

Region, Nation and Beyond. An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconceptualization of Ukraine

Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has attracted increased scholarly attention because of its erratic and contested political processes and complex cultural dynamics. The term “Ukraine” itself needs clarification: Does it refer to a geographic territory, a state, a nation or a culture? The incongruent, albeit intersecting, dimensions of “Ukraine” make clear that a single disciplinary approach will not suffice to describe the discourses that shape and define the largest state to appear on the political map of Europe in the 20th century.

This project proposes an interdisciplinary and transcultural approach that questions simplistic conceptualizations. It is a commonly acknowledged truth that regions matter in Ukraine. Yet, little is known about the discursive shape of Ukrainian regionalism and about how it affects greater processes of change. The project puts forward the hypothesis that patterns of regional identification in different social and cultural realms do not form a map with clear cut borders but rather overlap and/or form an archipelago. We expect to find similar attitudes in quite distant parts of the country and, conversely, diverse practices and values in regions that so far have been considered quite homogenic.

Five subprojects will provide insight to understanding a political entity that gained statehood only recently and is still struggling to articulate its cultural identity. The common denominator of these subprojects is their focus on regionalism. The project will begin by conducting a sociological survey to establish shared concepts and provide all subprojects with a broad, common framework. This survey will be financed by a grant from the Swiss State Secretariate for Education and Research. The results of all subprojects will be synthesized into an interdisciplinary analysis and published. Methodologically the project will combine quantitative and qualitative sociological research (questionnaires, in-depth interviews), discursive analyses, cultural histories and hermeneutics.

The overarching objective of the greater project is to challenge the dominance of the nation-state paradigm in analyses of Ukraine by illustrating the interrelationship between national and regional dynamics of change. The project will show how Ukraine can best be understood through its regions and how the regions must be considered in conjunction with the nation. Thus the project aims at a reconceptualization of Ukraine as a fluid construct where various discourses intersect, concur and eventually merge. It explicitly moves beyond the perspective of an entity irrevocably defined by traditional political borders and cultural, economic, historical or religious stereotypes.

The present project involves historians, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, literary critics and linguists from Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Canada and the USA. The planning for this project, which included the two preparatory conferences (Kyiv/L’viv 2008; St. Gallen 2009), was financed by a grant from the Swiss State Secretariate for Education and Research. The project proposed here will result in a collaborative volume of essays and at least 10 scientific articles to be published in international journals. Additionally, the research for four dissertations is integrated into the project, three of them codirected by a European and a Ukrainian advisor, one by a European and an American advisor. Keywords: Ukraine, Regionalism, Interdisciplinarity, History, Literature, Language, Religion, Economy

State of the art

Until the end of 1980s, humanities and social sciences in Soviet Ukraine suffered from strict ideological constraints and isolation. The concept of a Ukrainian nation was especially taboo. Ukraine was referred to primarily in the geographical sense. During perestroika, leading intellectuals posed legitimate questions like “Does Ukrainian culture exist as an entity?” (Ivan Dziuba)¹ or “Do we have scholarly understanding of Ukrainian history?” (Serhij Bilokin)².

Against this background, the progress of Ukrainian humanities over the last 20 years is impressive: their isolation has to a degree been overcome, scholars enjoy more intellectual freedom than in neighboring Belarus and Russia, new academic schools have emerged – as well as disciplines that previously were virtually non-existent (e.g. cultural anthropology, religious studies), academic discourses have been largely transformed due to the emergence of new journals and magazines (“Krytyka”, “Ukrainskyi Humanitarnyj Ohliad”, “Ukraina Moderna”). Still, the state of the art of humanities scholarship can hardly be described as satisfactory. First of all, progress is still very uneven. While history and, to a large extent, literary studies have taken the lead, linguistics remains very provincialized and religious studies and economics are struggling to massively reorient themselves. Secondly, the disciplines are developing separately from each other, within their parochial realms, and examples of interdisciplinary research are few. And finally, Ukrainian humanities scholarship persistently remains within the confines of the “national paradigm” which, apart from being outdated and politically charged, narrows the research agenda significantly and unnecessarily. It bypasses all consideration of regionalism and the importance of regional identities and cultures, an oversight which we seek to remedy.

