

## PREFACE

The volunteers and organisations involved in the project entitled “Once upon a time there was a Steel-town welcome you dear Reader!

The research of the North-East Passage Association started in September 2008 in the framework of the project entitled “Once upon a time there was a Steel-town”. We collected the bulk of the basic material for our publication by means of questionnaires and interviews that we conducted (quotations, pictures) and also by means of research in the archives and by leaning on the account of local people. The research was carried out by the members and volunteers of our association and our partner organisations; furthermore in some cases the collaboration of external participants was also encouraged. Secondary school students, university students, cultural anthropologist researchers and professors took part in the project gathering altogether 50-odd participants. The volunteers of the research included the students of Andrásy Gyula Szakközépiskola (Technical School), Avasi Gimnázium (Secondary Grammar School), Diósgyőri Gimnázium (Secondary Grammar School), Földes Ferenc Gimnázium (Secondary Grammar School), Gábor Áron Művészeti Szakközépiskola (Art School), Zrínyi Ilona Gimnázium (Grammar School) and Hámori Waldorf School, the majority of the college students pursued their studies at the Department of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Miskolc.

The primary objective of the research and the project was to overrule the simplifying, contemptuous, cliché-ridden image of the town, to revise the concomitant stigma and stigmatisation and to consolidate a modern point of view which faces the past and does not want to keep things quiet.

The fact that the name of the town became synonymous with the somewhat pejorative term “*steel-town*” has a long history. It is therefore worthwhile to examine the origin of this term: originally and primarily it was used in connection with the town Ózd, and was associated with the term “the Ruhr-area by the river Sajó”. Nevertheless, in the era prior to the change of the political system, in the common parlance generally proud of the industrial development, it did not have the negative connotation which it carries today. It was not until 1984 that due to the somewhat hazy and sentimental song of the Hungarian hard-rock band, P.Mobil the term steel-town clung to Miskolc. Thus, today the youth immersed in the retro-wave generated by the Internet know this term. Nowadays, due to the (worldwide) decline of the mining and heavy industry and due to the change of the political system, this term clings to Miskolc as a nickname (as the essence of the previous political system).

In the project we applied a somewhat new, *avant-garde* concept used in the field of social sciences i.e.: the method of oral history. We were interested in history *seen from below*, how the people of Miskolc recall the 1950s and 1960s, how they perceive their lives during that period. Usually this particular era of the past is missing from the national curriculum, since the content of history books is mainly restricted to the essential political and military facts and data. (It is therefore worthwhile to trace the problem even until the change of the political system). In the research of the project entitled “Once upon a time, there was a Steel-town” we were primarily interested in the simple, everyday life of the locals, how people in the various parts of the town spent their time, how they worked, how they entertained themselves, how they pursued sports, how the force of history capable of transforming societies changed their lives and how they tried to adapt.

The method we applied for examining this period has its own characteristics: it is important to note that we had the chance of meeting the “witnesses” of the era, who shared their experiences with us and showed us objects and pictures taken by themselves or by their friends and relatives. This method, however has its drawbacks as well, since recalling the youthful years from a several-decade perspective one tends to think back with a certain amount of nostalgia (memories may seem nicer), therefore we had to treat the collected data with an adequate degree of prudence and reserve.