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Source: *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec., 2008), pp. 915-934

Published by: [Canadian Political Science Association](#) and the [Société québécoise de science politique](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27754406>

Accessed: 18-08-2014 23:00 UTC

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Adapting to Changing Contexts of Choice: The Nation-Building Strategies of Unrecognized Silesians and Rusyns

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The history of Central Eastern Europe is one of shifting borders. States appear on the map, annex other states, or disappear only to reappear once again in a different location. Meanwhile, people learn imposed languages that they have to forget when their home ends up within different borders. Silesians in Poland and Rusyns in Ukraine are examples of minority groups whose identities and self-recognition have been deeply affected by a shifting geopolitical climate. Both groups have been ruled by different national governments throughout their history. They were oppressed under the Communist regimes, denied official recognition and forcibly assimilated. Their languages were considered dialects. In the current context, these groups claim a Silesian and Rusyn national identity respectively, based on the distinct character of their history, culture and language, as well as on their indigenous ties to a specific territory. Their demands for recognition are perceived as threatening to the territorial integrity of the countries in which they reside and are constantly denied. Non-recognized, they lack state financial support for cultural development and survival.

Although both groups represent a small fraction of the total Polish and Ukrainian populations, studying their interaction with the majority

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Juliet Johnson for her very helpful comments and the two anonymous reviewers who have pushed me with the depth of their comments to rewrite and clarify much of my argument. I am also grateful to Charles Blattberg and Philippe Faucher who, by listening and arguing, helped me to refine my thought. I wish to thank Aidan Jeffrey for her excellent editing job as well as Françoise Montambeault and Rouben Katchadourian for their corrections on an earlier version of this paper. The FQRSC fellowship and the support of CDAS, McGill, made this article possible.

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Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique

41:4 (December/décembre 2008) 915–934 doi:10.1017/S0008423908081080

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nation and various state institutions sheds a great deal of light on the political processes of identity transformation. *Because* the Silesians and Rusyns are tiny groups, with little economic or mobilization leverage, their identity-building strategies are subtle and the importance of symbolic politics in inter-ethnic relations is clear. My purpose is to examine the relationship between institutional constraints and nation-building. I posit, first, that Rusyns' and Silesians' nation-building strategies are a direct response to the minority laws and discourses of the majority nations and states. Non-recognized groups respond instrumentally to state definitions of "minority." Because only state-recognized groups can access state support for minorities, non-recognized groups will adjust their nation-building strategies to meet the state's criteria for recognition. Identity is not only constructed, but is reconstructed in a rational way responding to state incentives. Second, although European norms do not directly assist unrecognized minority groups, EU enlargement and discourse can provide new ways to frame their identity claims, possibly eroding the constraints of state laws over time.

Strategic behaviour is not understood here in classical rational choice instrumental terms. Two conceptions of identity are usually opposed in the literature (Hale, 2004: 459–60): primordialists consider identity as given and immutable, even if Shils (1957) speaks about the *perception* of primordiality and Van Evera states that identity is not a genetic condition but rather a social one (2001: 20); and instrumentalists such as Laitin (1995, 1998) believe that shifting identity is possible, reasonable and instrumental with regards to an individual's socioeconomic interests. The latter group claims that individuals consciously weigh the (dis)advantages of group membership and that for practical reasons, such as job opportunities, it would be rational to abandon their mother tongue and cultural practices.

My research aligns itself with the widely accepted assumption that identities are social constructions; they are "situational" and "ever changing" (Hale, 2004: 466; Young, 2002; Máiz and Requejo, 2005: 2–5; May et al., 2004: 9). I follow the constructivist perspective, which draws from both primordialism and instrumentalism (Hempel, 2004): identities are constructed and transformed through long-lasting cultural, historical and/or political processes that are based in large measure on the emotional and symbolic power of ethnic bonds (Kaufman, 2001; Ross, 2007). Safran remarks that "minorities do not give up their linguistic heritage without a fight, even if the payoff is significant" (2004: 2). Instrumentalism is thus somewhat "twisted": rational behaviour is observed in the choice of strategies to access valued goods, but these are often of a non-economic nature such as social status, dignity, self-respect and cultural survival. Varshney (2003) argues that these goals are not irrational if we adhere to Weber's categories of rational social action in *Economy and*

Abstract. The article explores the relationship between institutional constraints and nation-building. Non-recognized Rusyns in Ukraine and Silesians in Poland respond instrumentally to state definitions of “minority.” Moreover, both groups adjust their strategies to European structures and discourses which provide new ways to frame their identity claims. Institutions determine the constraints and incentives of group action. Identity is not only constructed, but is reconstructed in a rational way. Contrary, however, to the rational choice instrumental perspective which would predict an assimilation process, state policies encourage the Rusyns and Silesians to re-imagine and reinforce their distinctiveness.

