Adapting To Changing Context of Choice:
The Nation-Building Strategies of Unrecognized Silesians and Rusyns

Magdalena Dembinska

DRAFT. PLEASE DO NOT CITE

Paper to be presented at the Public Conference,
Ethnicity and Democratic Governance (EDG-EGD)
"Immigration, Minorities and Multiculturalism in Democracies"

Montreal, October 25-27, 2007

ABSTRACT

I argue that Rusyns in Ukraine and Silesians in Poland are engaged in a process of nation-building and that their choice of strategies is a direct response to the identity politics, minority laws and discourses of the titular nations and states, as well as to the new opportunities offered through European structures. This argument has broader implications for the recognition of difference necessary for the construction of shared political identities within states and within Europe, which all constitute political processes rather than principled objective responses.

Contact information
Centre for D. 3cw[(Ce7t0( )Tjc)ih.1(iansa)8(mStudtate(CDAS) ancGie pUns. rs)5o th4(,)41.153a.decracie

The history of Central and Eastern Europe is one of moving borders. An anecdote from the region tells the story of a person who was born in Austria-Hungary, went to school in Czechoslovakia, did his military service in Hungary, went to prison in the USSR, and is presently living in Ukraine, but has never moved from his village. States appear on the map, annex other states, and disappear to reappear on the map once again but in a different place. While geopolitics change, people learn imposed languages that they have to forget the day after, when their home ends up within different borders. If you do not move, your neighbors do. Resettlements are forced or are the result of people running away from their new oppressive masters, in search of their own country. The history of changing borders explains some ambiguities around identities in the region; identities which failed as yet to consolidate.

Silesians in Poland and Rusyns in Ukraine are such people. They never had their own independent state; they have been ruled by different national governments throughout their history. Their languages are considered dialects. Both groups were oppressed under communism, unrecognized and forcibly assimilated into the majority nations. Presently, both claim their national identity, based on the distinct character of their history, culture and language, as well as on their autochthonous tie to a specific territory. They are constantly denied recognition or even existence by states. Puzzlingly, the Rusyns in Poland, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania are recognized as a distinct ethnic or national group, whereas they are not in Ukraine. I suggest that the position of Rusyns in Ukraine is comparable to that of Silesians in Poland, and not to that of the Rusyns. To my knowledge, such comparison has never been done.

I argue that unrecognized Rusyns in Ukraine and Silesians in Poland are engaged in the process of nation-building and that their choice of strategies is a direct response to the identity politics, minority laws and discourses of the titular nations and states, as well as to the new opportunities offered through (eventual) European Union (EU) structures. I posit that recognition is a political act

and that determining “who is who” is a political process implying an interaction between groups and institutions, as well as between the groups themselves. As long as a minority defines itself in opposition to the majority group the tensions will not decrease. Furthermore, as long as the majority does not recognize difference, the existence of a shared political community is threatened. First, identity is a social construction, adapting to the changing context of choice; and, second, the recognition of difference is necessary, although not sufficient, to conceive multicultural arrangements,

parallel political process. This will bring me, in my concluding remarks, to assess the necessity of the recognition of difference and the importance of building shared political identifications.

Comparable Histories and Border Identities

The frequent divisions of the Silesian territory, which belonged to different states over time, constitute the basis of the Silesian identity's distinctiveness[1]. During the 10th century, the region inhabited by western Slavs was incorporated into Poland. When Poland dismembered into several principalities, Silesia was divided between Upper and Lower Silesia. In the 12th century, Germanic su0rG5(0rG5(ecitic)-is7(s)-re8(4(1)-is7(919e-is7e,.19e-is7e20e-is7e,.row0192e-is7e1)rG5(..row0deity)72n)5.8()7

After a long period of German politics where inhabitants went to German schools and fought in German armies (see Mucha 1997:31), Silesia is now being "Polonized" and its inhabitants are forced to assimilate into the Polish nation (on the re-polonization politics, see Linek 2001). Note that it was important for the Polish government to prove that Silesia's inhabitants were Poles in order to justify the recovery of this territory after World War II (Kamusella 1994:115, Ruszczewski 1995:103, Mucha 1992:469; compare with similar Rusyn history below). Together with the expulsion of Germans (approved by Potsdam treaties), Silesians having a relation with the German culture were resettled in Germany or sent to working camps in the USSR, and their property was automatically confiscated (Szmeja 2002:47). The government proceeded to verification policies imposing Polish citizenship/nationality on all Silesian inhabitants of Slav origins[4]. The idea, maintained by the Party and its First Secretary Gomu ka, was that these border inhabitants have had Polish national conscience before it was erased by germanization policies; it was time to restore and get them remember the real Self (Madajczyk 2000:84)[5]. Polish language became mandatory and was the unique language of instruction, with German and "Gwara" – the Silesian – forbidden and considered as inferior (Mucha 1992:469, Kamusella 1994:114)[6].

