



Ethnicity and Democratic Governance
Gouvernance démocratique et ethnicité

www.edg-gde.ca



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 PLEASE DO NOT CITE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 Developing-Area Studies (CDAS), McGill University, Canada
magdalena.dembinska@mail.mcgill.ca

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, to live together and not apart. Only then common identities can be developed through new relationships.

First, I will provide an overview of Silesian and Rusyn histories resulting in similar identity issues. Second, I will explore both the Polish and Ukrainian arguments and criteria justifying the non-recognition of those minorities. In the third section, I will show that international norms (here mainly European) do not provide these minorities with a resource to be used against the above criteria and arguments. I argue that determining who is and is not a nation/ethnic group is a political process, and that neither European, nor any other international norms, provide an objective definition of what they should be. In the fourth section, I will explore how these minorities are responding to changing laws and institutions in order to be recognized, Through the analysis and comparison of the cases of Ukraine-Rusyns and of Poland-Silesians politics, I argue that, in response to the claimed-as-objective criteria, Silesians’ and Rusyns both aim at (re)building the nation in order to meet the criteria imposed by the state. Together with a revival of history, symbols, identity-formation myths of ethno-genesis and glory, the language has to be standardized, with proper grammar and orthography, a language that can be taught and used in the media. In the fifth section, I analyze the changing discourses of Silesians and Rusyns in the context of EU opportunities. I suggest that the EU is a complementary context of choice. Because this context is providing these minorities with new forums to mobilize, put pressure on political actors and bring issues on the agenda, it offers them the possibility of engaging in a

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 distinctiveness¹. 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 people settled in Lower Silesia and in the 14th century, the Bohemian monarchy established its hegemony over both Upper and Lower Silesia. It is in 1348 that the region transferred to the Czech Crown. Czech was established as the official language in Upper Silesia, mainly inhabited by catholic Slavs, whereas German was spoken in Lower Silesia, mostly populated with protestant Germans. In the mid-18th century, seven-eighth of Silesia was attributed to Prussia, and the rest was given to the Austrian empire. Both empires proceeded with germanization policies.

After World War I, the geography changed again. The Austrian Silesia was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia; the rest of Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland². Between the two World Wars, the Polish Upper Silesia enjoyed quite a large autonomy. The Polish constitutional act of 1920 assigned it a special status with its own parliament, control over language policies, over schooling, police and public services³. After the German defeat in 1945, the small South-west part of Silesia remained within Czechoslovakia, while almost all the German portion went to Poland (see also Bieda 2006: 4).

¹ This short history of Silesia is based on Szmeja 1998, Cordell 1995, and Kamusella 1999.

² Formally in 1922, after a referendum (60% for Germany, 40% for Poland, Cordell 1995: 308) and three pro-Polish insurrections (1919, 1920, 1921).

³ It had authority over collecting taxes and after a percentage of regional earnings went to the Polish State for all-State purposes, an important amount of money went to the Silesian Treasure. The status of Silesia was also regulated by the Geneva Convention which guaranteed a "soft" division of the region, i.e. with guarantees for Germans in the Polish part of Silesia and *vice versa* (see Bialasiewicz 2002:113-114).

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 origins⁴. The idea, maintained by the Party and its First Secretary Gomułka, 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 śląska”, 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 Wisła.

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 USSR⁸ following the logics that it was peopled in majority with Ukrainians (the “ukrainization” of the Rusyns was similar to the “polonization” of the Silesians, see Kuzio 2005)⁹. Magocsi (1992:99) concludes that “the point is that although Rusyns may never have had their own state, they did have for a significant period of time in

⁷ This brief history is based on Michna 1995, Magocsi 1992.

⁸ Traded between Czechoslovak Prime Minister Benes and Stalin in exchange for the latter’s support for Slovakia to continue to be united with the Czech region. See Batt 2000.

⁹ It is interesting to note the use of terms in historiographies: “annexation” in the Rusyn, “reunification” in the Soviet and the Ukrainian. This is typical and observed in other situations such as for example the “annexation” of Bessarabia (now Moldova) vs. its “unification” with the Soviet Moldova in 1940, or “occupation” of the Baltic States vs. their “liberation” by the Red Army in 1940.

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 three countries: Poland in the Lemko region, Slovakia in the Prešov region and Ukraine in Transcarpathia. Under the communist rule, the Rusyn identity was forbidden and banned from official registers¹⁰. The propaganda maintained the idea that the Rusyns were national Ukrainians (see Magocsi 1992:97 and 101, Michna 1998:6). As for the Silesians (and Germans in Poland), Rusyn publications and cultural activities were forbidden.

The resulting identities are “ambiguous” (on fluid border identities, see for ex. Thaler 2001). There are Silesians identifying themselves as Germans from Silesia, others as Poles from Silesia and finally as Silesians proper (Bieda 2006:4, Szmeja 2002:195)¹¹. Similar dividing options are observed within the Rusyn community in Ukraine: some Rusyns consider themselves as a group of the Ukrainian nation, others as closer to Russians and finally as Rusyns proper (Michna 1998). For the purpose of my paper, I focus on the Silesian and Rusyn identifications proper. Both claim their respective distinctiveness and aim at group recognition. Both are denied such recognition based on criteria adopted by national states. My purpose is not to defend one position or the other, or to evaluate which one of the two communities is more “national”, but it is rather to show that the act of recognition is a political process independent from someone’s subjective feelings of distinctiveness. This political process of nation-building is determined by the interactions between the state, its titular nation and the unrecognized group.

¹⁰ Through a Bolshevik decree dating from 1925 in Ukraine; copied in Poland in 1945 and in Czechoslovakia in 1950.