Résumé. L'article examine le lien qui existe entre les contraintes institutionnelles et l'édification de la nation. Non reconnus, les Ruthènes en Ukraine et les Silésiens en Pologne réagissent instrumentalement aux définitions du terme «minorité» établies par ces États. De plus, les deux groupes adaptent leurs stratégies aux structures et aux discours de l'Europe, qui leur permet de formuler leurs revendications identitaires d'une nouvelle manière. Les institutions établissent les contraintes et les incitatifs à l'action collective. L'identité n'est pas seulement construite, elle est reconstruite de façon rationnelle. Contrairement, toutefois, à la perspective instrumentale du choix rationnel qui aurait prédit un processus d'assimilation, les politiques étatiques incitent les Ruthènes et les Silésiens à ré-imaginer et à renforcer leur identité distincte.

Society, namely, instrumental rational and value rational. The first is the classical rational choice instrumentalist approach. However, “it may be perfectly rational for human beings to be instrumentally rational while buying a car, but value rational while responding to questions of national liberation, school choice for children, affirmative action or multiculturalism in universities” (Varshney, 2003: 87).

At the individual level, Rusyns and Silesians gain little economically from being identified according to their ethnic group; they are not socially or economically marginalized so long as they do not identify publicly as Silesians or Rusyns. As Laitin states: “the strategy of assimilation should be chosen from a methodological individualist framework because it yields economic and status returns *to an individual* at lower cost than the route of collective action with the goal of enhancing group opportunities” (1995: 33). In his 1998 work he explains that the relative assimilation of ethnic Russians into the Estonian and Latvian majorities was largely based on their individual anticipation of individual level benefits in terms of economic returns and social mobility. Rusyn and Silesian claims for recognition cannot be explained through the classical instrumentalist approach because their opportunities for upward mobility increase when identifying with majority nations and decrease when openly identifying themselves as Rusyns or Silesians. Their actions are value rational. Minority cultural survival—the valued good—needs state support, which in turn implies that the minority group’s distinctiveness must be acknowledged. Some leaders may, of course, use this goal for their own profit, but “to be instrumentally used, ethnicity must exist as a valued good for some” (Varshney, 2003: 86). The remainder of this article analyzes the nation-building strategies of unrecognized Rusyns and Silesians, arguing that the constitutive elements of the groups’ identities

are reconstructed and reinforced in a process of instrumentally chosen strategies. These strategies respond to structural incentives and constraints. Both minorities aim to conform to their states' criteria for group recognition and both use European opportunities to legitimize their claims. Recognition would enable these groups to access the linguistic and educational policies, financing and political power that the 13 officially listed minorities in Ukraine and 14 in Poland enjoy and constantly renegotiate. Recognition would permit Rusyns and Silesians to negotiate privileges from the state rather than exclusively focusing on proving their legitimacy as distinct groups.

Comparable Identities and Demands

The frequent divisions of the Silesian and Rusyn territories have played a large part in the conceptualization of their respective identities. During the tenth century, the region of Silesia inhabited by Western Slavs was incorporated into Poland. In the twelfth century, Germanic people settled in Lower Silesia and in the fourteenth, the Bohemian monarchy established its hegemony over both Upper and Lower Silesia. Czech was 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-eighteenth century, seven-eighth of Silesia was attributed to Prussia, the rest to the Austrian empire. Both proceeded with Germanization policies. After the First World War, the Austrian Silesia was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia; the rest between Germany and Poland. Between the two world wars, the Polish Silesia enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. The Polish 1920 constitution assigned the Silesians a special status with their own parliament, control over language policies, schooling, police and public services.

After the German defeat in 1945, almost all of the German portion of Silesia fell under Poland's rule and was "(re)polonized" (Linek, 2001). To justify its recovery, it was important for the Polish government to prove the region was inhabited by Poles (Ruszczewski, 1995: 103). Silesians, bearing commonalities with German culture, were resettled in Germany or sent to working camps in the USSR (Szmeja, 2002: 47). The idea, maintained by the Communist government, was that Silesians harboured a Polish national conscience before it was erased by Germanization policies; it was therefore time to help the Silesians to remember their "real self" (Madajczyk, 2000: 84). Polish language became mandatory, while German and Gwara—the Silesian—became forbidden within the country.

