This attitude makes sense while viewing patriotism as "performance of solidarity to kith and kin."[34]

The importance of patriotism manifested in concrete actions in wartime also explains its contested nature. The term was not only used as a rigid category by Austrian state officials looking for internal enemies. It also reflected the wartime values of individuals who assessed each other's participation in the war effort. Patriotism was produced within the "social relations of sacrifice."[35] Being patriotic in wartime meant doing one's duty, not shirking or profiteering while others were suffering. The Habsburg state's crisis of legitimacy was forged within this patriotic moral economy as compensation for these sacrifices was deemed insufficient. The repression and suspicion against Czech-speakers (patriotism from above) were at odds with their wartime record, both as soldiers and as civilians (patriotism from below). The outrage of citizens who felt that they had done their duty and were poorly repaid should not be underestimated.

My second goal is to investigate how the war transformed modalities of citizenship and generated a crisis of state legitimacy. Military policies, food shortages, and increased encroachment on peoples' lives created disillusionment. The drafting of men and the collections, requisitions, and deprivation on the home fronts resulted in higher than ever expectations that the state would reciprocate in its welfare provision.[36] Men and women in Europe and beyond expected states to reward the sacrifices they had made for their country, by guaranteeing their material existence.[37] Yet, welfare had not been managed at the imperial level in Habsburg Austria. The imperial citizenship, which guaranteed equality before the law, was complemented by a local form of citizenship that comprised welfare entitlements. This right of domicile (*Heimatrecht)* was separate from residence and tied to the town of origin of the father. In 1900, only 20 percent of Prague residents had right of domicile in the city.[38] Poor relief was

[34] Definition used by Purseigle, "Au nom de la patrie," 803.
[35] Jean-Louis Robert, Jay Winter, eds., *Capital cities at war: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[36] On nonstate actors and war welfare, see Ke-Chin Hsia, *Victims' State: War and Welfare in Austria, 1868–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
[37] Richard Wall and Jay Winter, eds., *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work, and Welfare in Europe, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
[38] Pieter Judson, "Citizenship without Nation? Political and Social Citizenship in the Habsburg Empire," *Contemporanea* 4, (2018): 633–646.

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provided by municipalities based on the right of domicile.[39] After the war, this right of domicile played a major role in determining state citizenship in the various national successor states and citizenship was increasingly conceived in exclusionary terms.[40] Through the war, welfare, which had previously not been considered part of state responsibilities and therefore delegated either to municipalities or to national associations, became a defining feature of state legitimacy.[41]

Closely linked to expectations for welfare provisions were calls for more participation in the political process as just reward for wartime service. In the context of Habsburg Austria, male universal suffrage was a recent political gain (in 1907 and only for parliamentary elections).[42] The war had therefore broken out at a moment when democratization was already a major concern. These changes in citizenship practices are essential to the understanding of the social conflicts of the war's final years and the high expectations raised by the creation of a new republican Czechoslovak state. After the war, calls grew for an ever-more participative form of citizenship, akin to direct democracy.

In this context, the young Czechoslovak state during its stabilization period also struggled to establish its legitimacy. Michel Dobry has underlined how loss of legitimacy is not only a cause of political crises, but a phenomenon that is nurtured by the crisis itself.[43] The relationship of common citizens to the state ranged from the abstract allegiance to the ruler down to daily interactions with civil servants. The personnel of the bureaucracy did not change much with the creation of the Republic and therefore, to some extent, the state that Prague residents

[39] Olga Fejtová, Milan Hlavačka, Václava Horčáková and Veronika Knotková eds. *Poverty, Charity, and Social Welfare in Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2017).

[40] Dominique Kirchner Reill, Ivan Jeličić, and Francesca Rolandi, "Redefining Citizenship after Empire: The Rights to Welfare, to Work, and to Remain in a Post-Habsburg World," *The Journal of Modern History*, 94, 2 (2022): 326–362; on inclusion/exclusion from citizenship in wartime, see Daniela Cagliotti, *War and Citizenship: Enemy Aliens and National Belonging from the French Revolution to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), Pierre Purseigle, *Mobilisation, sacrifice et citoyenneté: Angleterre-France, 1900–1918* (Paris : Belles lettres, 2013); Klaus Richter, *Fragmentation in East Central Europe: Poland and the Baltics 1915–1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[41] Tara Zahra, "'Each Nation Only Cares for Its Own': Empire, Nation and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands 1900–1918," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1378–1402.