Regionalism

The present project builds on the best existing studies of other national cultures, and will for the first time provide an interdisciplinary synthesis of the regional aspects of Ukrainian culture. However, there is neither a coherent understanding of the roots, character and implications of regionalism, nor a consensus over the number of regions in Ukraine.³

Regionalism is a key factor in Ukrainian culture, and it occupies a central place in the political landscape. There is, however, a discrepancy between the importance of regionalism in Ukraine, on the one hand, and the small number of academic publications on regionalism. The problem is not just the quantity of publications but their quality as well. They tend to be descriptive, rather than analytical. With few notable exceptions, they fail to consider regionalism in a broader historical and comparative context. Scholars who study regionalism and its impact on national identity tend to essentialize regions and ignore the discursive and dynamic character of regional identities. Historians often apply the categorizations of regions that stem from the XIX century to the postcommunist landscape. In literary studies, regionalism has not become an important analytic category yet because many critics are eager to construct a coherent Ukrainian literary canon. Linguists have come up with descriptions of regional variations of Ukrainian language, but a synthesis of geographical and sociolinguistic peculiarities remains a desideratum. The importance of regional confessional groups is underresearched and a convincing explanation of the interrelationship of national to religious identities has yet to be made. Finally, the economic bases and economic cultures in the Ukrainian regions differ significantly from each other.

Traditionally, the regions in Ukraine have been defined geographically,⁴ sometimes even in an essentialist way.⁵ Forest belts, mountains and rivers seemed to provide sufficient evidence for the delineation of borders between regions.⁶ A case in point is Transcarpathia. Ever since 1989, there has been a movement calling for regional autonomy based on the idea that the indigenous East Slavs living there comprise a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn nationality which developed differently from other peoples of Ukraine.⁷ Ironically, quite a strong sense of regional patriotism is demonstrated in present-day Ukraine in Galicia and Donbas – two regions that lack clear-cut geographical borders.⁸ The ambivalent character of geographical isolation as an identity-shaping factor can be best demonstrated by the example of Crimea. The Crimean Tatars consider themselves a separate nation, but local Russians in Crimea do not possess a strong regional identity and prefer to identify with a Russian national homeland.

The geographical approach ignores the integrative nature of regional identification, since any regional discourse defines itself not only through external factors but also in negotiation with other discourses.⁹ In this sense, the making of regions is not only the result of a growing sense of local

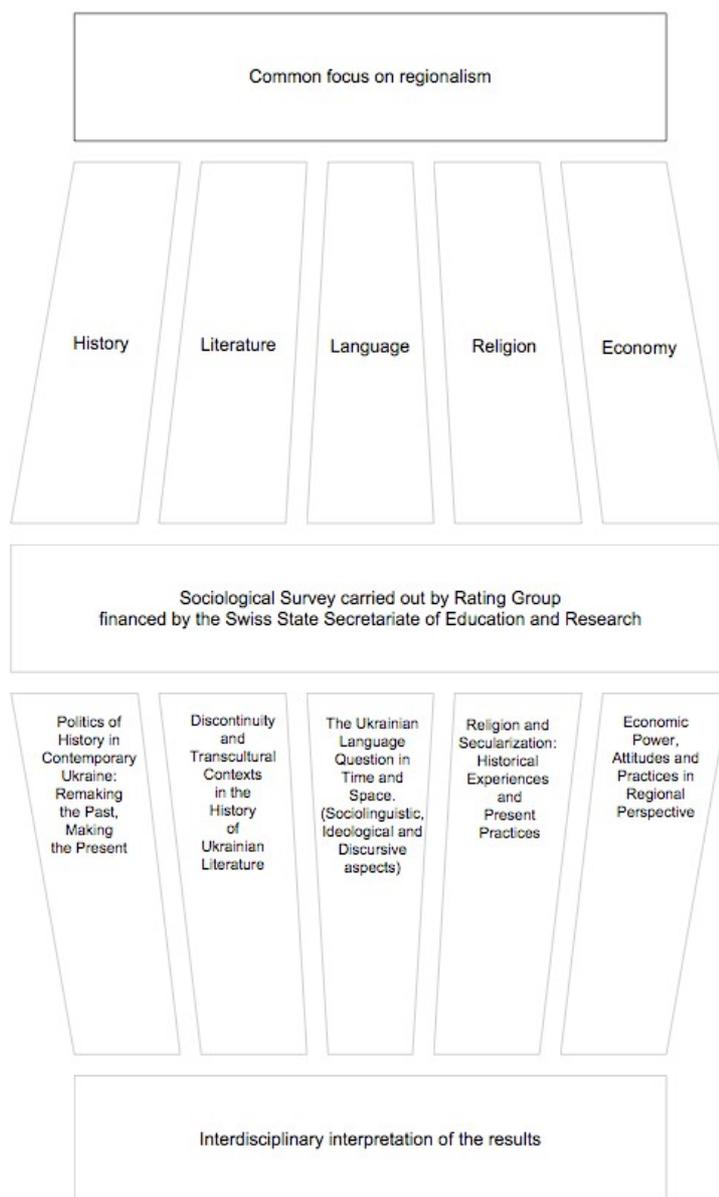
identification, but of numerous encounters of various attitudes crossing discursive borders as well.¹⁰ It is important to analyse why in some cases regional identification is more relevant than in others – even when lines of identification coincide on the same territory – and how these attitudes relate to identification with other (national, social, religious, age, etc.) markers. In other words, we do not assume from the outset that regionalism is strong and important. Rather, we have to place regional identification in a broad spectrum of other possibilities, and evaluate its relevance in the general hierarchy of identifications.