¹¹ Bieda cites the following results of a research on demographic composition of Upper Silesia in 1996 as declared by its inhabitants: 63,8% Poles, 12,4% Silesians, 1,1% Germans, 18,1% Silesians-Poles, 2,4% Silesians-Germans, 2,2% others (2006:7).

“Objective” Criteria for (Non) Recognition

In 2002, the question of nationality was reintroduced in the Polish census and the results were astonishing for most Poles¹²: Silesians appear as the biggest minority in Poland¹³ 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” (społeczność) in the same way the Roma were defined¹⁴ (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 census¹⁵, “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 “Największa mniejszość – Ślązacy”, *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 tensions¹⁷.

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 Silesian¹⁸. 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 2004¹⁹), 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 market²⁰. 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 without a parent-state, are in the ethnic category meaning that they are excluded from the electoral privileges granted to national minorities. See the letter dated of November 17, 2004 addressed by these groups to the Senate on www.ngo.pl

¹⁷ The “objective” criteria established in the Law are compared to Bismarck politics, denouncing the nationalist and anti-Silesian spirit of the Law. See the articles by Michał Smolarz, Kazimierz Kutz, Aleksandra Klich and Józef Krzyk, in *Gazeta Wyborcza-Katowice*, November 18, December 14 and 20, 2004.

¹⁸ See the presentation by the parliamentary expert Lech Nijakowski, in the stenogramme of June 16, 2004, on <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Biuletyn.nsf/wgskrrnr/ASW-155>.

¹⁹ “Kaszubi mają swoją rozgłośnię”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 30, 2004.

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 in Arel 2001:14). As Belitser (?:3-6) resumes, according to Ukrainian historiography, Transcarpathia was inhabited by eastern Slavic people, was conquered by Hungarians in the 9th century, was returned to Kiev princes between the 10th and 13th centuries (in the Kievian Rus), and was re-conquered by Hungarians in 1381. The fact that the inhabitants of Transcarpathia suffered from state policies different than the rest of Ukraine explains some cultural and linguistic differences but it does not equate being from different descent in any way.

Based on criteria adopted by both Poland and Ukraine to determine who forms a nation, an ethnic group or a regional linguistic group, Silesians and Rusyns are not recognized as a distinct people. These criteria are, among others, the existence of a literary language, a distinct culture and a distinct ethnogenesis. The tensions revolve around the use of objective versus subjective criteria for the definition of identity and around who decides which to use. Can Silesians and Rusyns use external instruments, i.e. norms and definitions, to press Poland and Ukraine respectively to recognize their existence as a distinct collectivity because they feel so?

European Norms of Little Use

During the 1990s, numerous documents providing rules to ensure minorities' survival and development were adopted by international organizations²¹. In Europe, the most important documents

²⁰ “Kaszubi mają swój komputerowy edytor tekstów”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 28, 2004.

²¹ There is article 27 of the UN International Pact on Civil and Political Rights referring to the protection of linguistic rights of minorities, the 1992 UN Declaration on Minorities and the UNESCO Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination

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 voivod 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” (*mała 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 2009), 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 not a theoretical one. For example, the ethnographic literature considers that, in the inter-war period in Masuria, the German national identity did not correspond to the spoken language, which was Polish (Blanke 1999). The Quebecois are an example of francophone speakers without a parent-state and as opposed to the situation with Silesians in Poland for whom language was not sufficient, they are (finally) recognized as a nation. In Moldova, the Gagauzi people received an autonomy status, while they are not recognized as a national minority. Although not recognized in Ukraine, Rusyns are recognized as distinct from Ukrainians in Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Yugoslavia. The differences in the criteria adopted from one country to another show that recognition is a political decision and not an objective universal.

Non-recognition based on some so-called “objective” criteria creates further tensions and pushes non-recognized communities into opposition. Neither European nor any other norms can rescue Silesians and Rusyns²³. I argue that, in order to be recognized, both groups engaged in a

²² Note that, interestingly, the Lemko registered their organization even if in its statute it is clearly mentioned that its purpose is to defend and develop the *national* Lemko culture (Michna 1995 :74). On Lemkos, see also Magocsi 1992, Dziewierski 1997 and Pactwa 1997.

²³ While analyzing reports on Ukrainian progress in adopting European recommendations, one can not but remark that the Rusyn question is there, but exclusively in an informative manner not in a prescriptive or recommending one. Consider for example the following extract from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) report on *Honouring of obligations and commitments by Ukraine* dated September 19, 2005 where Rusyns are mentioned with this formulation: “325. Rusyns (Ruthenians) continued to call for status as an official ethnic group in the country, noting that they are accepted as minorities in neighbouring countries. Representatives of the Rusyn community have called for Rusyn language schools, a Rusyn language department at Uzhhorod University, and for Rusyn to be recognized as one of the country's ethnic groups”. Document 10676, on: www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/43a97d1f4.pdf

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 nations²⁴.

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’ strategies²⁵. 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.

Affirming Difference: Opposing Myths of Ethnogenesis and Culture

I am borrowing the historic ethno-symbolism framework from Anthony Smith (1999), as well as similar ideas from Schöpflin (2000). Smith explains the strength of the bonds between members of a nation through its myths, memory, traditions and symbols, which are constantly rediscovered and re-interpreted. How is it possible and what does that mean for our argument? Myths are the narration of community’s history by the community itself (Schöpflin 2000:80). It is a perception, an interpretation of history rather than a historical truth (Smith 1999:16). Myths are the integrative element of communities because they create a sense of belonging and pride. They account for “our” territory, for

²⁴ Whether they are already nations or not is hotly debated in the scientific world, but it is not my purpose here.

²⁵ The Association of People of Silesian Nationality adds now “APSN-of persons declaring Silesian nationality”, in obvious reference to the formulation of the questionnaire of the 2002 census - which constitutes a new political instrument for Silesians.