[42] On the battle for suffrage, see Jakub Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 99–142.

[43] Michel Dobry, *Sociologie des crises politiques : La dynamique des mobilisations multisectorielles* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1986).

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encountered after 1918 on a daily basis in their dealings with police agents or ministry clerks was not so dissimilar to the previous regime. The local urban level was a prime space where these direct interactions with citizens took place.

The transformation of the relationship between the state and its citizens did not consist in a linear trajectory from subjects to citizens with the change from Empire to Republic. Rather, the important rupture took place before 1918. The war experience introduced emergency legislation which put the constitutional rights of the prewar period into question. It also crystallized new expectations of welfare provisions as part of citizenship. People in Prague took a chance on another state that could potentially fulfill demands that mattered to them, in terms of welfare, participation in the political process, and democratic practices.

Streetscapes and Urban Space

The notion of "streetscape" is the theoretical linchpin of this work, which contends that streets form a telling document to read cities.[44] It relates both to a method for urban history and to an argument about the particular relevance of streets at the time. "Streetscape" refers to the appearance of the streets, how they looked and felt to the contemporary observer: the built environment, visual displays (signs, announcements, posters), traffic of vehicles and people, and gatherings and encounters that took place there. It is thus a dynamic concept, which does not focus on a stilted representation of urban spaces but on how they were used. Streetscapes reveal the daily lives of a city's inhabitants, encompassing both eminently public sites (cafés, railway stations) and private buildings. Interactions "na ulici" (on the street) take place "between the intimacy of the home and the formality of the public."[45] Traveling to London in the early 1920s, writer Karel Čapek remarked that streets there were just "for passing through." In Prague, by contrast, "a street is a sort of great pub or public gardens, a village green, a meeting place, a playing field and a theater, an extended home and a threshold."[46] This liminality between public and private makes streetscapes a particularly fruitful lens to examine the impact of political and social transformations on ordinary residents.

[44] For an approach to cities as documents, see Karl Schlögel, *Moscow 1937* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
[45] Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond violence: Jewish survivors in Poland and Slovakia, 1944–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8.
[46] Karel Čapek, *Letters from England* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1925), 32–33.

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This book argues that recapturing the spirit of the time starts with the materiality of the street. Urban life, especially at this time, was defined by intense sensorial stimuli: the bodily sensation of being among the crowd or in the traffic, the industrial fumes and noises, the city lights, and elaborate shop windows.[47] The experience of the street constituted a means of information on the state of the city or even the country. As Gábor Gyáni argued about fin-de-siècle Budapest: "the preferred method of obtaining information was the purely visual perception of people and things."[48] The city was then replete with texts, posters plastered anarchically on walls or fences, official public announcements, or illustrated advertisements for products and events.[49] Very high literacy rates in Prague, around 90 percent of the population, meant that nearly everyone was able to read them and that written productions played a key role in urban experience.[50] In this sensorial texture of the street, primacy was given to the visual, but other senses such as the aural or the olfactory also formed an important part in the perception of the urban environment.[51] The main objects of study will thus be the city's visual aspect (posters, flags, colors, and uniforms), the experience of buildings' reconversion (schools into hospitals, railway stations into trafficking hubs, aristocratic mansions into ministries), and the occupation of public space through crowds.

The spectacle of city streets has often been analyzed by cultural theorists inspired by the work of Walter Benjamin, but more rarely by social historians. Molly Loberg has recently explored the struggles for control of Berlin's streets to show the link between urban consumerism and politics in the interwar years.[52] She demonstrates that many of the crises undergone by a city are made visible in the streetscape. Similarly, this book relies on a wide range of sources – from police reports, to municipal records, censored letters, memoirs, parish chronicles, and newspaper accounts – to document the everyday aspect of streets in Prague. The

[47] Kenny, *The Feel of the City*.
[48] Gábor Gyáni, *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin-de-Siecle Budapest* (Wayne: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2004), 197.
[49] On posters in Paris, see Roxanne Bonnardel-Mira, "Nouvelles pratiques de l'affichage commercial et recomposition de la culture urbaine parisienne à la fin du XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle*, 63, no. 2 (2021): 181–204.
[50] Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 335.
[51] Stephanie Weismann, "Scents and Sensibilities"; Peter Payer, *Der Klang der Großstadt: Eine Geschichte des Hörens, Wien 1850–1914* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2018); on sensorial history, see the work of Alain Corbin, "Le vertige des foisonnements. Esquisse panoramique d'une histoire sans nom," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 39, no. 1 (1992): 103–126.
[52] Molly Loberg, *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin: Politics, Consumption, and Urban Space, 1914–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