The five subprojects will approach this problem by organizing their research around four main concepts: regional and/or national identifications, collective memories, state-society relations, and key values. The comparison of disciplinary analyses of these concepts will help us draw a new map of regional identification in Ukraine. We expect the lines of shared attitudes not to coincide in the various five subprojects and to open up space for interdisciplinary interpretation. Methodologically, the project draws on research done by Rogers Brubaker who has shown that certain analytical concepts, such as "imagined communities", "ethnic groups" or "national identities", are much too static to describe the process of individuals forming identities in a given social and political context.¹¹ Additionally, in the Ukrainian case the possibility of national or regional indifference has to be taken very seriously.¹²

To be sure, Ukrainian regionalism is a very complex and elusive phenomenon. As a consequence, studies of Ukrainian regions are often characterized by terminological chaos and strong divergence of opinions. From this perspective, the Ukrainian case is hardly unique. Paradoxically, this situation also offers unique opportunities: any research team that addresses this issue in a more sophisticated way has the chance to set a really pioneering agenda that might be influential for many years to come. Given the fact that the Ukrainian case is still largely underrepresented in general studies of regionalism, this project aims to significantly contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon at large.

Outline of the research project

Since the aim of the project is an interdisciplinary reconceptualization of regionalism as it pertains to Ukraine, the five subprojects (history, literature, language, religion, economics) will be closely interconnected by a general paradigm of how regions and nations mutually constitute one another. The overall structure of the project can be schematized as follows:



The five research teams will closely collaborate and meet every year at a conference to discuss research progress. Each team will address from their own respective disciplines the four key topics: national and regional identifications, collective memories, the relations between state and society, and key values. The results of a large survey, carried out on a representative sample of the Ukrainian population (N>10000 participants) will be analyzed by Prof. Maria Lewicka and Prof.

Yaroslav Hrytsak in conjunction with the subproject research findings. The questionnaire will include fixed-response questions and psychometrically elaborated numeric scales corresponding to relevant theoretical issues tested in other studies, both in Ukraine and in other contexts. The questionnaire will address issues such as forms of self-identification, attachments to place, national attitudes, and mutual stereotypes, among others. A number of open-ended questions, for example, concerning memories, will be analyzed with the help of tools specifically adapted for text analysis. Cartographic materials and GIS (Geographical Information Systems) analyses, helpful in graphical presentation of regional differentiation of Ukraine, will also be used to illustrate regional differences. The entire research team (including the PhD candidates) will participate in the choice of questionnaire indicators. These indicators will build on previous surveys and serve as a basis of comparison with earlier surveys conducted in Ukraine by both coordinators of this component of the project (see the special issue of *Ukraina Moderna* 2/2007). A key part of the survey will be carried out by the Sociological Group Rating (www.ratinggroup.com.ua), a survey firm that specializes in representative Ukrainian surveys and has a proven track record of delivering competent and reliable research results. The costs for this survey will be covered by a grant from the Swiss State Secretariate of Education and Research and will be used to supplement the research findings of the subprojects. In addition, the project team will conduct in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with selected samples of respondents from the regions (11 cities), complementing and broadening the information obtained through surveys. In Ukraine, the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in L'viv will serve as a basis for the coordination of these individual open-ended interviews and focus-group discussions. This part of the project will be carried out by Dr. Viktoriya Sereda.