“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 communities²⁸. 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 people²⁹. 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, Szepański. Both have history

²⁶ As Wieviorka puts it: “cultural differences are not only reproduced, they are in constant process of being produced which means that fragmentation and recomposition are a permanent probability” (1998:881).

²⁷ We can not invent myths if we want to maintain their function, which is “to ensure that the integrity of group is safeguarded, that cultural reproduction is not prejudiced and that collective world made simple by myth remains for individuals to construct their identities as individuals and simultaneously as members of a community” (Schöpflin 2000:98).

²⁸ Note that my use of the term “myth” is not at all pejorative. It is not “fiction” but rather the history of, as interpreted by, a collectivity.

²⁹ On rival versions of the East Slavic idea, see Wilson 2004.

writers' curricula: Szoltysek, a history teacher, wrote an important account of the cultural history of the region³⁰; Benedek (2001) wrote a history textbook for schools reinterpreting Rusyns history. Figures such as the writer Henryk Waniek, the play writer Ingmar Villqist, the artist Andrzej Urbanowicz or K. Kutz, a Silesian movie director and senator, play an important role in disseminating the re-imagined histories and in showing them to the majority nation public opinion.

Silesians present themselves as a European community and the indivisibility of Silesian and European history is emphasized (Bialesiewicz 2002:121-122). In order to underline the distinctiveness of the Silesian culture, a different developmental path is presented in the work of Szoltysek and Szczepański. According to Szczepański: "it is well known that Silesia, since time immemorial, formed an integral part of the Old Continent, not only in geographical but also in cultural and civilizational terms (...) Its path to Europe has always been different from that of the remainder of the current Polish State" (cited in Bialesiewicz 2002:122). The myth of the Silesian Golden Age is situated in the 17th century when Silesia abandoned its plebeian roots and started to industrialize. The distinct culture of Silesians is further underlined by Kazimierz Kutz, who posits that Silesia "was the Reich's second-largest industrial area when the remainder of partitioned Poland was still just fields (...) a new model of man, of society [was born in Silesia] (...) a certain work ethic, but also a certain understanding of political culture, of social responsibility (...) so it has always been free of the absolutist traditions of the East [including Poland]" (interview conducted by Bialesiewicz, cited in her 2002:123). In sum, Silesia's industrial, civilizational history made its inhabitants different from the Poles, with its own cultural traits (which are not associated with the Poles): cleanliness, diligence, Prussian work ethic. Certainly, efforts are deployed to re-imagine and reinforce the distinctive Silesian culture, one that is standing in opposition to the Polish culture and to the mainstream Polish historiography.

³⁰ His short version of Silesian history can be consulted on-line: www.szoltysek.com.pl/historia.html

Similar efforts to re-imagine historical myths can also be observed with the Rusyns. In fact, the Ukrainian state's "objective" criterion requiring distinct descent for recognition needed a response. One of the 1997 World Congress of Rusyns' resolution was to publish a concise encyclopedia of Rusyn history and culture and for scholars to begin the preparation of a universal history of Rusyns³¹. The Carpatho-Rusyn Society's website acknowledges that the origins and early history of the Slavic people are still highly debated topics among scholars. However, what is interesting is to look at how history is presented by Rusyn organizations aiming at Ukrainian Rusyns' recognition and engaging in nation-building processes:

Slavic people have lived in the Carpathian region as early as the sixth century AD. The Carpatho-Rusyns are the direct descendants of one of these Slavic tribes that has lived along the Uz River called the White Croats (*Bilyj Horvaty*). By the 900s, waves of Slavic settlers calling themselves Rus' came from the East and began settling into the Carpathians, intermarrying and assimilated with the White Croats. From the Kievan Rus' kingdom they adopted their national name of "Rusyns," meaning -- the inhabitant or descendant of Rus'³².

According to this interpretation, Rusyns are thus of distinct descent: they are indigenous of the region, however "mixed" with Slavs to the east, i.e. ancestors of Ukrainians, who came to the region later. The myth of origins and ethnogenesis therefore differs from the Ukrainian one. The case of White Croats, ancient Karvaties and today's South-Slavs, is worth mentioning here. In his "truly scientific" account of Rusyn history (published in Rusyn and meant for history students and teachers), Andras Benedek (2001:21-22) argues with Istvan Kiszely that Carpatho-Rusyns are anthropologically and genetically distinct from Ukrainians. The former group belongs to the Alpine-Dinatric type (i.e. South-Slavs), whereas the latter belongs to the Dniester Carpathian type³³.

No matter how strong the argument of differentiation might be, it does not appear in any other document available on the same Carpatho-Rusyns Society site, entitled: "Arguments for Recognizing the Nationality of the Indigenous Subcarpathian Rusyn People in Ukraine". The document was written

³¹ Available on www.carpatho-rusyn.org/cong2

³² Paragraph on Rusyn's origins, taken from the Society's website: www.carpathorusynsociety.org/whoarerusyns.htm

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 region’s history would posit, there are four Eastern-Slavic peoples, and not three (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Rusyn). Contrary to the “scientific proof” provided by Ukrainian historiography, it is specified that “historical scholarship has convincingly proved that the issue of the origin of the Subcarpathian Rusyns is connected with the origin of a particular Slavic tribe or group of tribes, to which were added peoples from other Slavic regions” (p.2). Following V.O. Kliuchevskii’s thesis, a tsarist historian, the authors argue that the Carpathian region was all Slavs’ homeland, who subsequently dispersed in various directions, so that “the consolidation of the Rusyn people in the center of Europe took place parallel to the formation of East Slavic and other people” (see pp.2-3)³⁴.