The back and forth movement of the Silesian territory, now in Poland, has resulted in a particular identity of its inhabitants. They are neither Germans nor Poles (Ruszczewski 1995:101), and they have much resentment against both nations ("krzywda l ska", Gerlich 1994). The perception of difference and the constant "second class" status contribute to the development of the Silesian identity (see Szmeja 2002:45, Kamusella 1994). Numerous studies conducted in the region almost unanimously show that Silesians have a very strong and deeply rooted ethnic conscience; they identify

[4] The territory was further polonized through the policies of settlement of Poles from eastern territories (mainly Ukraine and Lithuania) now in USSR (Ruszczewski 1995, Kochanowski 2001), as well as through forced resettlement of Ukrainians (and Lemko-Rusyns) from eastern Poland in Akcja Wis a.

[5] The only way to get integrated into the society was to prove one's polishness (Kamusella 1994:144 no. 5). Topographic names and surnames were once again forcibly modified, from their German consonance to the Polish one and as did Germans before, the Polish government established a list of permitted names.

[6] For a detailed account of the 1945-1949 period in the history of Silesians, see Strauchold 2001.

themselves as Silesians in all social situations (Szmeja 1998:80). They consider that they have a proper culture, a language of communication "Gwara" used on a daily basis, a common historic genealogy as well as a determined territory of origin. Based on these elements, they claim the recognition of the Silesian national identity - without success for now.

The Rusyn story is quite similar. In the region of the Carpathian Mountains the borders changed frequently. These were so recurrent that the Rusyns did not assimilate into any ruling majority nation (Michna 1995:71)[7]. In the Middle ages, the region was transferred from Hungary to Poland and to Austria. Since the mid-19th century, the Rusyns are however recognized as a distinct people by some of their host-States and by the international community. After the Hungarian Revolution in 1849, Austria divided Hungary in five districts, with the one in Transcarpathia being administered by local Rusyns. It only survived a few months. After WWI, the Hungarian government created an autonomous Rusyn region, which existed for only 40 days. Simultaneously, the Rusyns were promised an autonomous region in exchange for their adherence to the new Czechoslovakia. This territory, named Carpatho-Ukraine comprised three-quarter of the Rusyn community. Although it can be argued that it existed more on paper than in reality (Michna 1998:5), it was not only recognized in the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution, but also by two international treaties: St-Germain-en-Laye (1919) and Trianon (1920). Carpatho-Ukraine declared its independence in 1939, but the day after it was annexed to Hungary. After WWII, it was annexed to the USSRsd Ta2.B"ukrhan in r915]TJ20.46 0 TD0.0S7

the twentieth century the experience – and therefore historical memory – of their political entity" (for the history account see also Batt 2000).

Presently, the Rusyn historical region is divided between thr

"Objective" Criteria for (Non) Recognition

In 2002, the question of nationality was reintroduced in the Polish census and the results were astonishing for most Poles[12]: Silesians appear as the biggest minority in Poland[13] with 173 200 persons declaring themselves of Silesian nationality. The census raised an old question: how to define Silesians? After 1989, Poland recognized the heterogeneity of the state, various national and ethnic groups were recognized, except for the Silesians. In the census' report prepared by Statistics Poland (GUS, 2003), Silesians are categorized as a "community" (spo eczno) in the same way the Roma were defined[14] (Vermeersch 2004). The Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages, adopted in 2005, establishing precise criteria characterizing minorities, aims at solving the ambiguities of minority status. Roma are now recognized as an ethnic minority while Silesians are still ignored.