Schematically the methodological collaboration between the five subprojects can be visualized as follows:

	History	Literature	Linguistics	Religion	Economy
National and Regional Identifications	Russian and Polish Elements	Different Conceptualisations: All-Russian, Little-Russian, Galician, Ukrainian Literature	Bilingualism, Surzhyk, Social and Cultural Status of Ukrainian	Confessional Diversity, state-church, Religion and National Identity	Regional Performance and Typologies of Enterprises
Collective Memories	Holodomor Ukraine in WWII Sites of memory	Formation of the Literary Canon Inclusion/Exclusion	Oppression of Ukrainian	Different Religious Traditions and Oppression	Experience with Devaluation
State-Society Relations	Politics of History and Memory, Instrumentalization of History, Use and Abuse of History	Cultural Colonisation	Politics of Language	Secularization vs. Religious Renaissance	Privatization, Social Welfare
Key Values	Victimisation vs. Europeanization	Multiculturalism	Romantic Understanding of Nation Building through Language	Eastern-Western Spiritualities	Feudal Capitalism vs. Consumerism

The survey and in-depth interview indicators will be designed during the startup conference in September 2012 in Kyiv. Additionally, the Center for Urban History in East Central Europe in L'viv will organize trainings for Ukrainian scholars who will carry out the in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions in the regions. This will enrich the academic training of the Ukrainian academic community involved by giving them the opportunity to learn new research methods and to work with an international research group. The fieldworkers will also closely collaborate with the four PhD candidates in the project.

History

From an outsider's perspective, it is striking how prominent the politics of history is in the official agenda of the Ukrainian government. Two topics stand out: the Holodomor and the role of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during the Second World War. The political obsession with these two issues has to be seen in the context of politicized historical narratives. Every Ukrainian government carefully designs a narrative of the common historical heritage of the people living on the territory of today's Ukraine. The official discourse supports desirable versions of this narrative by instructing, sanctifying and memorializing certain elements, and suppressing others.

The official politics of history strives to find a balance between the regions and the nation. Under Yushchenko, the government tried to create a distinctive Ukrainian identity which clearly separated Ukraine from its neighbouring states and yet clearly allowed for the presence of Polish or Russian elements in national culture. Today, the situation is unclear.¹³ The new minister of science and education, Dmytro Tabachnyk, drew a sharp distinction between Galicia and what he calls "Great Ukraine", maintaining that there are essential differences in cultures, religions, languages and political views. This subproject will provide a comprehensive study of the politics of history in contemporary Ukraine, its ideological and political implications, its cultural background, specific regional features and methods of implementation. In a first step, this subproject will map the institutionalisation of regional sites of memory in Ukraine. Ukrainian students will be hired on a contract basis to record local cultures of historical understanding and memory, including the description and analysis of a representative sample of local museums, memorial plaques and monuments on the raion and urban regional center levels. This research will also include an analysis of the attitudes towards and knowledge of commemorated historical events.

In a second step, regional cultures of memory will be interpreted against different official politics of history. This subproject will analyse the role and activities of state agencies versus the responses and activities from different social and cultural groups to the institutionalization of certain historical interpretations. Special attention will be paid to the key values in historical narratives: How is identity produced in the official, state politics of memory and how does it relate to the varying levels of historical consciousness in the regions?

The fieldwork in this subproject will be organized, coordinated and supervised by the Center for Urban History in East Central Europe. A dissertation addressing the tension between regional and national politics of memory will result from this subproject and be codirected by André Liebich and Georgi Kasianov. The PhD candidate will devise a framework to measure historical consciousness in the regions and responses to state-directed politics of memory.