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police archives, especially, contain a wealth of information, not only on issues of public order and demonstrations, but also on the general monitoring of life in the city. Police agents spent much of their time on street corners, in cafés and pubs, and their reports offer valuable insight on various aspects of urban life as much for what they are ostensibly about as for what they mention in passing. This social historical approach to the street moves away from attention to architectural renewals or literary and artistic developments, which have been analyzed elsewhere, to focus on the more quotidian changes.[53]

Everyday interactions and appearances act as a prism to approach the experience of the city's residents during those years. Historians of daily life have highlighted the inherent link between explorations of the everyday and analysis of specific places.[54] Among the rich historiography on daily life in cities during the First World War, the second volume of *Capital Cities at War* comparing London, Paris, and Berlin, has shown all the fruitfulness of looking at the war's impact on societies through specific urban sites.[55] The focus on the spatial dimension makes it possible to broach wider issues in very concrete, even mundane ways. This approach is akin to the gathering of "small insights" to form a complete picture.[56]

Streetscapes do not merely represent an epiphenomenon alongside the events taking place at the time; they embody the essence of the city at a

[53] On architecture in this period, see Rostislav Švácha et Jan Malý, *The Architecture of New Prague, 1895–1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); on cultural life and modernism, see Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911–1938* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[54] For new directions and possibilities in this field see: Paul Steege, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healy, and Pamela E. Swett, *"The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," The Journal of Modern History*, 80 (2008): 363; on history of everyday life, see: Alf Lüdtke, *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion Historischer Erfahrungen Und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt; New York: Campus, 1989); also Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, *L'invention du quotidien. I Arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

[55] Jay M. Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919: Volume 2: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); On cities during World War One, see beyond the works already cited: Robert Blobaum's *A Minor Apocalypse: Warsaw during the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2000); Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Alfred Pfoser and Andreas Weigl, eds. *Im Epizentrum des Zusammenbruchs: Wien im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2013); Jovanna Lazic Knezevic, "The Austro-Hungarian Occupation of Belgrade during the First World War: Battles at the Home Front" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006).

[56] Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," *Theory and Society* 7, no. 3 (1979): 273–288.

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particular moment just as much (or more) as decisions by the municipal elites, town planning reforms, famous works of art, or newspaper columns. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty explained of Paris: "Just as a person gives evidence of the same emotional essence in his gestures with his hands, in his way of walking and in the sound of his voice, each express perception occurring in my journey through Paris – the cafés, people's faces, the poplars along the quays, the bends of the Seine – is cut out from the city's whole being, and only comes to confirm a certain style or a certain sense of Paris."[57] The details of the streetscape, the sensorial reality of urban space, provide clues to grasp the experience of war and revolution.

Whoever passed through Prague's streets witnessed scenes and sights regardless of their loyalties, gender, class, or preferred language. The Prague residents studied here share a common space rather than a common stable identity; this, nevertheless, implies a shared experience. The focus on space as a unit of analysis moves this study beyond ethnically defined narratives of the region (dealing separately with the attitudes of Czechs, Germans, and Jews). There is no chapter dedicated to the German minority in Prague, to the Jewish population, or to women.[58] Instead, their stories are interwoven into the different chapters. This is not to diminish the role that women or other groups played in wartime and postwar Prague or to deny that appropriations or interpretations varied, but they all had in common a spatial frame of experience.

This common frame was all the more relevant as the period constituted a moment of heightened presence of people in the streets, including for populations like women or working-class inhabitants, which might have felt less legitimate in wandering the city center's streets in previous decades. The war broke the association of women loitering in city streets with prostitution. As Katya Motyl argues, more women entered the workforce, sometimes in visible urban jobs such as tramway conductors, and the unending queues to obtain food meant that they spent long hours standing in the streets.[59] A nostalgic writer in 1923 reminisced that the Prague houses of his youth had little mirrors by the windows, which allowed their occupants (especially female) to discreetly watch outside. Comparing it with his current day, he noted that "the whole Prague was

[57] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 342.
[58] On Jewish Prague residents see: Martin Welling, *Von Hass so eng umkreist: Der Erste Weltkrieg aus der Sicht der Prager Juden* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 2003).
[59] Katya Motyl, "Re-Embodying History's 'Lady': Women's History, Materiality and Public Space in Early-Twentieth-Century Vienna," *Gender & History*, 33 (2021): 169–191.

