

[論文]

## **Identity at the Borders of Closely-Related Ethnic Groups in the Silesia Region<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1. Introduction**

The aim of this text is to examine problems of identity among ethnic communities in border areas in cases where the boundary between neighbouring ethnic groups is difficult to establish (cf. Greń 2011). This mainly concerns ethnic groups that are closely related and, as a result of this close relation, are also typologically close. As a result, the use of ‘standard’ tools to establish ethnic boundaries may be hampered. By the standard tools of historical and contemporary ethnic demarcation (ethnic identification criteria), I refer to the components of cultural heritage which are most often described in the literature on the subject: history and tradition (living history), language, sense of community, identification with a specific territory, possible administrative factors (country, autonomy, etc.), and a reciprocal network of social interaction (horizontal and vertical), etc.

### **2. Theory and Methodology**

If we talk about identity as a functionalised construct, we ought to begin by defining what identity is<sup>2</sup> - how do we understand it? (cf. Greń 2012)

Of the many different concepts of identity and various attempts to define it<sup>3</sup>, this text builds on John Turner’s concept (Turner 1982:21), which takes into consideration both the psychological, as well as the sociological, aspects of the existence (and functioning) of this construct<sup>4</sup>. After taking into account the functional aspect of the three levels of identity, he differentiates between:

I (am) – a human,

I (am) – a social entity,

I (am) – an individual,

A holistic concept of identity is thus possible.

From the point of view of language as one of the indicators of identity, the social level of characterisation is paramount: “I” is conceptualised as a social entity and a mechanism for the formation and functioning of a group identity.

We are writing here about a group identity, despite the fact that references to language would suggest the use of the more general term of “ethnic identity”. Indeed, if we consider the full social differentiation at the level of “I” as a social entity, it becomes clear that ethnicity is not the sole category constructing the identities of individuals and groups, just as an ethnic group is not the only kind of social organization.

If the issue at stake here is the question of identity in relation to the category of ethnicity, a holistic treatment of the phenomenon of identity requires us to consider the fact that it has an interactive and functional character. In other words, in order to discover what constitutes ethnicity (to make it a cognitive tool), we should also consider other possible levels of group identity, such as religious, caste, racial, regional, local, neighbourhood, and family etc. This enables us to clarify the processes of the course, change, birth, and death of identity on the ethnic level, and thus to discover its dynamics. An examination solely of the ethnic level does not provide the opportunity to best explain these processes.

A dynamic understanding of identity, both individual and group, is based on the fact that each individual and group can, in a given place, time, and situation, present or realize membership of many groups. It does this in diverse ways:

- by the principle of inclusiveness, not only between Turner’s three categories, but also within the confines of the second of them, the social category. This represents belonging to various mutually inclusive groups (Varsovian, Mazovian, and Polish),
- by considering change over time, such as rising-declining categories (Macedonian-Bulgarian to Macedonian, Silesian-Pole to Silesian).

The interactive character of group identities, however, means that we also have to take into account the mechanisms of the coexistence of various identifications, both in relation to the individual and to groups. This does not only concern the inclusive distribution, but also the interlocking distribution, as in, for example, the Polish-American identity of members of the American Polonia, or bi-ethnic children of mixed marriages. This can equally apply to the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of the functioning of identity, such as the co-existence of various fragments (identifiers) of cultural identity, illustrated in the two examples presented above.

Ethnic demarcation is a situation where the phenomenon of ethnic competition becomes apparent. This competition takes various forms, from open conflict, to competing ethnic proposals, or different forms of cooperation. However, even under the conditions of

cooperation, the competing proposals remain, concerning the capability to choose between evident (and cooperating) identifications.

From this point of view, we are likewise interested in coping mechanisms and the kinds of solutions adopted under these conditions by particular units and groups.

Finally, the technical aspects of this type of conflict of interests in the borders are crucial. By this we mean the available types of tools, ie. ethnic criteria, that are occur in instances of bordering and closely-related ethnic groups, as well as how are they used.