The perception of difference and the constant "second class" status attributed to the Silesians by the German and then Polish governments

contributed to the development of a Silesian identity (Szmeja, 2002: 45; Kamusella, 1994). They are neither Germans nor Poles and have a great deal of resentment towards both nations (Gerlich, 1994). Studies conducted in the region almost unanimously show that Silesians have a very strong and deeply rooted ethnic conscience; they identify themselves as Silesians in all social situations (Szmeja, 1998: 80). They consider themselves to have a proper culture, language, common historic genealogy as well as a determined territory of origin. Based on these elements, they have made claims for the recognition of a Silesian national identity.

In the Rusyn region of the Carpathian Mountains borders changed so frequently that the Rusyns did not assimilate into any ruling nation (Michna, 1995: 71). In the Middle Ages, the region was transferred between Hungary, Poland and Austria. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Rusyns have been recognized as a distinct people by some states, as well as by the international community. After the Hungarian Revolution in 1849, Austria divided Hungary into five districts, with the one in Transcarpathia being administered by local Rusyns which lasted only a few months. After the First World War, the Hungarian government created an autonomous Rusyn region, which existed for 40 days. In exchange for their adherence to the new Czechoslovakia, the Rusyns were also offered an autonomous region, named Carpatho-Ukraine. It was recognized in the 1920 Czechoslovak constitution and in 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 the Second World War, it was annexed to Ukraine within the USSR. The Ukrainization of the Rusyns followed (Kuzio, 2005). Rusyn identity was banned from official registers; the state maintained that the Rusyns were national Ukrainians (Magocsi, 1992: 97–101; Michna, 1998: 6). Magocsi 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 the twentieth century the experience—and therefore historical memory—of their political entity” (1992: 99). Presently, the Rusyn historical region is divided among Poland (Lemko region) and Slovakia (Prešov region), where Rusyns are recognized as a minority group, and Ukraine (Transcarpathia) where they are not.

The identities emerging from this historical context are ambiguous (Thaler, 2001). There are Silesians identifying themselves as German-Silesians, Polish-Silesians and Silesians proper (Bieda, 2006: 4; Szmeja, 2002: 195). Similar options are observed within the Rusyn community in Ukraine: some consider themselves part of the Ukrainian nation, some closer to Russians and others as Rusyns proper (Michna, 1998). For the purpose of my paper, I focus on those identifying themselves as Silesians and Rusyns proper. In the Polish 2002 census, over 173,000 individuals declared themselves as Silesians and, following a 1996 poll, they

constitute 12.4 per cent of the region's inhabitants (Bieda, 2006: 7). In the Ukrainian 2001 census, 10,100 individuals self-identified as Rusyns. However, Rusyn organizations collected over 103,000 signatures of people declaring themselves as Rusyns and estimate that they compose 65–70 per cent (800,000 persons) of the Transcarpathian population (Subcarpathian Rusyns, 2004).

These Silesians' and Rusyns' claims to constitute separate nations have been and are still met with hostility. Máiz 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 granting nations, but not ethnic groups, the right to self-determination. Groups which claim that they should legitimately be considered a nation are perceived as threatening state sovereignty, particularly in the context of states recently liberated from Soviet domination and struggling with state-building processes.

The Movement for the Autonomy of Silesia (RAŚ) was created in 1990. An article published in the Polish journal *Polityka* suggested then that RAŚ demanded the unification of the region with Germany. Some articles printed in *Jaskółka śląska*, a monthly journal edited by RAŚ, advanced the idea of an independent Silesian state. Officially, however, RAŚ demands regional autonomy similar to that accorded to the region between the two world wars (RAŚ program, www.raslaska.pl, August 23, 2007; Bieda, 2006: 10; Cybula and Majcherkiewicz, 2005: 150). It was met with strong opposition from the Polish state as was immediately associated with "separatism." As a result, the State Security Department (UOP) issued a secret report where it explicitly lists RAŚ as a potential threat to Polish state interests (Poland, State Security Department, 2000). Requests for autonomy are perceived as threatening territorial integrity and sovereignty and constitute the basis for continuous non-recognition of Silesians. Perseverance in aspiring to the status of a "nation(-ality)" is interpreted as confirming the separatist threat. This climate of mutual suspicion is not conducive to resolving the impasse.