Contrary to the subjective definition of "nationality" used in the 2002 census[15], "objective" criteria for characterization are included in the Law. Five criteria define an ethnic minority (art. 2 para 3): it is a group (1) smaller than the total majority population; (2) having a distinct language, culture or tradition; (3) aspiring at preserving its language, culture or tradition; (4) conscious of and articulating its community history; (5) with ancestors residing on the Polish territory for more than 100 years. An additional criterion has to be met for a group to be recognized as a national minority (art. 2 para 1), which is (6) the group has to identify itself with the titular nation of another state (i.e. parent-state)[16]. Recognition is also possible for minority groups traditionally using a distinct language present in a region of Poland (art. 19). This provision does not concern dialects nor immigrant languages.

[12] For an analysis of the census, mainly from the language diversity angle, see Moskal 2004.
[13] See "Najwi ksza mniejszo – l zacy", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 16, 2003.
[14] Note the change: Roma were presented as a "national minority" in the Parliamentary Commission on Minorities report of 1995.
[15] Read as follows: "ethnicity is a declarative (based on subjective sentiment) individual trait of every person that expresses his/her emotional, cultural, or genealogical (because of the parents' background) linkage to a certain nation". Note the use of ethnicity and nation (synonyms?).

Following those criteria, among others, Armenians in Poland are a national minority, while Roma and Lemkos-Rusyns are ethnic minorities. Silesians cannot be recognized as a nation according to this definition since they do not have a parent-state. They are not an ethnic minority either since "Gwara" should be first recognized as a distinct language and not considered as a mere Polish dialect. The latter was finally granted to the Kashubs,– western Slavs from Pomerania, germanized/polonized in the similar way as the Silesians and with a language which was considered for a long time as a mere dialect of the Polish language -, now recognized as regional language group. The continuous non-recognition of Silesians is subject to tensions[17].

To justify the recent recognition of Kashubs vis-à-vis the non-recognition of Silesians, Polish authorities point at the lack of standardization of the Silesian dialect, the lack of literature in Silesian[18]. Kashubs do have literature in Kashub, there is also a Kashub translation of the Bible and a Kashub-Polish dictionary. In order to teach in schools, Kashubs begun to standardize different orthography variants (Majewicz 1996). The language is present in the local media (since December 2004[19]), there is even a movie with Kashub dubbing, and last but not least there is a computer program for editing Kashub text available on the market[20]. The main explanation resides in the objective criterion of language as being constitutive of a distinct identity.

What is the "objective" basis of non-recognition in the case of the Ukrainian Rusyns? In the Law on National Minorities of Ukraine (1992, art. 3), a "minority" is defined as a group of Ukrainian citizens, who are not Ukrainian by *descent*, and who share a community spirit and a common identity (see Michna 1998). According to the Ukrainian State, which invokes scientific work, Rusyns do not

[16] These criteria are contested not only by Silesians but also by Roma, Tatars and Lemkos (Rusyns in Poland) who, being

constitute such a minority because they are an ethnographic group of the Ukrainian nation. They speak a dialect of Ukrainian and have historically identified with Ukrainians (see Arel 2001:15). Consider for example the following argument presented by Ukraine in the document prepared for the Council of Europe: “all truly [!] scientific historical and ethnographic research attests to the fact that the indigenous Slavic population of Transcarpathia, besides certain peculiarities in culture, language, and customs, belong to the Ukrainian people” (cited

where issued by the Council of Europe (see Kymlicka 2004): the Frame Convention (1995) and the European Charter on minorities and regional languages (1992). Putting aside the several critiques faced by these documents regarding their ambiguous formulations (see for example Henrard 2001), we can say that they do not provide with any definition of who should be considered as the minorities who are subject to the rules and protections they include. Consider for example the following formulation extracted from the Charter (part I, art. 2 para 2): each country will apply such and such provisions "concerning all languages indicated at the moment of ratification, acceptance or approbation". There is no magic formula. The states ratifying the Charter decide who is put on the list (see also Deets 2002:35). Nothing is said on how to establish such a list. Subjective criteria are sometimes put forward but with little use as the case of Silesians illustrates.