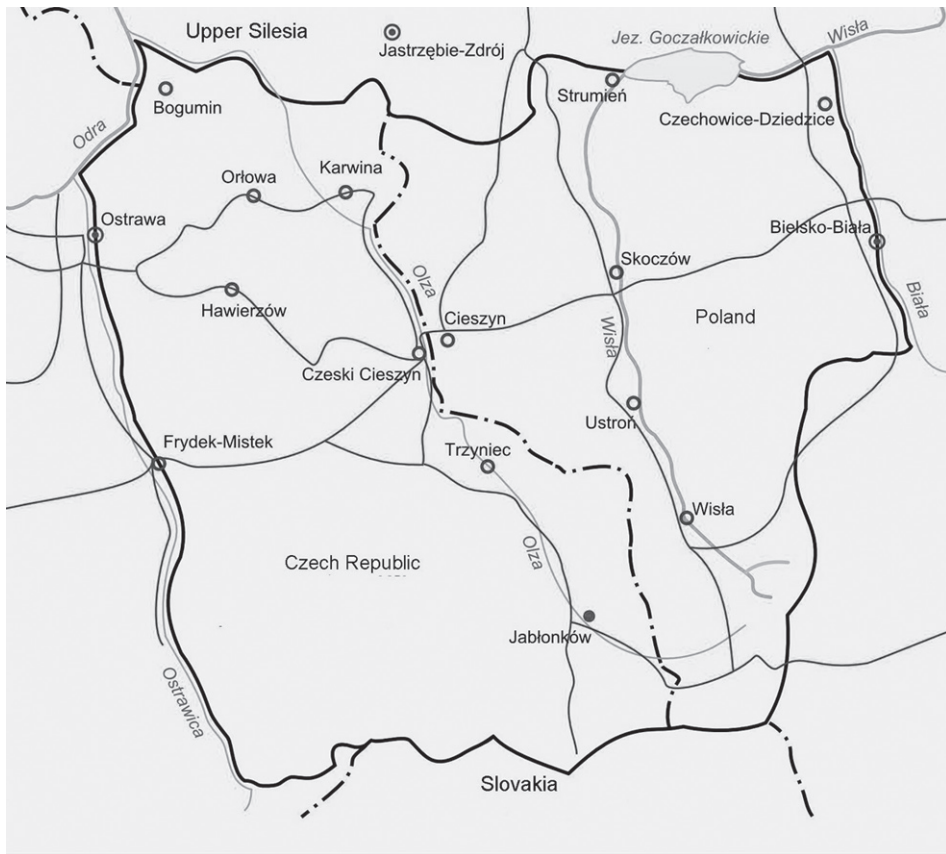
From the premises outlined above, it is possible to extrapolate certain research and methodological conclusions. We are referring here to our own research experiences in the Polish-Czech borderlands in Silesia, particularly in Cieszyn Silesia.

From the point of view of the researcher, the proper application of research tools to the analysed body of social data is essential. As a result, in order to study the phenomena and mechanisms within the identity, we should allow multiple identities on many levels and with varying character (for example, one cannot *a priori* assume a single-element of national identity of groups and individuals). The research methods applied likewise should take all of these possibilities into account. They should allow (but not assume) that the results might show indications of the multi-ethnicity of individuals and groups, and a gradation in the sense of identity and its determinants. The latter in turn arises from an acknowledgement of the dynamic character of phenomena relating to the issue of identity.

These assumptions are particularly important when the subjects of the study inhabit ethnic, linguistic, and cultural borderlands. Such groups have an alternative proposition at their disposal in each of these spheres. Identifying the true choices under conditions of alternative propositions (often, but not always competing) will be possible when no possible choice and none of the possible combinations is, *a priori*, excluded.

### **3. Data for analysis**

The area which serves to exemplify the solutions adopted under these circumstances has the indicative characteristics of a close border, both in the genetic and typological sense. This is Cieszyn Silesia, which today lies, in terms of its historical boundaries, on the border of Poland and the Czech Republic and, if the Cadca region is considered transitional with respect to Cieszyn Silesia, also in Slovakia. In some cases, we refer to social phenomena in the Upper Silesia region (in the modern understanding of the term). The current situation is of interest here and therefore the linguistic and sociological data comes mainly from the recent years.



The Cieszyn Silesia: created on the basis of the map:  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5d/Slask\\_cieszynski.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5d/Slask_cieszynski.png) (CC BY-SA 2.5)

The data was collected using a variety of methods (cf. Greń 2011).