This subproject will draw its strength from the relevance of historical awareness in contemporary Ukrainian society and from a multiplicity of methods and approaches applied, ranging from quantitative visualizations in map format to illustrations of monuments and ethnographic recordings of popular reactions to these commemorative practices. A combined analysis of regional and national memory has never been done in Ukrainian Studies.¹⁴

Literature

In Ukraine the arts are the most prominent – and consequently also overburdened – vehicle of nation-building. Our reconceptualisation of Ukraine as a cultural space situated on a continuum of regional and international literary production provides an essential contextualizing perspective. This subproject considers the important theoretical and conceptual areas of contemporary literary studies, i.e., literary historiography, reception theory, institutions, cultural study (particularly regarding identity and cultural borders), canon formation, literature and ideology as well as social function. This research will engage the issue of literary historiography and the way a national literary past – and canon – is constructed in the context of Ukrainian nation building. However, "Ukrainian

literature" will not be considered as a given unity, but as a regionally differentiated corpus, sometimes written in different languages. The subproject will also address the periodization of Ukrainian literature: What are the main factors driving literary development in Ukraine? How do Ukrainian literary histories relate to their counterparts in Russia and Poland? Which regional differences can be observed in the construction and institutionalisation of a literary system? How variable are regional conceptions of a "pantheon of writers" and how does the language issue play a role in this process? Concepts of the origins and existence of modern Ukrainian literature will be reexamined through its literary institutions and the modus operandi of Ukrainian literati in different regions. How do literary institutions function? What are the uses of and reactions to past cultural legacies? How can we describe the relationships between the state and market mechanisms as well as between the public and private spheres in the shaping of literary processes in Ukraine? Notions of cultural hybridity and strategies of adaptation, compensation, subversion and mimicry will be crucial to the analysis of literary phenomena.

Special attention will be devoted to the attempt (successful for much of Soviet Ukrainian literature during and after Stalinism) of fettering literature and culture in ideological strictures, i.e., through the imposition of "Socialist Realism". The (ed.): *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Budapest 2007; Lebow, R. N., Kansteiner, W., Fogu, C.: *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Europe*. Durham 2006; Olick, J.K. (ed.): *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*. Durham 2003; Müller, J. (ed.): *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge 2002. Vgl. auch Wilfried Jilge: *Nationalukrainischer Befreiungskampf. Die Umwertung des Zweiten Weltkrieges in der Ukraine*. In: *Osteuropa* 58 (2008), p. 167-186; Andrij Portnov: *Pluralität der Erinnerung. Denkmäler und Geschichtspolitik in der Ukraine*. In: *Osteuropa* 58 (2008), p. 197-210; Portnov, A.: *Uprazhneniia s istoriei po-ukrainski*. Moskva 2010. Ukrainian literary system is an interesting case for post-colonial studies.¹⁵ Neither the efforts to delineate clear cultural borders with Russia nor to create a new "state culture" can be fully understood independent of post-colonial studies. Despite official declarations, the politics of national memory and identity, media productions and cultural preferences remain more intimately related to the post-Soviet culture and Russia's new nationalism than to those of other European countries. The dislocations and discriminations of the past return as the foreign "Other" that still threatens and subverts the "Ukrainian" way of life. Ukrainian literature remains one of the most prominent sites of these contestations. The efforts to establish firm borders around Ukrainian culture (and literature!) rely on a rigid conceptualization of national identity replete with linguistic and ideological codes. This defensive view makes the evaluation of literature and its canonical figures, from Kotliarevs'kyi, Gogol'/Hohol', Shevchenko, Ol'ha Kobylyans'ka, Viktor Petrov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Bruno Schulz to Andrey Kurkov, not to mention less famous contemporary authors as Ihor Klekh or Ihor Pomerantsev, extremely difficult. It is imperative to introduce a regional paradigm to the study of Ukrainian literature in order to come to terms with the complex structure of writings in different languages and cultures, such as the Stanislavs'kyj phenomenon, the Zhytomys'ka school, the Hutsul-text in Ukrainian literature, and so on. The regional approach becomes even more important when a dialogue evolves between different regions, e.g., in the 1920s between Kyiv and Kharkiv (Zerov- Chvyl'oyj). The conceptualization of literary landscapes can be found in works by contemporary writers Zhadan and Andrukhovych. The journal *Chetver* (Ivano-Frankivs'k / L'viv) is a platform for aesthetic analysis and a trend-setter for authors from different regions. Two dissertations will be completed as part of this subproject, one codirected by Philipp Ther and Jaroslav Hrytsak analyzing the multilingual cultures in Odesa, and the other codirected by Alexander Wöll and George Grabowicz dealing with the formation of the Ukrainian literary canon. The two PhD candidates will participate in the sociological survey and be responsible for the literary part of the questionnaire. Data collected from the survey will be analyzed in these dissertations.