In December 1996, the Court in Katowice received a request for the registration of the Association of People of Silesian Nationality. It was subsequently registered in June 1997, recognizing that "a person's nationality is subject to her own choice and that autochthonous Silesians form a minority in Upper Silesia, such as it is obvious for anyone who passed some time in the region" (cited in Kranz 1998). The decision was contested by the Katowice voïvod and in September, the Appeal Court reversed it, stipulating that the Silesian regional identification did not constitute a national identity but rather a "small homeland" (ma a ojczyzna). The Supreme Court confirmed this decision in March 1998, justifying it with a reference to the Explanatory Report annexed to the Frame Convention of the Council of Europe, which says that the choice of the nationality of a person is bound to objective criteria and that subjective identifications do not automatically imply the creation of a nation or of a national minority. Finally, the Association sent the case to the European Human Rights Court, without success. The European Court did not actually debate the question of whether the Silesian nation existed or not, rather judging that, according to the procedures that were applied,

---

in Educational Systems. OSCE issued the Copenhagen Document (1990) where it mentions minority rights to education in the minority language and to use minority languages in administration.

Poland did not do anything illegal (Kranz 1998)[22]. Rusyns, with the support of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), intend to submit their cause to the European Court (Belitser ?:9), but the Silesian experience sets a discouraging precedent.

The European Court did not even debate the question of what criteria Silesians had to meet to be considered as a nation. There is no rule, no common definition in Europe nor in the scientific world. One must admit, observing who is who in different countries, that it is a political question and

political process aiming to respond to the criteria adopted by their respective states. Following Gerlich (2002:45-47) and Magocsi (see Lane 2001:695), we might be at the forefront of a historical process of making new nations[24].

Responding to "Objective" Criteria

Saying we are different because we feel so did not work. New strategies have to be put forward and these are adapting to the discourses and institutions in place, which provide the actors with a context constraining the possible choices. An institutional change modifies the actors' strategies[25]. Laws create new spaces for debate and constitute "moments" of a continuous political process. In order to be recognized, Rusyns and Silesians are adapting their strategies to the "objective" criteria. Thus, we should observe the reinforcement of distinct Silesian culture; the affirmation of distinct descent in the case of Rusyns; and language standardization together with proving that they are literary.

"our" Golden Age, for the causes of decline and victimization (Smith 1999:62-68). Myths determine the borders of "us" versus "them" (Schöpflin 2000:80 and 84). Myths also justify collective claims, rights, duties, territories and self-determination (Smith 1999:68-70). They mobilize collective action and they create/maintain divisions (ibid.:82). However, both authors consider that myths are flexible. Nations, as social constructions and imagined communities (Anderson 1991), do change. Myths are adapting to the needs of the moment, i.e. to an external threat, to structural changes. In fact, "different myths receive emphasis at different times to cope with different challenges" (Schöpflin 2000:98,)[26]. Politicians, priests, writers, historians, intellectuals and linguists (Schöpflin 2000:87) have a specific role in this process as they retain control over myths. Some limits apply: myths can not be invented; they need to relate to the collective memories ("responsiveness", Schöpflin 2000 :87)[27].

State-constructed myths of Silesians being Poles and Rusyns being Ukrainians collide with collective memories of at least some members of these communities[28]. To counter states' discourse on common descent, common culture and common literary language underlying their non-recognition, Silesians and Rusyns propose myths differentiating them from the titular nations.

The formal requirement of strongly distinct culture or tradition included in the 2005 Polish Law on minorities reinforces the development of a Silesian "imagined community" with its own constitutive myths. The continuous emphasis on common descent in Ukrainian "truly scientific" work stimulates the counter-myth of Rusyns as a distinct 4th Eastern Slavic people[29]. Myths are re-imagined, structured and promoted by public figures and scientists. Rusyns have their Magocsi, professor of political science in Canada; Silesians have their professor of sociology, Szepa

by M. Makara from the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society and M. Sharga from the Transcarpathian Association “Znannia”, and translated to English by E. Rusinka and P.R. Magocsi (i.e. one of the Rusyn myth-controllers according to Schöpflin and Smith). The thesis of distinct descent is comes from the idea that, contrarily to other interpretation of the re

prayer books, but also *zborniks*, encyclopedic works or collections of legends, stories and tales which are "the fundamental reason for the myth-based world-view of the Rusyns" (Benedek 2001:45). The most known national writer, and the most "used", is the 19th century Aleksander Duchnovi , who not only organized a Rusyn literary society in 1850[41], but "his prayer book, his drama and romantic historical stories served to advance the development and formation of national identity and awareness" (Benedek 2001:49). To be able to demonstrate literary existence and continuity constitutes an advantage Silesians lack in their language- and nation-building basket.