The data is chiefly based on the results of questionnaire surveys carried out over the entire Cieszyn Silesia region, on both sides of the border, in the latter half of the 1990s. The questionnaires were presented to 14 and 15 year-olds (the last two classes of junior high school, and in Zaolzie<sup>5</sup> also in lyceum classes), due to the fact that this is a generational group, in whose case the value system acquired at home has not yet been subject in a meaningful way to external influences, for example, in high school, the army, and at work. Yet, it is an age group that is sufficiently aware of questions of individual identity and group affiliation. The entire population of that age group was surveyed, but to a different extent (the questionnaires were anonymous and voluntary, with a certain percentage returned empty). Several hundred answers were received relating to questions of national, ethnic, and regional identity. These topics were complemented by questions about stereotypes and on the function and role of the

dialect<sup>6</sup>.

The second type of material consists of data collected from discussions conducted on regional forums<sup>7</sup> dedicated to matters of national, ethnic, and regional identity and to the determinants of identification.

The third sub-group comprises data collected by way of observation, including participant observation.

#### **4. Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire**

The basic data on the subject of feelings of belonging to a regional or ethnic group was gathered using a questionnaire<sup>8</sup>. It assumed, as a principle, the possibility of multiple and not exclusive answers (which distinguished it from questions asked, for instance, in records common in Poland). The starting point for such a solution was the assumption that was derived from participant observation. According to this, ethnic and regional identification, especially on the border, does not always have a discrete character and does not only apply to people from families of mixed nationality and from different regions. It was also possible to express a gradation of the sense of ethnic and regional affiliation. This assumption was confirmed by the results collected, and these are in turn confirmed by the results from the other types of material.

An analysis of the material yielded the following individual categories, which were adopted by particular units from the region in question:

1. Multiple ethnic identity, more or less hierarchical, sometimes functional (Czech from the contemporary perspective and Polish in the historical context),
2. Multiple regional identity, more or less hierarchical,
3. Single ethnic identity,
4. Single regional identity,
5. No ethnic identity,
6. No regional identity.

These categories may appear in various co-existing arrangements among particular individuals, for example, a multiple regional identity with a single ethnic identity, multiple ethnic with multiple regional identities, a lack of ethnic identity with a multiple regional identity or with a multiple/single regional identity and *vice versa*, and even, exceptionally, the lack of ethnic or regional identity – only a neighbourhood identity – within the inhabited region.

The questionnaire provided the following options: Pole, Silesian, Cieszyn Silesian/Cieszynian (in that order), Goral (meaning ‘inhabitant of the mountains’), and additionally Czech, Zaolzian, Slovak, and Moravian in the questionnaires in Zaolzie.

Most often, these identifications formed regional-ethnic combinations. From an analysis of the conditions of co-occurrence of the identifications in particular cases, the following general conclusions may be drawn<sup>9</sup>:

1. Some respondents recognise that Cieszyn Silesian is also Silesian (that the term is a hyponym), while others do not. In the Polish part, almost everyone who declared a Silesian identity also declared a Cieszynian one. Their Silesian-ness has a Cieszynian character, which indicates that they combine the two terms. Not everyone, however, who declared a Cieszynian identity considered themselves Silesian (declared Silesian-ness) – only just over half. In the Czech part, the opposite was true: Cieszynian declarations more often accompanied Silesian. Considering themselves Cieszynian, they also considered themselves Silesian. On the other hand, Silesian identity accompanies Cieszynian less frequently. Being Silesian, they could also be Cieszynian or Zaolzian (otherwise: Czech Silesians). The difference between the Polish and Czech parts of Cieszyn Silesia is a result of the development of the situation in Poland where an association exists between Silesian-ness and Upper Silesia, and so some Cieszynians distance themselves from this kind of Silesian-ness.<sup>10</sup> To some extent, this results from the ‘appropriation’ of the Silesian identity by Upper Silesians (cf. Wanatowicz 2005).
2. Silesian identification is only to a small degree considered an ethnonym, that is, a national identity. The selection of this option accompanies the selection of the ethnonym Pole in Poland<sup>11</sup>. In the Czech Republic, it accompanies the ethnonyms Pole and/or Czech – only 12 individuals (4.23% of all responses) rejected both Polish and Czech identities, selecting the regional identity as the main one – but whether this is equal to the others, i.e. as a nation – is not known. This is explained to a significant extent by the cool reception in Cieszyn Silesia of the aspirations to autonomy of the Upper Silesians, which is presented in the name of the whole of Silesia.
3. In Zaolzie, a Silesian identity has relatively stronger ties to Czech identifications than to Polish identifications. Its lack reinforces the selection of a Polish identity. Polishness is most weakly confirmed among people for whom Silesian-ness poses a problem.
4. In the Polish part, the regional identity represents a Cieszynian identity. Likewise, in the mountains, a Goral identity combines with Cieszyn (Silesian) and Silesian Goral (in the Silesian mountains Beskids).
5. In the Czech part, the category of regional identity is a competition between Cieszynian