A similar account of impasse can be observed in Rusyn-Ukrainian relations (Michna, 1998: 11–14). In the region, the 1991 referendum on Ukrainian independence included a question on Transcarpathian self-governance (Solchanyk, 1994: 62). Due to its ambiguity, the 78 per cent "for" result was not accepted by Kiev and the demand for regional autonomy has been subsequently ignored (Kuzio, 2005). The alternative idea advanced by the Society for Subcarpathian Rusyns, calling for unification with Czechoslovakia on inter-war terms, had to be dropped altogether after the latter's dissolution (Belitser, n.d.: 8). The subsequent strategy was to establish a provisional government of Subcarpathian Rus which claimed independence (Niewiadomski, 1995; Pozun, 2000). Due

to the lack of mass support for independence, Rusyns resumed their demands for regional autonomy within Ukraine. Here, too, the autonomy claims are perceived as threatening state security (Protsyk, forthcoming: 27–29; Arel, 2001: 15). In 1996, the Ministry of Interior issued the “Plan of Measures to Solve the Ukrainian-Rusyn Problem” (State Committee of Ukraine, 1996), portraying the movement as a threat and establishing a detailed plan of eradicating “political Rusynism” (Belister, n.d.: 2). Perceived as threatening, both the Silesians and the Rusyns have been denied recognition at the state level.

“Objective” Criteria for (Non)Recognition

In the 2002 Polish census, which used subjective definitions of “nationality,” 173,200 persons declared themselves Silesians, the country’s biggest minority. The census raised an old question of how to define Silesians. After 1989, without any particular definition of what constitutes “minorities,” Poland acknowledged and provided assistance to a panoply of groups, except the Silesians. The 2005 Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages (hereafter, 2005 law) concluded a 15-year-long parliamentary debate aiming at solving the ambiguities of minority status (for a report, see Łodziński, 2005). A subjective definition of “minorities” was considered in the beginning, but for the purpose of clarity and better legislative and resource control, the law provides “objective” criteria for recognizing minorities within Poland and a list of 14 recognized groups (for state functional simplifications; see Scott, 1998). This list however, failed to include the Silesians.

In the 2005 law, an ethnic minority is defined as a group having a distinct language, culture and tradition, with ancestors residing in Poland for more than 100 years, such as the Roma, Rusyn-Lemkos or Tatars. An additional criterion has to be met for a group to be recognized as a national minority: they must identify with the titular nation of another state, such as the Germans, Lithuanians or Armenians. Ethnic minorities enjoy linguistic and cultural rights; national minorities enjoy also electoral “privileges.” With these criteria, Silesians can no longer claim a minority status based solely on subjective declarations. They cannot be recognized as a nation since they do not have a parent state. Nor are they an ethnic minority, since Gwara must first be recognized as a distinct language rather than a dialect. Such recognition was finally granted to the Kashubs, Western Slavs from Pomerania, whose language was long considered a dialect of Polish. They gained the status of a regional language group in the 2005 law, in accordance with the European Charter.

To explain the recognition of Kashubs vis-à-vis the non-recognition of Silesians, Polish authorities point to the lack of standardization of the

Silesian dialect. Kashubs have a literature; there is a Kashub translation of the Bible and a Kashub-Polish dictionary. The language is present in the local media, there is a movie with Kashub dubbing and there is even a computer program for editing Kashub texts. The main explanation for this difference therefore resides in the criterion by the Polish state that language be constitutive of a distinct identity.

What is the basis of non-recognition in the case of the Rusyns? In the Law on National Minorities of Ukraine (1992), a “minority” is defined as a group of Ukrainian citizens who are not Ukrainian by *descent* (also translated: “ethnicity”), who share a community spirit and a common identity (Michna, 1998). The state’s subsequent discourse indicates that the question as to who is Ukrainian and who is not is subject to scientific analysis (Seriot, 2006: 217–20). The provisional government program claimed that Rusyns constituted a distinct nation (Baluk, 2002: 252). Nevertheless, according to the state, Rusyns are considered an ethnographic group of Ukrainians; they speak a dialect of Ukrainian and have historically identified with Ukrainians (Arel, 2001: 15). This view was supported in 2000 by the National Academy of Sciences in a study requested by the State Committee of Ukraine Dealing with Nationalities and Emigration (Regional Parliament of Subcarpathian Rusyns, 2004). Consider the following argument presented by the Ukrainian government in the document prepared for the Council of Europe (CE): “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” (in Arel, 2001: 14). As Belitser summarizes, according to Ukrainian historiography, Transcarpathia was inhabited by Eastern Slavic people, conquered by Hungarians in the ninth century, returned to Kiev between the tenth and thirteenth centuries and was re-conquered by Hungarians in 1381 (n.d.: 3–6). The fact that the inhabitants of Transcarpathia suffered from state policies different from the rest of Ukraine helps to explain some cultural and linguistic differences, but it does not indicate a difference in descent.