Following the victimization myth, the present "linguistic problem" is due to the frequent divisions of the Rusyn historical region and consequently different linguistic influences. Four Rusyn dialects developed in Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and Yugoslavia (Vojvodina) with Rusyn writers using different terminology. In the absence of a codified language, the use of grammar and orthography differed from one author to another. This was also apparent in Rusyn newspapers throughout the region (see Michna 1998:19). In 1992, the World Congress of Rusyns decided on the creation of a Rusyn literary language on the basis of spoken dialects (see Magocsi 1996:683[42]). The Yugoslav variant had been codified already in the 1920s and has been used since. Through a collaborative work within the newly created Institute of Rusyn Language and Culture in Presov (Magocsi 1999:109), Lemkos in Poland and Rusyns in Slovakia codified their variants, and Ukrainian Rusyns have a codified form as outlined in the grammar *Materynskyi iazyk* (1999). The next step, after these codified versions prove to function in practice and are gradually stabilized[43], is to create a single Carpatho-Rusyn literary standard[44]. The language standardization work by Ukrainian Rusyns is certainly reinforced by the cooperation with kins in neighbouring countries, an advantage not available for Silesians. However, its success depends heavily on the responsiveness on behalf of the Rusyns

[39] See: www.punasymu.com
[40] On www.carpatho-rusyn.org/
[41] Immediately banned by Hungarian authorities though.
[42] On natural vs. constructed languages in the Rusyn case see Seriot 2006.

help for recognition but I argue that structures do offer some opportunities that may be worth exploring for the communities to be heard and their cause put on the agenda.

Early Self-Determination Demands

Maíz and Requejo point out that "many groups and communities tend increasingly to regard themselves as nations in order to strengthen their demand for self-government and cultural autonomy" (20005 :5). This is a consequence of the received wisdom that in order to have the right to self-determination one has to be a nation[46]. Claiming to be nations then, is perceived as undermining State sovereignty, particularly in the context of weak and/or new States just liberated from Soviet domination and struggling with State- and nation-building processes. It is no surprise to see the resistance to recognize the claimant communities and a resulting impasse and further tensions.

The Movement for the Autonomy of Silesia (Ruch Autonomii l ska, RA) was created as early as January 1990. Following an article published in the Polish journal *Polityka*, the RA demanded the unification of the region with Germany. Given the demography of the region together with the opposition of Poles to such an idea, this demand would not be realistic. Some articles printed in *Jaskółka śląska*, a monthly journal edited by RA , advanced the idea of a Silesian nation and of an independent Silesian State. Officially, the RA demands for regional autonomy are similar to the one accorded to the region between the two World Wars (RA programme on www.raslaska.pl; Bieda 2006:10, Cybula and Majcherewicz 2005:150). It met strong opposition from the majority and the State as it was immediately associated with "separatism". As a result, in 2000 the State Security Department (UOP) issued a secret report where it explicitly lists the RA as a potential threat to Polish

[46] Consider however the Gagauzs who have autonomy status and self-government within Moldova even if they are not officially recognized as a national community. It is true that the autonomy was granted after a nearly violent confrontations and in the context of parallel Transnistrian conflict threatening Moldova, but still the point is that the question is not one of rights but one of politics.

State interests[47]. Thus, requests for autonomy are perceived

Academy of Science) – with the objective of eradicating rusyness[50], or "political rusynism" (Belister?:2).

Due to the history of the regions under analysis and to at least some separatist voices, the demands for recognition and autonomy by Silesians and Rusyns encountered strong opposition from the Polish and Ukrainian States respectivly. Some signs of "détente" can however be observed as these unrecognized communities turn to a fairly European discourse and argumentation. Using European opportunities in order to gain voice on political arena these groups try to work with, or at least not against, their respective host-States.