and Zaolzian (newer, but currently slightly stronger<sup>12</sup>). The proportion of Silesian identification is also higher and it is more strongly connected with Cieszynian, but also slightly with Czech (Czech Silesia).

6. For 12.32% of all respondents in Zaolzie, it is possible to combine Polish and Czech identities. It is therefore understandable that a lack of Polish identification increases the percentage of people declaring a Czech identity in comparison with those that also have a Polish identity, and *vice versa*. The lack of a Czech identity increases the percentage of people declaring a Polish one, and so a certain contradiction exists.
7. Gorals in Poland, in a decided majority, identify themselves as Silesian Gorals, and more particularly Cieszyn-Silesian (and here the division between Upper Silesia and Cieszyn Silesia is clear). This is reinforced by a geographical feature, namely the Silesian Beskids. In the Czech Republic, the Gorals feel slightly more connected with Silesia in general (which originates from the fact that Silesia is understood differently here, a point which will be discussed more below), than with Cieszyn Silesia, with the latter more or less connected with Zaolzie. This can be compared with the example of the competition between these identifications detailed above.
8. It is interesting that 'Polish' Gorals in the Czech Republic mostly feel themselves to be more closely connected to Poland than to the Czech Republic. In internet discussions, however, people claiming to be Gorals from the Zaolzie region clearly feel more affinity towards the Czech side. This is probably because they attend Czech rather than Polish schools (cf. Greń 2009).
9. The Moravian identity, and the Slovak one even more so, are the only complementary identities.

Since a declaration of affiliation to various, including competing, ethnic, and regional groups was allowed, the question arose regarding the degree of affiliation with particular groups. This question was put to all those surveyed, irrespective of their declared systems of identification. The issue was the hierarchy of the identity propositions available in the territory, including the names of the regional and ethnic groups, from the most to the least important to the respondent.

The respondents were presented with a list of territorial terms and were requested to place them in order from the most to the least important. Over the whole survey area, the following terms were proposed: *family*, *family hamlet*<sup>13</sup>, *family town*<sup>14</sup>, *Silesian Beskids*, *Cieszyn Silesia*, *Upper Silesia*<sup>15</sup>, *Poland*, *Europe*, and only in Zaolzie: *Zaolzie*, *Moravia*<sup>16</sup>, *Czech Republic*, *Slovakia*<sup>17</sup>.

The results obtained from this section of the questionnaire were quite symptomatic.

They revealed the existence of three various types of evaluating these names (and so the possible affiliation of the respondents to them)<sup>18</sup>.

The first of these types, the most common found in the responses, can be referred to as traditional. In this type, neighbourhood units are the most important for respondents: hamlet, village, and region. The greater the territorial range, the lower this element was evaluated. A different arrangement is presented by the second type that may be termed modern (nation-state). The state is distinguished among the territorial units, and then its parts, in an order in keeping with the traditional. And finally, the third type, least often invoked, raises the status of Europe<sup>19</sup>, which is the most important for respondents, and thereafter the order may follow either the traditional or the modern type<sup>20</sup>.