Responding to “Objective” Criteria

In order to be recognized, Rusyns and Silesians have responded to their states’ “objective” definitions of minority groups by reinforcing a distinct Silesian culture, by affirming distinct Rusyn descent and by standardizing their respective languages. In so doing, as Gerlich (2002: 45–47) and Magocsi (Lane, 2001: 695) remarked, they may have entered a historical process of developing new nations.

Opposing Myths of Ethnogenesis and Culture

Smith's historic ethno-symbolism (1999) 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. Myths are the narration of a community's history by the community itself. They are interpretations, not invented fictions, because they have to relate to facts and to collective memories (Schöpflin, 2000:87). Myths are the integrative element of communities because they create a sense of belonging and pride. They account for "our" territory, "our" Golden Age, and for the causes of a nation's decline and victimization. Myths determine the borders of "us" versus "them," justify collective claims and mobilize collective action. However, both Smith and Schöpflin regard myths as flexible. Nations, as social constructions and imagined communities, are not static entities but rather imbued with fluidities and change. Myths adapt to the needs of the moment, to an external threat, and to structural changes. In fact, "different myths receive emphasis at different times to cope with different challenges" (Schöpflin, 2000: 98). Politicians, priests, writers, historians, and linguists retain control over myths.

State-constructed myths of Silesians being Poles and Rusyns being Ukrainians collide with the collective memories of at least some members of these communities. The formal requirement of strongly distinct culture 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 Ukraine stimulates the counter-myth of Rusyns as a distinct Eastern Slavic people (on the East Slavic idea, see Wilson, 2004).

Silesians present themselves as a collectivity within Europe and emphasize the indivisibility of Silesian and European history. In order to underline the distinctiveness of the Silesian culture, Szołtysek and Szczeptański argue that "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" (Bialasiewicz, 2002: 122). The distinct culture of Silesians is further underlined by 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]" (Bialasiewicz, 2002: 123). Silesia's industrial and civilizational history made its inhabitants different from the Poles, with their own cultural traits: cleanliness, diligence and Prussian work ethic. Moreover, in their arguments for the registration of

the Association of National Silesians (ZLNŚ) and in the responses to the subsequent and continuous negative decisions by the Polish courts (see below), Silesians also emphasize their “objective existence” given the history of the Silesian national movement with its awakening stated in 1849 (ZLNŚ, 2005). Since “distinct culture” is one of the 2005 law criteria for minority recognition, efforts are deployed to re-imagine and reinforce the distinctive Silesian culture.

Similar efforts can be observed in the Rusyn case. The Carpatho-Rusyn Society’s website acknowledges that the origins and early history of the Slavic people are still highly debated among scholars. It states, however, that:

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. 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. (www.carpathorusynsociety.org/whoarerusyns.htm, November 26, 2007)

According to this interpretation, Rusyns are thus of distinct descent: they are indigenous to the region, however “mixed” with Slavs to the east—ancestors of Ukrainians—who came later to the region. The case of White Croats, ancient Karvaties and today’s South Slavs, is worth mentioning. In his “truly scientific” account of Rusyn history (published the year following the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences conclusion stating that Rusyns are Ukrainians), Benedek presents Kiszely’s argument posing that Carpatho-Rusyns are anthropologically and genetically distinct from Ukrainians (2001: 21–22). The former belongs to the Alpine-Dinatric type (South Slavs), whereas the latter belong to the Dniester-Carpathian type.

Another document available through the Carpatho-Rusyns’ Society website makes a different argument for separate descent. The authors, Makara and Sharga, state that “with stubborn insistence, Ukrainian chauvinists, in violation of historical truth and present reality, are trying to transform Rusyns into ‘ethnic Ukrainians’” (2005: 10). Here, the thesis of distinct descent is sustained by the idea that there are four Eastern Slavic peoples, not three (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Rusyn). Contrary to the “scientific proof” provided by Ukrainian historiography in 2000, it argues 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” (2005: 2). Following Kliuchevskii’s thesis, 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” (2005: 2–3).