Once the myth of distinctive origin asserted, Makara and Sharga implicitly create the myth of victimization: the Rusyns could have consolidated in a nation(-state) but other powers have so far impeded this development. First they argue that due to the “geographic separation and association with different States, Rusyns did not and could not have taken part in the formation of the Ukrainian ethnic or political nation” (p.1), opposing the thesis of Rusyns being national Ukrainians. Rusyns had their own national awakening by the mid-/end of the 19th century, parallel to the Ukrainian’s and other peoples’ national awakenings. Rusyns had Mykhail Luchkai-Pop, who wrote a voluminous *History of Carpatho-Rusyns*, as well as today’s national hero and author of Rusyn hymn, Aleksander Duchnovič. The problem is that Rusyns were subjected to many alien political and governmental regimes, “each of which tried to prove ‘scientifically’ its own historical right to rule the land” (Makara and Sharga, p.1).

³³ Another, associated thesis has been advanced by Aleksei Petrov (reviewed by Lane 2001). In his account the earliest Rusyns arrived to the region in the 9th century along with the Hungarians, but they settled in Transcarpathia only in the 13th century, meaning that they could not be really part of the Kievan Rus (Lane 2001:690).

The myth of a continuous struggle for national liberation is also an important part of Rusyn's historical account, as initiatives for recognition and for self-determination illustrate, particularly in the first half of the 20th century. This struggle, interrupted by the Soviet rule, has naturally resumed since the Soviet Union fall (see Michna 1998:2-6).

Aspiring to the official recognition of their distinctiveness by the Ukrainian and Polish governments, both Rusyns and Silesians offer their own account of their origins and difference, re-imagining and disseminating their community's myths to oppose the ones propagated by their respective states. Doing so, they adapt to the "objective" criteria.

Literary Language Not Dialect: Resuscitating Poets and Standardizing Grammars

In response to the continuous affirmation that Silesian "Gwara" and Rusyn are dialects by the Poles and Ukrainians, we observe a process of linguistic construction and the rediscovery of regional writers and poets emphasizing literary versions of the said dialects.

In the case of Silesian it is quite easy to establish the link between the Polish "objective" criteria and the process of language standardization³⁵. Since the end of the communist rule, there is a revival of musical festivals and theatrical presentations in Gwara together with the publication of books for children and editions on Silesian culture (Bialasiewicz 2002:120, Gębusia 2006:160). However, the intensification of Silesian linguistic politics aiming at the recognition of Gwara as a language is more notable since the 2005 Law, which recognized the Kashub dialect as a language. The efforts of "myths controllers" are strongly connected to the elements mentioned by Polish authorities to justify the recognition of the Kashub language: the literature, the codification efforts, the existence of a Kashub-Polish dictionary, of local media, and of an editing computer program. It is not a coincidence that one month after the official announcement of the Law, new shows in Gwara were created on TV

³⁴ Note that this represents the myth of territory, important for the nation-building process, which might be weakened if the White Croats thesis is advanced.

Katowice³⁶. There was also an increase in the number of radiophonic programs in Silesian. For example, Radio Piekary's strong popularity is due to its numerous programs in Gwara. An Association of the Piekary Radio Friends was formed and, since then, issues a journal in Silesian (Gębusia 2006:160). There is also a considerable effort to write and publish Silesian poetry and legends which, until now, were transmitted orally³⁷, as well as to translate other literature to Gwara³⁸. With the impending ratification of the European Charter by Poland – and the inherent requirement to enumerate subjected languages within state borders (see above) - the efforts to standardize Gwara have intensified. A group of people under the direction of Adam Rygiel (from the monthly *Na gruncie*) undertook codification and a Silesian alphabet and a Polish-Silesian dictionary are now available on-line³⁹. In parallel, work is under way to create a Gwara editing programme, *à la* kashubian.

It is more difficult to establish a strong correlation between Ukrainian “objective” criteria and Rusyn language standardization as codifying efforts took place long before. However, together with the myth of ethnogenesis, the codification of the Ukrainian Rusyn and subsequent use of it in daily practice and contemporary literature, should “beat” the Ukrainian State formal objection. This does not imply recognition, but muddling in this process would inquire new arguments and justifications.

It is not surprising to find the following statement on The Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base⁴⁰ regarding the status of the Rusyn language: “It should be clear from the outset that we are not dealing here with the ‘natural’ spoken language, but rather with the written language of culture, education, etc.” The existence of a proper written Rusyn language - as opposed to merely a Rusyn dialect – is therefore suggested. The proof presented thereafter relate the continuity of Rusyn language written form beginning in the 12th and 13th centuries, “perhaps even earlier”. This is also accounted for by Benedek (2001:45-50). The literary genre is mainly religious work with gospels, religious poetry,

³⁵ On the search of the Silesian language, see Czesak 2004 and Kamusella 2004.

³⁶ “Telewizja Katowice stawia na śląskość”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 21, 2005.

³⁷ Przemysław Jedlicki in *Gazeta Wyborcza-Katowice*, September 7, 2006.

³⁸ See for example the ample work by Szoltysek, some of which is available on www.szoltysek.com.pl.

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 Duchnovič, who not only organized a Rusyn literary society in 1850⁴¹, 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 1996:683⁴²). 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 stabilized⁴³, is to create a single Carpatho-Rusyn literary standard⁴⁴. 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.

themselves, i.e. its use in practice. There is a promising note by Elaine Rusinko reviewing in 1998 an anthology of Rusyn poetry by Vibrala N. Dudash (1997): “the new variants of Rusyn have taken roots as the medium of cultural reproduction” (Rusinko 1998:348)⁴⁵.