Using Europe: Transformation of the Demands

The RA journal has now an extended title: *Jaskółka śląska - Europe of 100 Flags*[52]. The concept is used by the European alliance of regional political parties (DPPE-EFA) to which RA adhered after the 2004 EU enlargement. Together with Scots, Bretons, Catalans, Moravians and others, Silesians endorse explicitly, not separatism, but the "Europe of regions" concept where historical regions would have most of cultural, economic and political competences - without necessarily undermining State[53] and supra-states structures, as long as they respect regional specificities (RA programme). Interestingly, besides the continuous efforts to register the Association of People of Silesian Nationality, "historical region" is not to be associated with "ethnic" Silesians. Rather, the new strategy is to put emphasis on the particular history of this *geographical* region with its ethnic diversity (see Cybula and Majcherewicz 2005:150). This can be seen in the latest proposal by RA [54] to introduce in Silesian schools classes of regional history, without any reference to a *national* Silesian history[55]. The RA programme envisions an autonomous Silesia within Poland[56] and a region within Europe. Considering some statements by Mr. Gorzelik, the head of RA , who at some point talked about a future capital in Brussels and no need for intermediaries (i.e. State capitals), this of course can be seen as a political strategy rather than a real wish (see Bieda 2006:11-12). The point is that, although unrecognized, Silesians are now represented in the European Parliament through DPPE-EFA, they have allies beyond borders who support their cause (see also Keating 2003:11). Silesians gained a voice and their demands are legitimized through European structures. The strategy is two-fold and played on two political arenas simultaneously: to recognize Silesians as distinct people and to accord autonomy to the Silesian multicultural region through a political process within the Polish State and

[52] Referring to the idea by Yann Fouere, a nationalist activist from Bretagne.
[53] See for example Senator Kutz statements or an article by Józef Krzyk in *Gazeta Wyborcza – Katowice*, October 23 and December 12, 2006 for the former, and July 14, 2005 for the latter.
[54] *Gazeta Wyborcza* – Katowice, September 1, 2006.
[55] Consider however the section on symbols to be used in the potential Silesian autonomous region as presented in the RA programme – these are explicitly linked to the nation-building Silesian myths.
[56] Dorota Simonides, for example, pleads not to confuse self-government with separatism, *Polityka*, October 4, 1997, p. 13

through the European opportunities. The goals did not change. Strategies and above all discourses changed adapting to external context of choice.

The use of Europe is less obvious in the case of Ukrainian Rusyns than in the case of Silesians. Perhaps this is due to Poland already being part of the European structures, while for Ukraine it represents a possible future. Further research should be conducted here. However, we can already observe some similarities in the change of discourse by Rusyns. Autonomy demands seem to be now at most secondary as the Provisional Government suspended its work in 2000, for lack of massive support[57], and Transcarpathia is presented more often as a multicultural region[58].

The impasse in Rusyn-Ukrainian relations broke by the end of 2004. The Orange Revolution and the victory of the pro-European option in Ukraine made Rusyns optimistic of the possible change of State policies towards unrecognized people. Rusyn representatives supported Yushchenko and joined the efforts for Europeanization. A more open democratic Ukraine aiming at the EU adhesion would provide a good context for the Rusyn cause. The signs of "détente" associated with this new State direction are visible: some Rusyn cultural events take place with official support (formally allowed only for recognized minorities), permission to present their cause on television in Rusyn language and the creation of 26 Sunday schools instructing the Rusyn language and culture. Moreover, Viktor Baloha, a Rusyn, is close to the President Yushchenko and has even been appointed his chief of staff[59]. Even though not recognized, some political space has been opened where to "squeeze" and be heard.

The aspirations of Ukraine to join the EU are used, although timidly, by Rusyn leaders knowing that external pressures can be exploited to their advantage. Consider for example Fedir

important for Ukraine to register this [Rusyn] nationality, in order to avoid various manipulations at the level of the European Union. (...) There is a league of Unrecognized peoples, which creates a negative image for Ukraine in connection with the fact that the Rusyn nationality is not recognized"[60]. The new pro-European context of Ukraine offers an external political space for Rusyns to act.

The external arena could prove even more productive for Rusyns than for Silesians. The former have a considerable advantage of an active diaspora and kins in neighboring countries, recognized as ethnic or national minorities. Here the idea of multicultural region of Transcarpathia is complemented by a larger idea of historical region of kins with the Lemko and Presov territories[61]. The close relationship and cooperation between Rusyns in Slovakia and Lemkos (Rusyns) in Poland together with Ukrainian Rusyns might be seen as a reproduction of the Hungarian concept, controversial though, of a Europe of (extra-territorial) nations, or "Europe of kins". This idea envisions one voice for the nation, not for the State, in the European community building process (Ieda 2004 :4,15, see also Deets 2004). The Secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Ministry once declared: "State borders are gradually losing their meaning in the course of European integration. The Hungarian nation policy is in the mainstream of Europe where the emphasis is moving from state borders to communities of individuals and peoples" (cited in Ieda 2004:20).