Linguistics

The language situation in Ukraine is quite unique. The official language is spoken by a minority of the population, but most people claim "Ukrainian" to be their "mother tongue" in census

questionnaires. Many studies have been carried out to analyze this linguistic phenomenon asking who speaks which language, where and in what situation. Yet, little has been done to analyze the social connotations of language choice in particular situations.

After the presidential elections of 2010, the status of regional languages gained importance. The regional use of Russian competes with the state language. Apart from linguistic criteria, the changing ideas of and attitudes towards Ukrainian in public discourse will be analyzed. What were the politics of shaping the stylistic and grammatical norms of the language? What were the pragmatic contexts governing the use of Ukrainian in different periods? How do the politics of language in the 19th century differ in the parts of Ukraine that were under Austrian and Russian imperial rule? Do these politics weaken or reinforce existing patterns of linguistic behavior? How do political borders interact with isoglosses? What exactly were the effects of the forced interruption of the national “renaissance” in 1933 and how deep did the Stalinist Russification of Ukraine really go? Scrutinizing the Ukrainian language in the imperial and Soviet past will provide the necessary basis for an investigation of the contemporary situation. The use of Ukrainian and Russian today is not so much a geographical as a pragmatic issue. The linguistic borders between regions fade whereas the mutual influence between Russian and Ukrainian is increasingly important. We will also address the role of political institutions in heavily influencing the dynamics of linguistic prestige, especially in public administration and education. This research will be conducted on two levels: the representations of language in everyday life (newspapers, advertisements, internet chats, etc.), and the scientific and pseudo-scientific texts on the differences between Russian and Ukrainian, their origins, and on the link between language and thought as reflected in school- and university texts and manuals.

A comparison between the discourse on language during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods will allow us to identify continuities and discontinuities. Finally, the project will explore the existing epistemological models of Ukrainian and their implications for the official policy of language in a dissertation codirected by Patrick Sériot and Serhii Vakulenko.

Religion

Even before Soviet policies of atheism were suspended in the late 1980s, a religious renaissance had already taken root among many confessional groups in Ukraine. Places of worship as well as new religious-based social, educational and cultural institutions began to appear and to foster qualitatively different cultural values. Yet, this process of religious renewal neither unfolded in a predictable nor in an equal fashion among confessional groups in Ukraine. Seven decades of Soviet secularist policies and the steadfast promotion of atheism, when combined with religious and national-based forms of protest and resistance, have yielded a high degree of social secularism that is manifest, paradoxically, in high levels of professed religious belief among non-practicing, nominally affiliated individuals. In other words, after 1991 in this secular society, religion has become extremely important. Many religious communities in Ukraine are striving to bring about broad-based economic, political, social and, above all, spiritual reform. They aim to impart a revised sense of shared morality by creating social institutions founded on “godly” principles. Since independence, the new Ukrainian state has adopted liberal legislation that does not restrict non-traditional or foreign religious groups. This openness and the reluctance to “manage” the developing religious pluralism, as we currently see in Russia, has contributed to making Ukraine a dynamic religious market and home to a wide spectrum of confessional groups. Ukraine is rapidly regaining the vibrant religious landscape it had prior to the advent of communism.¹⁷

We will take a two-fold approach to analyzing the transformative powers of religion in generating regional diversity. On the one hand, we will explore how certain practices transform the lives of individual converts, as well as how congregations transform the local communities. In particular, we are interested in the forms of religious and social engagement communities advocate as part of a wider process of desecularization and how this contributes to regional variation. On the other hand, we will explore how the practice of traditional religious heritage itself becomes transformed

in the process of adapting to the local setting, with a particular emphasis on adaptation to dominant local religious and spiritual practices, which in some instances will include atheism and secular public and private spheres. The local cultural reception to this religious resurgence will vary significantly across Ukraine, reflecting different levels of secularization and the predominance of a single faith tradition and, if so, which one.