In sum, the nation-building strategies of Rusyns and Silesians are adapted to their context of choice created by institutions and official discourses. In order to be recognized, and without any external objective instrument at their disposal, unrecognized communities proceed in response and to conform to the criteria adopted by the States. To differentiate themselves from the titular nations they reimagine their constitutive elements in opposition to them. This process has some implications for the possibility of constructing inclusive shared political communities in the context of non recognized diversity. Before we develop such concluding remarks on the implications of our research, we still have to consider how European structures are acting as an alternative and complementary context of choice for unrecognized Rusyns and Silesians.

Adapting Strategies to External Opportunities: Europe of Regions and Kins

We observe a new and parallel political process, one that adapts Silesian and Rusyns strategies to the European opportunities. New venues are in place. This can be seen through the changing discourse of Silesians and Rusyns regarding their respective self-determination and autonomy which are now more associated with the idea of Europe of regions and Europe of kins, within Poland and Ukraine. The autonomy is presented as a decentralization process in a European spirit. It is not an autonomy for the sole benefit of the Silesian and Rusyn communities but rather for the regions inhabited by a diversity of cultural communities, autonomy for a multicultural region, within the State and within (eventual for Ukraine) European structures. As seen above, European norms are of little

⁴³ See the Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base site, op.cit.

⁴⁴ Model borrowed from Romansch language in Switzerland (Magocsi 1996:684).

⁴⁵ The anthology is divided in regional linguistic variants groups, each preceded by a literary and linguistic overview written by leading scholar in his own regional version of Rusyn (Rusinko 1998: 349).

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” (2005 :5). This is a consequence of the received wisdom that in order to have the right to self-determination one has to be a nation⁴⁶. 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 Śląska, RAŚ) was created as early as January 1990. Following an article published in the Polish journal *Polityka*, the RAŚ 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 RAŚ, advanced the idea of a Silesian nation and of an independent Silesian State. Officially, the RAŚ demands for regional autonomy are similar to the one accorded to the region between the two World Wars (RAŚ 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 RAŚ 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 interests⁴⁷. Thus, requests for autonomy are perceived as threat to Polish State sovereignty, forming the basis of the perpetual non recognition of Silesians. Their perseverance in aspiring to the status of “nation(-ality)”, instead of a regional group, is interpreted as confirming the separatist threat. This climate of mutual suspicion is not conducive to resolve the current impasse.

A fairly similar account of impasse can be observed in Rusyn-Ukrainian relations (for a detailed account see Michna 1998:11-14). Following a request on the part of Rusyns, the 1991 referendum on Ukrainian independence included - in the region’s questionnaire - a question on the status of Transcarpathian self-governance⁴⁸ (Solchanyk 1994 :62). Due to the ambiguity of the questions, the 78% “for” result was not accepted by Kiev and the demand for regional autonomy has been subsequently ignored (see Kuzio 2005). With the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the alternative idea advanced by the Society for Subcarpathian Rusyns, calling for the unification of Transcarpathia with Czechoslovakia on inter-war terms, had to be dropped altogether in 1993 (see also Belitser ?:8). The subsequent strategy was to establish a Provisional Government of Subcarpathian Rus which claimed independence (Pozun 2000⁴⁹) and declared its intention to join the CIS independently from Ukraine (Protsyk 2006:28). Due to the lack of mass support, Rusyns went back to their demands of recognition and regional autonomy within Ukraine. Here too the autonomy claims are perceived as a threat to the State security (see Protsyk 2006:27-29, Arel 2001:15) and the non recognized Provisional Government as a separatist entity. In 1996, the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior issued the “Plan of Measures to Solve the Ukrainian-Rusyn Problem”. This document goes even further than the later UOP statements regarding Silesians: not only does it portray the Rusyn movement a threat, but it establishes a plan - with schedules and the entities responsible for its implementation (Ministries and

⁴⁷ See www.videofact.com/mark/uop/uop1.html

⁴⁸ Not explicitly autonomy, see Kuzio 2005:2.

⁴⁹ See also the interview with Tibor Ondik, minister in the Provisional Government, in Niewiadomski 1995.

Academy of Science) – with the objective of eradicating rusyness⁵⁰, 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 respectively. 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 self-determination strategy failed. Besides adapting their strategies to the “objective” criteria as elaborated by the States, Silesians and Rusyns are also reacting to the European structures which offer some opportunities to pursue political and identity claims. It is often argued that economic advantages associated with the European Union change internal policies. I opine that the European integration process and institutions, in addition to economic advantages, offer an alternative and complementary political arena for unrecognized groups as well as means for survival of cultural communities otherwise unheard and/or in extinction (see also Jesse and Williams 2005 :126, Anderson et al. 2002 :9).

Facing accusations of hostility towards and separatism from Poland⁵¹, Silesians adapted their discourse to the European context. The claimed autonomy is to be understood now in terms of the process of decentralization of the State. Moreover, it should be accorded to the region as a multicultural entity, not to the Silesian community alone. Both ideas have a highly European spirit.

⁵⁰ See the document on www.lemko.org/rusyn/kurasen.html.

⁵¹ See Lech M. Nijakowski for an argument against the autonomy strategy of RAŚ which only, and unnecessarily, alimented the Polish State perception of the separatism threat, in *Gazeta Wyborcza – Katowice*, August 4, 2005

The RAŚ 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 RAŚ 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 State⁵³ and supra-states structures, as long as they respect regional specificities (RAŚ 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 RAŚ⁵⁴ to introduce in Silesian schools classes of regional history, without any reference to a *national* Silesian history⁵⁵. The RAŚ programme envisions an autonomous Silesia within Poland⁵⁶ and a region within Europe. Considering some statements by Mr. Gorzelik, the head of RAŚ, 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 RAŚ 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 support⁵⁷, and Transcarpathia is presented more often as a multicultural region⁵⁸.