Europe modifies the role of borders. Artificially divided cultural communities have an advantage here as their efforts for cultural survival might be reinforced through better cross-border cooperation and through gaining a common voice on the alternative and complementary to the State, European arena. Consider the findings by Ewa Michna. Analyzing and comparing her interviews with Rusyns in Slovakia and in Poland conducted in 1995 and in 2003, she finds a strong correlation between expectations by the Rusyn leaders once Poland and Slovakia enter the EU, and the drop of

[59] Data from RFE/RL, 8:33, September 26, 2006.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Note the work on language variants codification and especially the possibility of a common literary standardized Rusyn for all kins.

their national aspirations along with the vision of Rusyn independence (however weak it was; Michna 1995 and 2004). She concludes that minority aspirations follow political pragmatism (Michna 1995:81), a conclusion which corroborates the thesis put forward by Bartkus (1999) on the dynamics of secession linked to a cost and benefit calculus. One of the leaders of Slovakian Rusyns commented[62]: "for us, hope lays not in a [Rusyn] State but in a united Europe for we will be once again in a common space where we will be able to communicate with each other without any obstacles. This can worry Transcarpathian Rusyns because Ukraine will not enter there [EU] for long time and because they are isolated and subject to assimilation politics. They are right to aspire to autonomy" (cited in Michna 2004:148). The interview was conducted before the Orange Revolution and I suspect that the idea of Europe of kins, i.e. with faded borders and the possibility to elaborate common Rusyn projects in the larger European political space, is now on Ukrainian Rusyns' minds. A two-fold strategy can be observed. On the one hand, Ukrainian Rusyns aim to be recognized as distinct from the Ukrainian nation through the internal political process of nation-building and using external actors to pressure the State. On the other hand, they should be seen to further tighten cultural cooperation with their neighbouring kins in order to have at least one foot in Europe and by the same token be heard in European structures. In both Rusyn and Silesian cases it seems that the argument developed by Michael Keating (2003:5) is corroborated: "the European theme has been taken up by minorities as a substitute for irredentism".

Recognition of Difference and Building Complementary Shared Identifications

I have argued that in response to the "objective" criteria, and aspiring for the recognition of their distinct identity, Silesians and Rusyns (re)build their respective communities following and in order to meet the criteria. Together with a revival of history, symbols, identity forming myths of ethnogenesis and glory, the language is being standardized. Even if the EU is not a guarantee of future

[62] Note the use of "us", i.e. Rusyns to be part of EU, and "them", i.e. Ukrainian Rusyns.

recognition, it provides new fora to press the minority cause and provides them with legitimating arguments through the "en vogue" concepts of Europe of regions and Europe of kins. It follows that identities are dynamic, they adapt to the institutions and laws which provide them with a context of strategy choices. This corroborates Iris Marion Young relational ontology of difference and her related argument stating that differences between communities are differences of degree not of sort (see Young 2002). Consequently, my study also meets Michael Walzer (2004): instead of searching for some principled and objective criteria for a definition of nations and their rights, I approached tensions and demands as a dynamic political process.

The study has further policy and theoretical implications: (1) the need for political recognition of difference in multicultural divided societies; (2) the possibility of building complementary identifications adapted to changing context and allowing multicultural arrangements in different political spaces.

The insistence on the non-recognition of Silesians and Rusyns by their respective States reinforces efforts to reimagine identity elements *in opposition* to Poles and Ukrainians respectively. Such a process divides further the identity cleavage and leads to intensified hostility and impasse in the possible dialogue on political mutual, common arrangements. In order to diminish tensions one has to recognize that the State is composed of diversity and different groups should share the political community. Stivell rightly remarks that "minority identities need to be recognized simply as existent. Not to be, obviously represent a big, normal and legitimate frustration, which can sometimes lead to excess" (2003:197). To recognize is to invite the other to elaborate common projects and live together, not beside one another (Schaap 2005).