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not always on the street like now," with women and girls "always in the open air." The mirrors had slowly disappeared: "it was as if the whole life poured out into the streets – there was no need for a little mirror."[60] The class barriers in urban space were also attenuated through the frequent protests of the years 1917 to 1920, but also through the general upheaval of social hierarchies. High inflation and currency fluctuation transformed class patterns of consumption. Post-1918 democratization was also a spatial process: everyone felt more entitled to the traditional bourgeois sites of the city center.

This appropriation of the street took place in the context of aspirations to modernity when the appearance of city streets took on particular relevance. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, all the major political and social changes found their expression in the streetscapes of big cities, arguably more than ever before or after. Smaller European capitals were no longer simply the seats of a court but conceived as national metropolises.[61] Streets became a barometer of progress. Early twentieth century urban dwellers measured their relationship to modernity by looking at their city. Central European cities, especially, experienced very rapid population growth during this era and aspired to the characteristics of the "great city," in terms of infrastructure, transportation, or urban planning.[62] In Prague too, the turn of the twentieth century saw the development of public amenities and urbanistic projects such as the clearing of the former Jewish ghetto to rebuild a new modern neighborhood.[63] Prague residents in 1914 tracked the "metropolitan" features of their city in the urban visual landscape: functioning trams, streetlights, new

[60] Ignát Herrmann, *Před padesáti lety: drobné vzpomínky z minulosti* (Prague: F. Topič, 1925), 133.

[61] Anna Ross, "Down with the Walls! The Politics of Place in Spanish and German Urban Extension Planning, 1848–1914," *The Journal of Modern History*, 90, no. 2 (2018): 292–322.

[62] Martin Kohlrausch, Jan C. Behrends eds., *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014); Nathaniel Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); on public space and the entanglements of state initiatives and national identities, see Markian Prokopovych, *Habsburg Lemberg: Architecture, Public Space, and Politics in the Galician Capital, 1772–1914* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009).

[63] Jiří Pešek, *Od aglomerace k velkoměstu: Praha a středoevropské metropole, 1850–1920* (Prague: Scriptorium, 1999); Cathleen M. Giustino, *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics Around 1900* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993); Klára Bruhová, *Praha nepostavená: Vltavské brehy jako urbanistické téma moderní metropole* (Prague: Czech Technical University Publishing House, 2017).

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food delicacies, enticing shop windows, and well-dressed crowds. All these commodities of metropolitan life would be disrupted by the outbreak of war and the worsening shortages. When the prewar urban experience had been characterized by its growing distance from rurality, the war and its dark streets, deficient transportation, and vegetable plots brought city dwellers backward. This book explores this moment in time when a reduced experience of modernity coincided with city crowds' aspirations to shape the future.

In other words, the urban space under study is not simply a backdrop to larger social transformations; the streetscape emerges as an agent in the story of war and regime change.[64] This is not to argue necessarily that material space had agency, but that, at that particular historical moment, change did take place on streets and had to take place on streets. The belief that buildings and streetscapes shape behaviors and attitudes had accompanied nineteenth-century urban development.[65] The notion that the streetscapes should reflect political and social changes was visible in the denunciation letters about the appearance of streets. Streets were integral to the way Prague residents perceived wartime conditions, imperial collapse, and Czechoslovak renewal, and they were central to the way citizens interacted with their own state. By removing signs and emblems, wearing or displaying certain colors, or writing on walls, Prague's inhabitants aimed to act on the cityscape. The First World War and the creation of new states corresponded to a moment when officials at the municipal or state level attempted to put their mark on urban space. It was also a particular moment of investment of urban space by crowds in an atmosphere of heightened social conflict. The street in this period was often invoked as a full subject and even as a political actor. As František Soukup, one of the main protagonists of the October 28 coup, asserted: "for today's democracy, the street has a great significance."[66] At a moment in which Prague's inhabitants felt entitled by democracy to make claims and partake in power, change was a product of both official projects and initiatives from below, which shaped urban space and postimperial statehood in equal measure.