With the myth of distinctive origin asserted, Makara and Sharga create the myth of victimization: the Rusyns could have consolidated in a nation (nation-state) but other powers have so far impeded this development. They oppose the thesis of Rusyns being national Ukrainians, stating 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” (2005: 1). Rusyns had their own national awakening in the nineteenth century, parallel to the Ukrainian and other national awakenings. For example, Rusyns had the history writer Luchkai-Pop as well as today’s national hero and author of the Rusyn hymn, Aleksander Dukhnovych. The problem is that Rusyns were subjected to many alien political regimes, “each of which tried to prove ‘scientifically’ its own historical right to rule the land” (Makara and Sharga, 2005: 1). The myth of a continuous struggle for national liberation is another important part of this historical account. This struggle, interrupted by Soviet rule, has naturally resumed since the Soviet Union fell (Michna, 1998: 2–6).

Given that Makara and Sharga’s text title is “Arguments for Recognizing the Nationality of the Indigenous Subcarpathian Rusyn People in Ukraine” and is posted on a Rusyn website and that the ZLNŚ opposes the Polish state historical policies in its struggle for the recognition of Silesian nationality (see ZLNŚ responses to Court decisions, <http://zlns.republika.pl.dokumenty.htm>, March 15, 2008), I posit that, seeking recognition, Rusyns and Silesians respond and instrumentally adapt to the “objective” criteria and to the state discourses, and in so doing they re-imagine their identity constitutive elements.

Resuscitating Poets and Standardizing Grammars

In response to the continuous affirmation that Silesian and Rusyn are dialects, we observe a process of linguistic construction and the rediscovery of regional writers and poets putting forward the literary versions of the dialects.

The intensification of Silesian linguistic politics aiming at the recognition of Gwara as a language is notable since the 2005 law (Czesak, 2004; Kamusella, 2004). The efforts of “myths controllers” are strongly connected to the elements mentioned by Polish authorities to justify the recognition of the Kashub language. Tomasz Kamusella from the University of Opole said standardization process will take the same path (2005). One Silesian activist, Adam Rygjou, commented that Silesian will disappear if its education does not receive state support as the Kashub does (Rygjou, 2008). In order to do so, according to linguist Jolanta Tambor,

Silesians should imitate the Kashubs' language standardization efforts (see Pustułka, Rocznik, Adamus, 2008). The value rational objective for the Silesian to be recognized and put on the official list of distinct languages, is also put forward in an article "On the Need of Codification" found on the RAŚ website (RAŚ, 2007). It is not a coincidence that one month after the official announcement of the law, new shows in Silesian were created on TV Katowice. There was also an increase in the number of radio programs in Silesian. Radio Piekary's strong popularity is due to its numerous programs in Gwara and the Association of the Piekary Radio Friends now 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 only transmitted orally, as well as to translate other literature into Silesian. A group of people have begun to codify the Silesian language, which has resulted in a Silesian alphabet and a Polish-Silesian dictionary available in libraries and online (see www.punasy.mu.com, November 27, 2007). Furthermore, work is under way to create a Silesian editing program.

In their efforts "to legitimate the language" (Seriot, 2006: 211), Rusyn "myth controllers" have emphasized ancient literary writings to counter the Ukrainian state's arguments that Rusyn is a mere dialect. Benedek writes that since Kiev denies Rusyns' distinctiveness "citing the lack of a common literary language and an independent culture ... this small nation ... must find its way back to its traditional values and hence to a claim of self determination" (2001: 5). According to the World Academy of Rusyn Culture website: "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." (Dulichenko and Magocsi, www.rusyn.org/lanlanguage.html, November 26, 2007). The proof presented thereafter relates to the continuity of Rusyn written language beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, "perhaps even earlier." The literary genre is mainly composed of religious works, legends and tales which are "the fundamental reason for the myth-based world-view of the Rusyns" (Benedek, 2001: 45). The most widely known national writer is Dukhnovych, who organized a Rusyn literary society in 1850 and whose "prayer book, his drama and romantic historical stories served to advance the development and formation of national identity and awareness" (Benedek, 2001: 49). The capacity to demonstrate literary existence and continuity constitutes an advantage Silesians lack in their language- and nation-building repertoire.

In accordance with the victimization myth, Rusyn activists tie the "linguistic problem" to the frequent divisions of the Rusyn region and the subsequent introduction of various linguistic influences. Different Rusyn language forms developed in Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and Yugoslavia. In 1992, the World Congress of Rusyns decided to create a liter-

ary language on the basis of spoken dialects (Magocsi, 1996: 683). Since 1999, Ukrainian Rusyns have a codified form as outlined in *Materynskyi iazyk*. While it remains to be seen how integrated this standardization will become, there is a promising note by Rusinko reviewing an anthology of Rusyn poetry: “The new variants of Rusyn have taken roots as the medium of cultural reproduction” (1998: 348).