Should they be recognized as a specific minority category, national or ethnic? If identities are dynamic and adapt to the changing context of choice, this should not be necessary *a priori*. The "who is who" question is a political one. On the one hand, nation-builders from the majority and from the unrecognized minorities do have to take into account the level of support for their claims. Following

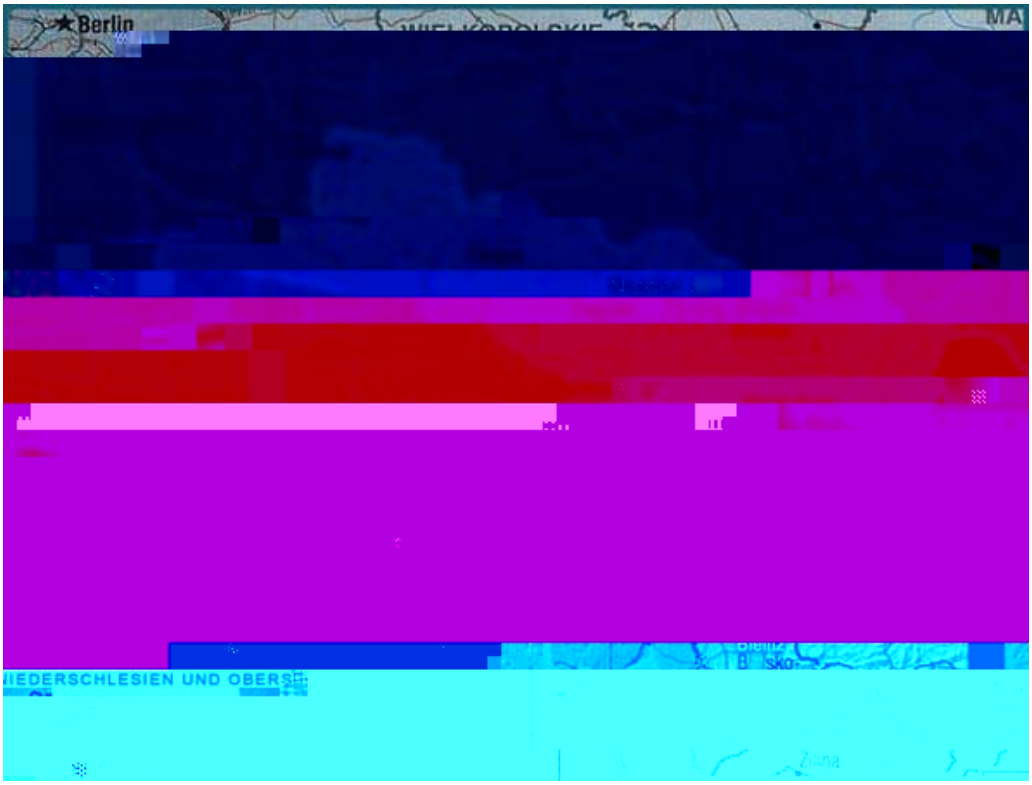
the responsiveness element necessary for the myths to function, a nation can not be invented as it has to correspond to the collective memory. On the other hand, as Walzer put it (2004:45): "when arguing about multiculturalism and democratic citizenship, we have to pay attention (...) to the specific features of group life and the specific demands of different groups" instead of asking who has the right to what following such criteria and law (see also the discussion in Gupreet 2002:187-189). In that sense the demands to register the Association of People of Silesian Nationality is an erroneous strategy which provokes more enmity than peace. Their postulates could be realized in structures other than "national minority" and in a step by step, muddling through process (see also Gerlich 2002:41). To recognize them as distinct people, without any categorization at first at least, could provide an invitation to a dialogue on possible distribution of means for the survival of difference (linguistic and educational policies) and possible distribution of power (representation, autonomy). This surely is a long and arduous political process but the impasse should be broken. The resulting political arrangement is unknown as it results from politics, not from any principled solution.

Identities being fluid and adapting, although slowly and not in the sense of acculturation, to the changing context, we can foresee further developments. As we have seen, Europe is such a context of choice. Further European policies-incentives for rapprochement could be elaborated. Silesians and Rusyns present themselves as distinctively Silesi

identifications and as such allows unification

Kranz Jerzy (1998), “A National Minority of Silesians?”, *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 7:4
Kuzio Taras (2005), “The Rusyn Question in Ukraine: Sorting Out Fact From Fiction”, *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*

MAP: Low and Upper Silesia regions



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Silesia.jpg

MAP: Rusyn historic region in present-day State borders

Source : http://carpatho-rusyn.org/map.htm