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 staff⁵⁹. 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 Shandor, the deputy head of the People’s Council of Transcarpathian Rusyns, stating that “it is very

⁵⁷ In fact the suspension was quasi unnoticed by Rusyns, RFE/RL, January 12, 2000.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, it is a multicultural region where ethnic minorities, such as Hungarians, support and struggle for the recognition of Rusyns. Note that the Transcarpathian Oblast recognized Rusyns as distinct from Ukrainians in March 2007. Legally they do not have such an authority but it still is an important symbolic act.

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 territories⁶¹. 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 commented⁶²: “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 Silesians and Rusyns, within Polish and Ukrainian States, but simultaneously as European communities too. As Poles and Ukrainians do. This is the political space where they can meet. I follow Jesse and Williams (2005) and consider such a complementary arena as a chance for a process of reconciliation between hostile communities: “international institutions afford the opportunity for conflicting groups to reduce the enemy image, ethnic security dilemma, and mistrust (...). Cross-border institutions have an effect on the expression of multiple group identities that can lead to a reduction in tension by creating an atmosphere where different ethnic groups lose their strict definition of the Self and Other” (p.113). This is maybe how the process of European identity-building functions. It is additional and complementary to particular cultural

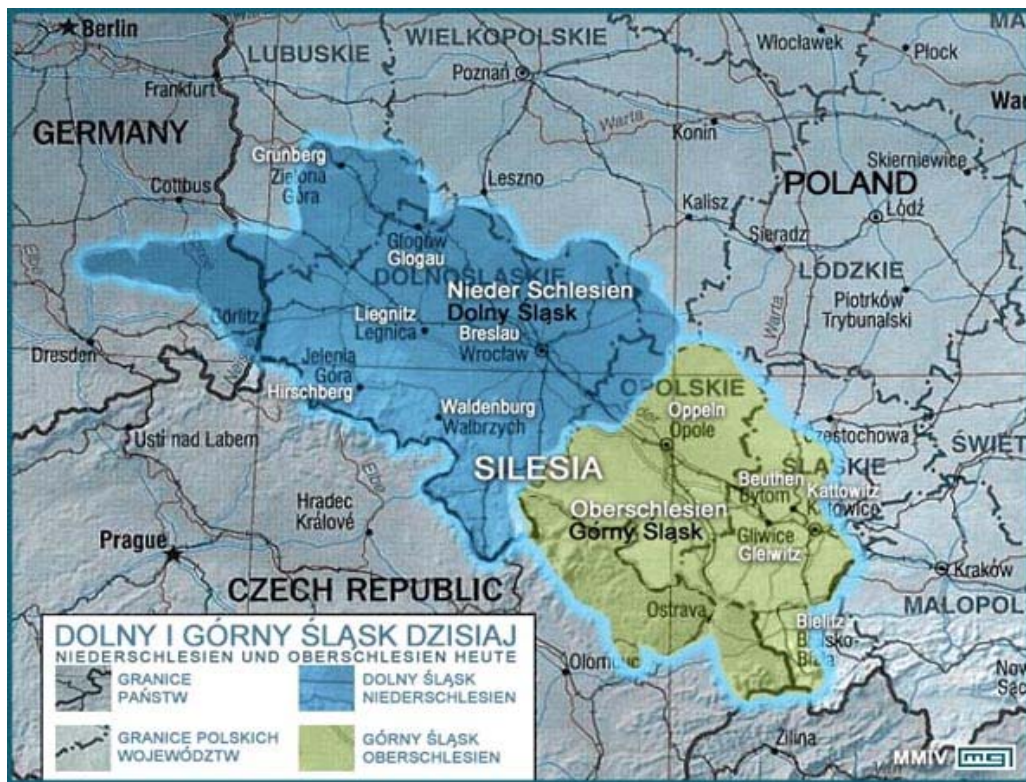
identifications and as such allows unification without unity; the dynamic process constituting regions and an integrated whole as “imagined communities” in space (Bialasiewicz 2002:112).