The period of war and regime change was part of a special moment in the history of the streetscape. Even if street protests remained relevant

[64] See Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: the Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[65] William Whyte, "Buildings, Landscapes, and Regimes of Materiality," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (2018): 135–148.

[66] František Soukup, *28. říjen 1918* (Prague: ústrední dělnické knihkupectví a nakladatelství, 1928), 1071.

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in the second half of the twentieth century, for example in 1989, streets increasingly became conceived as a place for circulation, for going through, characterized by a higher density of cars – wider and emptier.[67] Between 1914 and 1920, people were careful observers of both the changes and the lack of changes registered on the street. They spent more time there and judged their integration to modernity and to the postwar European order based on their experience of the city. Interestingly, the conviction that the cityscape could provide a "reading" on the city existed at the time. One of the aptly called "mood reports" of the Military Command stated: "One must live here, observe the faces, the behavior of the public, the general image of the city to observe the direction and the strength of the wind."[68] Amidst dark and dirty streets, the combination of diminished modernity, increased state intervention, and growing democratic aspirations created tensions between mental self-perceptions and the reality of the streetscape. It is precisely in this disconnect that this book finds fertile historical ground.

Third largest urban center in the Austro–Hungarian Empire in 1914, Prague was a medium-sized European city, with a population of approximately 200,000 in the inner city and 600,000 in the urban area.[69] Even though the inner suburbs and smaller localities would only be joined to the city into Greater Prague in 1922, they all formed a single police jurisdiction before the war. Along the Vltava River was the Old Town, medieval heart of the city, and on the other side the Prague Castle (Hradčany) and Malá Strana, more sleepy neighborhoods where the aristocracy still had its dwellings. The New Town was the booming economic center of the city in the early twentieth century with the main busy thoroughfares: elongated Wenceslas Square, and on one side na Příkopě Street/Am Graben, on the other, Ferdinand Avenue. The middle classes and upper classes were concentrated in the center but by 1914, the most prominent of the suburbs (*předměstí*/*Vororte*) such as Král. Vinohrady, and to a lesser extent Karlín and Smíchov, were not only home to the industrial working classes, but also included recently built middle-class residential zones. On the periphery stretched the working-class neighborhoods of Libeň, Holešovice (administratively belonging to Prague), and other working-class suburbs such as Žižkov, or Vršovice where, on the whole, living conditions were already difficult before the war with a

[67] Brian Ladd argues for a peak of the European street's quintessential attributes around 1900, Brian Ladd, *The Streets of Europe: The Sights, Sounds, and Smells that Shaped Its Great Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[68] Mood report from the Prague Military Command, July 31, 1917, NA, PM 1911-1920, ka 5101, no. 17189/17.

[69] Pešek, *Od aglomerace k velkoměstu*, 169.

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high prevalence of tuberculosis and over-crowded housing.[70] Yet further away, on the outskirts of the Prague urban area, were a cluster of smaller, almost already rural municipalities. The lack of administrative unity multiplied the number of local representatives and officials. Every suburb had its own municipality and its own mayor. In addition, the towns of Král. Vinohrady, Karlín, Žižkov, and Smíchov were also the seat of an administrative district (represented by a district officer). The local elites of these towns refused integration in the prewar period, mostly for taxation reasons. In the 1910 census, 7 percent of the population in Prague and the inner suburbs declared German as their language of daily use (mostly middle-class and residing in the center and in Král. Vinohrady). The overwhelming majority of the population registered as Catholics with a Jewish minority representing 5 percent and a smaller Protestant minority. The German presence in Prague was marked spatially around the Corso na Příkopě/Am Graben where the German bourgeoisie would promenade as well as in the neighboring streets around specific buildings (German House, theaters, cafés).[71]

Meanwhile on Purkyně Square …

To ground the book's narrative in urban space, each chapter includes several vignettes relating events taking place on Purkyně Square (Purkyňovo náměstí/ Purkyněplatz), the main square of Prague's largest suburb, Královské Vinohrady/Königliche Weinberge (today's náměstí Míru). The square had developed much more recently than its counterparts in the city center. In the thirty years between its creation (1884) and the start of the war, it had become the heart of the rapidly growing, dynamic, middle-class suburb (Figure 0.1). The buildings surrounding it, all built during that period, reflected this prosperity. The presence on the square of a town hall, a school, a church, a Czech National House, a theater, several cafés, and restaurants positions it as an entry point into many of the issues encountered in Greater Prague between 1914 and 1920. In its center, facing a small park, stood the austere neogothic cathedral of Saint Ludmila (1888–1893). Lining the side closest to the center were the town hall (1878, expanded in 1893) and the school. On the opposite side, at the top of a slight incline,

[70] On daily life in working-class Prague, see Antonín Robek, Mirjam Moravcová, Jarmila Šťastná eds., *Stará dělnická Praha: život a kultura pražských dělníků 1848–1939* (Prague: Academia, 1981); on the interwar years, Stanislav Holubec, *Lidé periferie: sociální postavení a každodennost pražského dělnictva v meziválečné době* (Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2009).