Specifically, this research project will comparatively address crucial issues related to the expansion of religious pluralism across regions with a variety of religious traditions and institutions. By investigating how local confessional, socio-cultural and political contexts shape the forms, beliefs and practices that religious communities foster, our findings will also assess the comparative impact of religious communities on the dynamics of personal and social transformation at the national level. Our goal is to understand the diversity of religious expression in a variety of confessional and socio-cultural settings across Ukraine, leading to an analysis of the varieties of religious phenomena emerging after the fall of communism and their relevance for broader political and cultural change. Local faith traditions and their varied relationships with state agencies shape the reception, growth and evolution of non-traditional forms of worship. Some foreign faith groups have become socially accepted and influential in some regions, whereas they remain marginalised in others.

The religious pluralism emerging in Ukraine poses significant challenges above all to Orthodox tradition. The institutional structure of Eastern Orthodoxy mirrors the ideal of nation-state, with each people ideally constituting a single ethno-religious community (i.e. Russian Orthodox Church, Georgian Orthodox Church, Estonian Orthodox Church and so on).¹⁸ This nation-state model of Orthodox religious organization bequeaths by birthright an inherited and immutable religious identity, which can only be altered by active conversion to another faith tradition. Religious pluralism, on the other hand, introduces the possibility of competition, choice and enhanced demands for freedom of conscience, all of which threaten to destabilize and weaken the privileged place of Orthodoxy in Eastern European societies. There are now actually four Eastern Christian churches in Ukraine, three of which are Orthodox and one Catholic, and all consider themselves “national” churches. The Russian Orthodox Church is the only Orthodox Church in Ukraine that is canonically recognized by the Eastern Orthodox communion. These Orthodox churches in Ukraine represent forty percent of all the churches under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, which is why the Russian Orthodox resists the creation of a separate Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the unification of the various Ukrainian Orthodox Churches into one.¹⁹ So, religious pluralism begins right in the traditional faith group, Orthodoxy, and today includes over 33,000 congregations representing 55 different denominations. For these reasons, and many others, religion is a key sphere fostering regional diversity and transnational connections in Ukraine today.

Economy

One of the main goals of Soviet regional development policy was to avoid significant differences in income distribution, living standards and values in the regions of the country. After World War II, Soviet regional policy focused on resettlement (forced migration) of workers and experts to underdeveloped regions. These endeavours failed, both on the level of the Soviet Union and on the level of the successor states, particularly Ukraine.²⁰ This subproject will analyze the interdependence of regional identifications and values and regional economic differences in Ukraine.

Privatization was the most important element of economic reform in Ukraine aimed to foster a market economy and to create a new business class. However, as pointed out by many researchers, social and cultural inertia reduced the effectiveness of reform by enabling nomenclatura and a few oligarchs to dominate the Ukrainian economy. As a consequence, inequality among social groups and regions skyrocketed. The political choice to pursue gradual reform rather than shock therapy resulted in chaotic pluralism²¹ that has had long lasting implications. The resource rich eastern Ukraine, with the help of subsidies and favorable monetary policies, has maintained most of its big,

albeit inefficient, enterprises. At the same time, in other parts of the country the closing down of factories resulted in deep and permanent regional economic decline.

Privatization, together with other failed or uncompleted transitional reforms, changed regional working conditions such that different values, norms, interests and perceptions emerged. Acceptance of grey and black market practices, attitudes towards taxing, accounting and controlling have become highly regionally variable.

These regional values and behaviors contributed to the development of regional “mental programs” (Hofstede) that have economic repercussions by creating a reflexive system with diverging regional identities. In a first step, the subproject will explore the processes of regional transformation by describing, analyzing, and mapping the interrelationships between regional identification and socio-economic development. The subproject will examine regional socio-economic indicators, such as attitudes toward work, perceptions of trust, openness to entrepreneurship, and so on in order to explain regional differences in economic performance, migration patterns and competitiveness.

In the second step, the subproject will analyze current regional development policies in Ukraine and compare the results in different regions. This subproject will closely collaborate with Anastasia Tserkovnyuk, who is completing a doctoral dissertation about regional differences and their ramifications for the implementation of Corporate Governance in Ukraine. This research is externally funded and not part of the budget.

Summary

The regional paradigm ensures that the five subprojects on history, literature, language, religion and economics do not draw on a “Ukrainian nation” as a given entity but respect its dynamic and discursive nature. The main focus will be regional identifications and attitudes “from below“, rather than policy-driven initiatives. By regional identifications and attitudes, we mean not only those that have a clear territorial dimension but also a wide spectrum of markers (social, religious, gender, economic base and others). These identifications and, most importantly, their hierarchies will be checked against the question as to whether they form regional patterns.