Bibliography

- Anderson Benedict (1991), *Imagined Communities*, London; New York : Verso
- Anderson James, O'Dowd Liam and Wilson Thomas M. (2002), “New Borders for Changing Europe”, Special Issue, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 12:4
- Arel Dominique (2001), “Recreating Majorities: The Use of Nationality and Language in the First Post-Soviet Censuses”, The National Council for Eurasian and east European Research (NCEEER), Washington, D.C., on www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2001-815-01g-Arel.pdf
- Bartkus Viva Ona (1999), *The Dynamic of Secession*, Cambridge University Press
- Batt Judy (2000), “Transcarpathia – The Centre of Europe”, paper presented at the CEES Annual Conference, June 16-18, on www.crees.bham.ac.uk/research/transcreees.pdf
- Belitser Natalya (?), “Political and Ethno-Cultural Aspects of the Rusyns’ Problem: A Ukrainian Perspective”, research paper, Programme on European Security, on dev.eurac.edu:8085/mugs2/do/blob.pdf?type=pdf&serial=1036425198529
- Benedek Andras S. (2001), *Gens Fidelissima: The Rusyns*, Matthias Corvinus Publishing (on-line)
- Bialasiewicz Luiza (2002), “Upper Silesia: Rebirth of a Regional Identity in Poland”, in Batt Judy and Wlczuk Katarzyna, eds., *Region, State and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe*, Frank Cass, London, Portland, OR., pp. 111-132
- Bieda Marcin (2006), “Naród czy polityczna gra? Kształtowanie się tożsamości regionalnej na przykładzie Górnego Śląska”, conference paper, on www.socjologia.ath.bielsko.pl/prace/mbieda_slask.pdf
- Blanke Richard (1999), “Polish-Speaking Germans?”, *Nationalities Papers*, 27:3, 430-453
- Cordell Karl (1995), “Upper Silesia and the Politics of Accommodation”, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 5:3, 307-325
- Cybula Adrian and Majcherkiewicz Tatiana (2005), “Wielokulturowość regionu Środkoeuropejskiego a narody i państwa narodowe: przykład Górnego Śląska”, *Sprawy narowodościowe*, no. 26, 135-156
- Czesak Artur (2004), “Ślązacy w poszukiwaniu języka”, *Przegląd polonijny*, 30:3, 105-112
- Deets Stephen (2002), “Reconsidering East European Minority Policy: Liberal Theory and European Norms”, *East European Politics and Society*, 16:1, 30-53
- Deets Stephen (2004), “The Hungarian Status Law and the Specter of Neomedievalism in Europe”, paper presented at APSA, Chicago, September 1-4, www.allacademic.com/meta/p72487_index.html
- Dziewierski Marek (1997), “Lemks as an Ethnic Group”, in Szczepański Marek S., eds., *Etnic Minorities and Etnic Majority. Sociological Studies of Ethnic Relations in Poland*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, pp. 324-332
- Gębusia Jacek (2006), “Walka o autonomię: Baskowie i Ślązacy”, in Dziewulska Agata, ed., *Współczesna wojna*, Centrum Europejskie UW, Varsovie, pp. 136-162, on www.studiaeuropejskie.pl/images1/File/ebooks/wspolczesna_wojna.pdf
- Gerlich Marian G. (1994), “Śląska krzywda”, *Etnografia polska*, 38:1-2, 5-21
- ____ (2002), “Powolywanie narodu śląskiego”, *Etnografia polska*, 46:1-2, 29-49
- Gurpreet Mahajan (2002), *The Multicultural Path*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousands Oaks, London
- Henrard Kristin (2001), “The Interrelationship Between Individual Human Rights, Minority Rights and the Right to Self-Determination and Its Importance for the Adequate Protection of Linguistic Minorities”, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 1:1, 41-61
- Ieda Osamu (2004), “Post-communist Nation Building and the Status Law Syndrome in Hungary”, in Kántor Zoltán et al., *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building and/or Minority Protection*, 21st Century COE Program Slavic Eurasian Studies, Slavic Research Center, ch. 1, pp. 3-57, on src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no4_ses/contents.html
- Jesse Neal G. and Williams Kristen P. (2005), *Identity and Institutions*, State University of New York Press
- Kamusella Tomasz (1994), “‘Musisz być Niemcem, albo Polakiem’: polityka ennacjonalizacji a retoryka wielokulturowości na Górnym Śląsku po 1989 roku”, *Sprawy narodowościowe*, 14/15, 113-123
- ____ (1999), “The Upper Silesians’ Stereotypical Perception of the Poles and the Germans”, *East European Quarterly*, 33:3, 395-410
- ____ (2004), “Standardyzacja języka górnośląskiego i jej implikacje społeczno-polityczne”, *Sprawy narodowościowe*, Instytut slawistyki PAN, Zakład badań narodowościowych, no. 24-25, 113-131
- Keating Michael (2003), “European Integration and Nationalities Question”, paper presented at APSA, Durban, June 29 – July 4, on www.umich.edu/~iinet/euc/PDFs/2005%20Papers/Keating%20IPSA%20paper.pdf
- Kochanowicz Jerzy (2001), “Gathering Poles into Poland: Forced Migration from Poland’s Former Eastern Territories”, in Ther Phillipp et al., *Redrawing Nations*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., ch. 6, pp. 135-153