[71] On national relations in the prewar, see Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914*, 2nd. ed., rev. (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006); Gary B. Cohen, "Cultural Crossings in Prague, 1900: Scenes from Late Imperial Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook*, 45 (2014): 1–30; for a fine-grained analysis of

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stood the massive neo-renaissance National House (1893–1894), a hub of local sociability. The building hosted conferences, meetings, but also celebrations, concerts, and performances. Inside, one could find a grand foyer, a lavish ballroom, rooms for various associations, a library, a gym, a restaurant, and a café. Behind was a little cinema, the kino Minuta. The (Czech) municipal theater of Král. Vinohrady (1905–1907) cut an elegant Art Nouveau figure on the Northern flank with its willowy statues and lampposts. The square boasted two more cafés, the famous café Hlavova and the café Royal, as well as a restaurant. Hlavova was a large coffeehouse in a neo-baroque building with several rooms, billiard tables, foreign newspapers, mirrors, and chandeliers. The square was the main pedestrian thoroughfare of the suburb, crossed by two tramway lines, with benches and kiosks in the park for more leisurely walks. As a 1908 guidebook summed up, the square was a "beautiful open space with a pretty park in the center, enclosed by modern constructions with magnificent facades."[72]



Figure 0.1 Purkyně Square, 1912
Source: Courtesy of Michal Frankl

national relations grounded in urban space in the interwar, see Ines Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen. Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag (1918–1938)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012); for a longer term view on issues of belonging in Prague, see Chad Bryant, *Prague: Belonging in the Modern City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021).

[72] *Illustrovaný průvodce po Praze a království Českém* (Prague: Český zemský svaz ku povznesení návštěv cizinců v král. Českém, 1908), 51; František Ruth, *Kronika královské Prahy a obcí sousedních* (Prague: Pavel Körber, 1904), 899–902.

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The book is divided into six chapters, all exploring different shades of wartime and postwar experiences. The dominating palette is rather dark and gray: these were years of deprivation for most of Prague's inhabitants, of gloomy streets, cold apartments, pale faces, and missing stuff. The first three chapters focus on war and the changes it brought to urban space. Chapter 1 analyses the different facets of militarization, the departure of reservists on the days of mobilization, the transformations in civil–military relations, and the climate of suspicion generated by military repression. Chapter 2 looks at the visual presence of Austrian patriotic culture in Prague's urban space (the flags, posters, and collections to promote the war effort). It thereby interrogates the relation of Prague to Austria–Hungary in the first war years. Chapter 3 deals with the bloodier side of war, the deaths, the wounded, and the refugees. It traces the presence of the war's casualties in urban space and examines how this presence framed Prague residents' relation to the conflict. Chapter 4 centers around food, the nerve of war, which slowly became the most important issue in wartime and postwar Prague, shaping everything else. It tracks how shortages created a new city made of restrictions around food use in various venues, visible deprivation, new food circuits, and changed relationship to the countryside. Chapters 5 and 6 move into the period 1917–1920, as the home front started to break down. What united this period was the frequency of street protests which are the subject of the Chapter 5. It analyzes the trajectories of the demonstrations, the buildings they targeted, in order to uncover their meaning. Finally, Chapter 6 investigates the 1918 transition from Empire to Republic. It highlights the continuity between the two regimes – a continuity visible in urban space – as well as the hunger for change in a period of great uncertainty.

The war was a moment when the Habsburg state intervened in the regulation of the way streets looked in unprecedented ways: produced more posters and government announcements, monitored colors, mandated what goods could be exposed or not in the streets, reduced street lighting, and imposed closing times, but it was also a time when people took to the street with the idea that it could change something, that what happened there was meaningful. In a century when online spaces have become increasingly more powerful in shaping politics, it might be worth going back to understand a time when streets particularly mattered.

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