In sum, the nation-building strategies of Rusyns and Silesians are adapted to their context of choice created by institutions and official discourses. To attain their valued goal—recognition for dignity and for cultural survival—communities proceed instrumentally in order to conform to the criteria adopted by the states in which these groups reside. Ultimately, the goal of such conformity leads them to affirm their distinctiveness and to reinforce their constitutive elements.

Adapting Strategies to External Opportunities

Since the European enlargement prospect, we can observe a parallel political process, one that adapts Silesian and Rusyn recognition strategies to European opportunities. They have recast their demands for autonomy as associated with the idea of a Europe of regions and/or kins. While legal appeals to European norms have been of little use in their efforts to achieve recognition, I argue that European structures do offer opportunities for these communities to put their cause on their governments’ agendas.

Unenforced European Norms

During the 1990s, numerous documents providing rules to ensure minorities’ survival and development were adopted by international organizations. In Europe, the most important were issued by the Council of Europe (CE): the Frame Convention (1995) and the European Charter on minorities and regional languages (1992). However, they do not define minorities. Rather, member states themselves decide who is put on the list (Charter, art. I.2.2; also Deets, 2002: 35). Ukraine ratified the charter in 2003 with a list of 13 languages, not including Rusyn; in Poland the ratification process is occurring but with little chance for Silesian to be added to the 14 languages already recognized in the 2005 law.

The CE avoids adopting a definition of “minority” and puts forward subjective criteria of self-identification (Seriot, 2006: 222). However, the case of the registration of the Association of National Silesians (ZLNŚ) is not a success story. In June 1997, the Court in Katowice registered the Association recognizing that “a person’s nationality is subject to her own choice and that autochthonous Silesians form a minority” (Kranz, 1998: 69). The Polish Appeals Court reversed the decision, stipulating that the

Silesian regional identification did not constitute a national identity. The Polish Supreme Court confirmed this decision, justifying it with a reference to the explanatory report annexed to the Frame Convention, which states that the choice of the nationality of a person is bound to objective criteria (yet none is provided) and that subjective identifications do not automatically imply the existence of a nation/national minority. Finally, the association sent the case to the European Court of Human Rights. It ruled that Poland did not commit an illegal act in denying recognition to Silesians (Kranz, 1998). Subsequently, in obvious reference to the subjective definition of “nationality” used in the 2002 census, the association instrumentally renamed itself adding: “of persons declaring Silesian nationality” —but without success thus far. Rusyns, with the support of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), intend to submit their cause to the European Court (Belitser, n.d.: 9), but the Silesian experience sets a discouraging precedent.

The European Court did not even debate whether or not Silesians should be considered a national minority. This is a political, not a theoretical question. Although not in Ukraine, Rusyns are recognized in 22 other countries as distinct from Ukrainians; Slovakia recognizes them as a national minority, and Poland recognizes them as an ethnic minority. It therefore appears that existing norms are of no help to non-recognized groups. Is Europe of any use at all?

Using the Europe of Regions and “Kin”

Although Silesian and Rusyn demands for recognition encountered strong opposition from the Polish and Ukrainian states, some signs of détente can now be observed as these unrecognized communities have turned to a more “European” line of argumentation. It is often said that economic advantages associated with the EU alter internal policies. I argue that the European integration process and its institutions offer an alternative and complementary political arena for identity groups to counter state constraints (Jesse and Williams, 2005: 126).

Facing accusations of hostility towards and separatism from Poland, after Poland joined the EU in 2004, Silesians adapted their discourse to the European context and claimed that Silesian autonomy should be understood in terms of the Europe-wide decentralization process. Moreover, autonomy should be accorded to the region as a multicultural entity, not to the Silesians alone. Both ideas have a highly European spirit. The RAŚ journal adopted an extended title: *Jaskółka śląska—Europe of 100 Flags*. 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 and others, Silesians endorse the “Europe of regions” concept where historical regions would have most

of the cultural, economic and political competences, without undermining state structures. The “Silesian historical region” is not to be associated with “ethnic” Silesians but with the geographical region and its ethnic diversity (Cybula and Majcherkiewicz, 2005: 150). The RAS program envisions an autonomous Silesia within Poland and a region within Europe. Although unrecognized, Silesians are now represented in the European Parliament and have allies beyond state borders. Silesians have thus gained a public voice and their demands are legitimized through European structures.