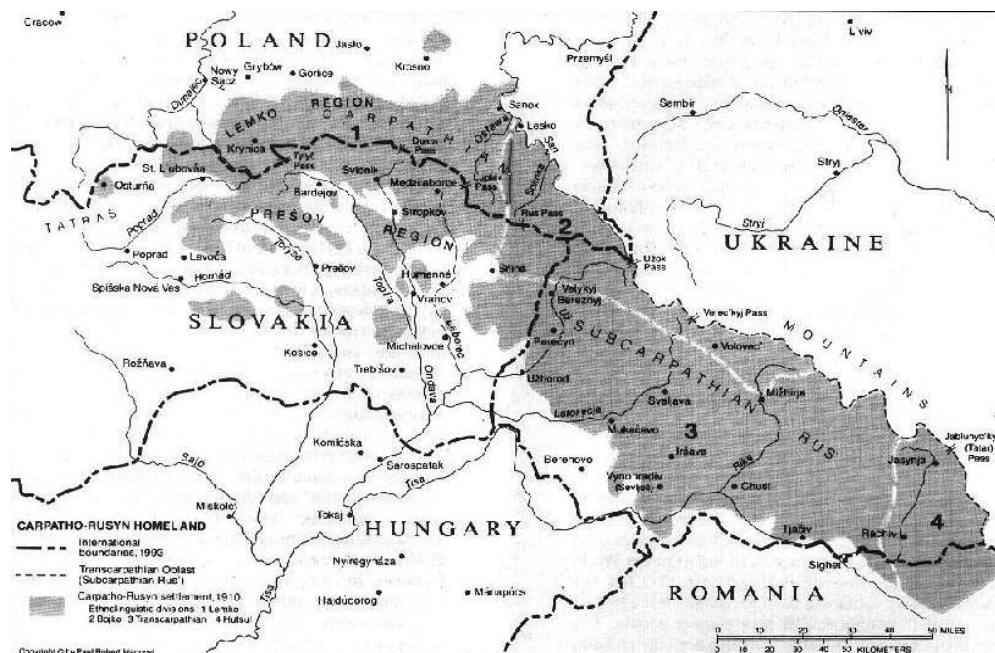
- Kranz Jerzy (1998), "A National Minority of Silesians?", *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 7:4
- Kuzio Taras (2005), "The Rusyn Question in Ukraine: Sorting Out Fact From Fiction", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, no. 32, 1-15
- Kymlicka Will (2004), *National Minorities in Post-Communist Europe : The Role of International Norms and European Integration*, on www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/globalization/Kymlicka_Oct7_04.pdf
- Lane Hugo (2001), "Rusyns and Ukrainians Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: The Limitations of National History", review article, *Nationalities Papers*, 29:4, 689-696
- Linek Bernard (2001), "'De-Germanization' and 'Re-Polonization' in Upper Silesia, 1945-1950", in Ther Phillip and Siljak Ana, eds., *Redrawing Nations*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., ch. 5, pp. 121-133
- Madajczyk Piotr (2000), "Les minorités nationales dans le processus de réconciliation germano-polonaise", *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 31 :1, 81-96
- Magocsi Paul R. (1992), "Carpatho-Rusyns: Their Current Status and Future Perspectives", *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 1:1/2, 95-111
- _____. (1996), "Another Slavic Language in Making", *Slavonic and East European Review*, 74:4, 683-686
- _____. (1999), *Of the Making of Nationalities There is No End*, vol. 1, Columbia University Press, New York
- Máiz Ramón et Requejo Ferran, eds. (2005), *Democracy, Nationalism and Multiculturalism*, Frank Cass Publishers
- Makara M. and Sharga M. (?), "Arguments for recognizing the Nationality of the Indigenous Subcarpathian Rusyn People in Ukraine", document available on the Carpatho-Rusyn Society's website
- Michna Ewa (1995), "Czy nowy nacjonalizm? Ruch Rusiński na Słowacji, Ukrainie i w Polsce", *Przegląd polonijny*, 21:1, 71-81
- _____. (1998?), "Institutionalization of Carpatho-Rusyn Community Life and Its Subjection to Political Conditions", <http://lgi.osi.hu/ethnic/csdb/doc/Amichna.doc>
- _____. (2004), "Od 'euroentuzjazmu' do 'europragmatyzmu'. Karpatorusińscy liderzy etniczni wobec jednoczącej się Europy", in Krzysztofek Kazimierz, Sadowski Andrzej, eds., *Pogranicza i multikulturalizm w warunkach Unii Europejskiej. Implikacje dla wschodniego pogranicza Polski*, t. 2, Instytut Socjologii, Białystok, pp. 143-156
- Moskal Marta (2004), "Language Minorities in Poland at the Moment of Accession to EU", *Noves SL. Revista de Sociolingüística*, spring-summer, on www.genat.net/presidencia/llengcat/noves
- Mucha Janusz L. (1992), "Democratization and Cultural Minorities", *East European Quarterly*, 25:4, 463-482
- _____. (1997), "Getting Out of the Closet: Cultural Minorities in Poland Cope with Oppression", *East European Quarterly*, 31:3, 299-309
- Niewiadomski Andrzej (1995), "Rusini walczą o niepodległość", *Rzeczpospolita*, on www.lemko.org/rzeczpospolita9.htm.
- Pactwa Bożena (1997), "Religion and Ethnic-National Identity of Lemks", in Szczepański Marek S., ed., *Etnic Minorities and Etnic Majority. Sociological Studies of Ethnic Relations in Poland*, Uniwersytet Śląski, Katowice, pp. 333-349
- Pozun Brian J. (2000), "Multi-Ethnic Outpost", *Central Europe Review*, 2:40, on www.ce-review.org/00/40/pozun40.html
- Protsyk Oleh (2006), "Majority-Minority Relations in Ukraine", in Waller Marc, ed., *An Ever Diverse Union?*, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming
- Rusinko Elaine (1998), review article, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 42:2, 348-350
- Ruszczewski Jacek (1995), "Etniczność a konflikty społeczne na Śląsku Opolskim", *Przegląd polonijny*, 21:1, 101-113
- Schaap Andrew (2005), *Political Reconciliation*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York
- Schöpflin George (2000), *Nations, Identity, Power*, New York University Press, Washington Square, New York
- Seriot Patrick (2006), "Droit au nom et droit du nom: les Ruthènes sont-ils une minorité?", *Slavica Occitania*, 22, 207-233
- Smith Anthony D. (1999), *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press
- Solchanyk Roman (1994), "The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46:1, 47-68
- Strauchold Grzegorz (2001), *Autochtoni polscy, Niemcy, czy... Od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu (1945-1949)*, Wyd. Adam Marszłek, Toruń
- Stivell Alan (2003), "Besoins et enjeux de la reconnaissance", dans Le Coadic Ronan, dir., *Identité et démocratie. Diversité culturelle et mondialisation : repenser la démocratie*, Presses universitaires de Rennes
- Szmeja Maria (1998), "Grupa pogranicza i jej identyfikacja narodowa. Przypadek Śląska", *Przegląd polonijny*, 24:1, 71-87
- _____. (2002), "Identyfikacja narodowa Ślązaków na Opolszczyźnie. Przypadek grupy pogranicznej", *Przegląd polonijny*, 28:2, 43-53
- Thaler Peter (2001), "Fluid Identities in Central European Borderlands", *European History Quarterly*, 31:4, 519-548
- Walzer Michael (2004), *Politics and Passion*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London
- Wilson Andrew (2004), "Rival versions of the East Slavic Idea in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus", in Slater Wendy and Wilson Andrew, eds., *The Lagacy of the Soviet Union*, Banigstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, ch. 3, pp. 39-61
- Young Iris Marion (2002), "Self-Determination and Global Democracy: A Critique of Liberal Nationalism", in Breinig Helmbrecht et al., *Multiculturalism in Contemporary Societies*, Erlangen, Allemagne

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>