This project will be carried out on two levels. First, it will focus on historical, literary, linguistic, religious and economic discourses and the tensions they create between regions and the nation in Ukraine. This will help identify the persistence of regional divisions and reveal the continuity and change in regional formation. Special emphasis will be placed on post-independence regional projects, the agents advancing them, and their political implications. These projects include calls for Crimean autonomy, Zakarpattya/Rusyn nation building, Galician leadership in matters of Ukrainian culture and Donbas economic transformations and the emergence of oligarchic power. Second, the project will focus on the ways people imagine regions, and the role of this imagination in the hierarchy of their identifications. In order to get a broader comparative base of analysis, the survey will contextualize and contrast the Ukrainian findings with regional attitudes in Belarus, Poland and Russia. This will help avoid the pitfalls of a parochial national paradigm and accommodate regions like Galicia or Polissia which straddle multiple state borders and constitute a transnational phenomenon.

Because the project does not presuppose the number and dimensions of possible Ukrainian regions, the model proposed by Barrington and Herron, which divides Ukraine into eight regions based on their historical and linguistic characteristics, will serve merely as a starting point.²² The survey will identify regional patterns that display a strong correlation between specific discourses of history, language, literature, religion and economy on the one hand, and a strong identification with a cultural markers on the other. The results of the survey and subproject research findings will allow for an innovative reconceptualization of Ukrainian regions based on attitudes, practices and narratives.

Project management

The overall project will be managed by Alexander Kratochvil, who will serve as a coordinator in St. Gallen.

The Center for Urban History of East Central Europe will be responsible for the fieldwork in the Ukrainian regions (in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions) will be carried out under supervision of Dr. Viktoriya Sereda.

The sociological survey, which is financed by a grant from the Swiss Secretariate for Education and Research, will be carried out by the Rating Group under supervision of Prof. Maria Lewicka and Prof. Yaroslav Hrytsak.

Any disputes will be settled by a commission consisting of Ulrich Schmid (Switzerland), Juliane Besters-Dilger (Germany) and Andreas Kappeler (Austria).

Importance of the project

Recently, more and more attention is given to the territories that lie beyond “enlarged Europe,” but nevertheless form an integral part of Europe. Ukraine, with its controversial past and its complicated contemporary history, attracts growing attention from scholars from all over the world. The proposed project responds to and develops this tendency of scholarly inquiry. Ukraine has experienced numerous cultural conflicts, which are reflected in the regional politics of history, in the (re)formation of the literary canon, ongoing assessments of the language situation, the tension between secularization and religious renaissance and the complexities of economic transformation. The proposed project involves scholars who are committed to scientific excellence, and to introducing evidence-based arguments into discussions that are frequently inflamed by politics. Moreover, it will offer policy-makers and scholars an analysis of the regional differences in the politics of history, lay the groundwork for a redefinition of a Ukrainian literary system, provide insight into language selection, analyze the growing religious diversity and its implications and the impact of economic structures on regional identities. Finally, the analysis of the Ukrainian case can serve as a point of departure for future comparative studies on regionism in other parts of Europe and Eurasia.

The project will deliver a highly innovative reconceptualization of Ukraine, both in its methodology and topical foci. Researchers from several countries and disciplines, many of whom have previously already done collaborative research together, will continue to work to provide multi-faceted answers to urgent contemporary problems and build a network of scholarly exchange that will lead to further cooperation between Ukrainian and Western scholars. The project will vastly expand the communication between Ukrainian academic institutions and scholars of Ukraine the world over and serve to foster integration within Ukrainian humanities. Moreover, researchers from neighbouring countries (Russia, Poland) will also be involved in this project.

Extensive organizational work in the preparation of this project has been sponsored by the Swiss State Secretariate for Research and Education. The international cooperation and exchange of this project will not stop with the end of the funding period. Rather, it will flourish in ongoing interdisciplinary and international research on a nation which in its cultural heterogeneity is quite paradigmatic for nations today.

1 Dziuba, I.: Chy usvidomliuiemo natsionalnu kulturu jak tsilisnist?, in: Ukraina: Nauka i kultura (vol. 22), Kyiv 1988, p. 309-325.

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