The use of Europe is less obvious in the case of the Rusyns, as right now the EU represents only a possible future for Ukraine. However, some similarities in the change of discourse by Rusyns can be observed. Autonomy demands are now secondary as the provisional government suspended its work in 2000 for lack of massive support, and Transcarpathia is presented as a multicultural region. The 2004 pro-Western “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine made Rusyns optimistic concerning the possible change of state policies towards unrecognized people. 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); presenting their cause on television in Rusyn language was permitted; and 26 Rusyn Sunday schools are now in place. Moreover, Viktor Baloha, a Rusyn, is close to President Yushchenko and has been appointed chief of staff. While not officially recognized, some political space has been opened for the Rusyns.

Aspirations for Ukraine to join the EU are used, although timidly, by Rusyn leaders. Consider for example Shandor, the deputy head of the People’s Council of Transcarpathian Rusyns, stating that “it is very important for Ukraine to register 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” (“Transcarpathian Rusyns,” 2006). The new pro-European context offers an external political space in which to act. It could prove even more productive for Rusyns than for Silesians. The idea of the multicultural region of Transcarpathia is complemented by a larger idea of the historical region of kin including the Lemko and the Prešov territories. The co-operation between Rusyns in Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine might be seen as a reproduction of the (controversial) Hungarian concept of a Europe of (extra-territorial) nations, or “Europe of kins” (Deets, 2004; Ieda, 2004).

The existence of the EU has modified the role of borders. Cross-border cultural communities, such as the Rusyns, have an advantage as they have the possibility of gaining a common voice within the European arena, which can be both alternative and complementary to the state. Consider the findings by Michna. In her 1995 and 2003 inter-

views with Rusyns in Slovakia and Poland, she finds a strong correlation between the expectations of advantages for community development once Poland and Slovakia enter the EU and the decline in Rusyn leaders' self-determination aspirations (Michna, 1995, 2004). A leader of the Slovakian Rusyns commented: "For us, hope lies 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" (Michna, 2004: 148). Although Michna concludes that minority aspirations follow political pragmatism (1995: 81), which corroborates Bartkus' thesis regarding the dynamics of secession as linked to cost-benefit analysis (1999), it should not be understood in instrumental rational terms, but rather as a value rational process: "In order to survive and develop as a group, let's use Europe." The idea of a "Europe of kins," with diminished borders and the possibility to elaborate common Rusyn projects in the larger European political space is on the minds of Ukrainian Rusyns. The Rusyns appear to be tightening co-operation with their kin in order to maintain one foot in the European arena. Both the Rusyn and Silesian cases confirm Keating's argument: "The European theme has been taken up by minorities as a substitute for irredentism (separatism)" (2003: 5).

Conclusion

I have argued that non-recognized minorities respond instrumentally to the constraints and incentives provided by the state and regional frameworks. Identity is not only constructed, but is reconstructed in a value rational way. To achieve their valued goal of community survival, minorities act instrumentally. They need recognition in order to get the state's support for schooling, media, cultural events and political participation. In the process of strategically adapting to the context of choice, constitutive elements of identity are reconstructed and reinforced. Aspiring for recognition of their distinct identity, Silesians and Rusyns (re)build their respective communities in order to meet their states' established criteria. While the EU may not guarantee recognition, it provides new forums to press for minority causes and legitimizes their demands through the "en vogue" concepts of a "Europe of regions" and "Europe of kins," which over time may erode the constraints imposed by states. Identities are dynamic; they adapt to the institutions and laws that provide the context for strategic choices.

The study has further implications for the need for political recognition of difference and for building shared complementary identifications in different political spaces. Non-recognition of Silesians and Rusyns reinforces efforts to re-imagine identity elements *in further opposition*

to the Poles and the Ukrainians respectively, by emphasizing their status as victims of the majority. "Trying to transform Rusyns into 'ethnic Ukrainians' ... ha[s] spread friction among nationalities... It is this friction that is a source of danger for the integrity of Ukraine, not Rusyns" (Makara and Sharga, 2005: 10). Such a process deepens cleavages and leads to intensified hostility. 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, rather than apart (Schaap, 2005). As Walzer puts it: "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 (2004: 45; also see Gurpreet, 2002: 187–89).

Understanding identities as fluid and adaptive allows us to foresee further developments. Silesians and Rusyns present themselves as distinct from Poles and Ukrainians, but simultaneously as European communities. This is the political space where these groups can meet. As Jesse and Williams argue, such a complementary arena creates the chance for reconciliation: "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" (2005: 113). European identity-building may, in short, allow unification without unity.

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