The second and third arrangements probably characterise the typical territorial value system of Polish youth, irrespective of the region. However, the traditional system arises from Cieszyn traditions and, as can be seen, in the period when the survey was conducted, it was still the most strongly represented in the area surveyed. Hence, the most common order of results obtained was as follows:

No.	The Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia	The Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia
1.	family	family
2.	family hamlet	family hamlet
3.	family town	family town
4.	Cieszyn Silesia	Zaolzie
5.	Silesian Beskids	Cieszyn Silesia
6.	Upper Silesia	Silesian Beskids (//Upper Silesia)
7.	Poland	Upper Silesia
8.	Europe	Moravia (//Czech Republic)
9.		Czech Republic // Poland
10.		(Poland // Slovakia)
11.		Slovakia
12.		Europe

This is an example order of increasingly interesting units:

1. family – unchallenged – highest ratings;
2. family hamlet and family town compete for second and third place;
3. Cieszyn Silesia – a region that traditionally fulfilled the role of a small homeland, most often fourth in Poland and fourth or fifth in the Czech Republic – competes with Zaolzie;



4. Silesian Beskids – a small Silesian Goral nation, for non-Gorals – our (Silesian) mountains – most often in fifth place;
5. Upper Silesia is understood in two ways: our Silesia, and if not ours, then also (still) Silesia – at sixth place in Poland and seventh place in the Czech Republic;
6. Poland - in Poland most often in seventh position after family neighbours and regions, but also fourth, after the family neighbourhood circle and second, after family, in Zaolzie, where it competes with Czech, in an arrangement similar to that in the Polish part, yet in a more balanced spread of results. It enjoys a somewhat higher position in competition with Czech;
7. Europe – after the nation/state and also, for a small group, at the top of the ranking;
8. Moravia – after the regional, but before the nation/state;
9. at the end of the ranking, Slovakia, which in principle was insignificant for the respondents (it was ignored in many questionnaires).

In Zaolzie, therefore we see competition both at the regional level, Cieszyn Silesia vs. Zaolzie, and at the ethnic, Poland vs. Czech (possibly even Silesia). Frequently, these ethnonyms and the feelings of connection to them expressed by the respondents appear together: *I feel Polish* and simultaneously *I feel Czech*. The coincidence does not apply solely to mixed families, but also characterises a certain number of respondents from homogeneously Polish families. In such cases, it must be assumed that this is an issue of the coincidence of two circles of officialdom at the same level, but in different spheres: Polish – transferred by tradition, and Czech - arising from national affiliation. These identities coexist and they do not exclude one another, but are instead complimentary.

The traditional system for the evaluation of units performing the function of small and large homelands is connected to changes in the statehood of Cieszyn Silesia. Since the small homeland (region) was stable, but the large homeland (state) changed, the small homeland became more important. This could lead, as a result of the identification of the nation with the state, to an indifference to nationhood. A further consequence might have led to a desire to raise the region and regional group to the position of an autonomous territorial unit and nation. On the other hand, a different development was also possible. Instead of a renunciation of national identity, there was an ‘acquiescence’ to accept any nationality proposed by the political situation and so to accept multiple national identities, with a superior position of the region. Under these conditions, even conversion<sup>21</sup> did not present a problem for those with such a system of values. They accepted the proposition of a new nationality, retaining the regional identity<sup>22</sup>.

How did regionalism influence the conversion mechanism? Regionalism, in conjunction

with an indifference to a national identity, could cause a process of conversion (this also through a phase of regional separatism). Under conditions of multiple ethnic identifications, a regional affiliation could delay the conversion process, based on the principle of ‘why should I change my national status, since I already feel like a member of a given nation anyway’. Under the heavy pressure of political factors, such as a change of state affiliation, it does not protect against conversion, unless the feeling of regional affiliation accompanies a sense of the historical attachment of a given region to a single, defined nation (and state).

Apart from the direct declarations with respect to the multiple identifications occurring in this border region, we tried to elicit opinions regarding identity indicators. The most important indicator, in common understanding, is linguistic affiliation. What is the relationship between identity and code? (cf. e.g. Edwards 2009) The following solutions are possible: only one, main identity is chosen along with its code as a primary code. The remaining codes, even those acquired in a natural way, are treated as alien. It is also possible to choose two or more identifications and their characteristic codes without distinction. In such a case, the codes are used depending on the communication situation, following practical considerations. Another possibility is to refer to several identifications and make use of a familiarity with several codes, but in a way that is hierarchical and, in the case of codes, also functionalised.<sup>23</sup>

An example with respect to ethnic units is provided by the situation in Zaolzie and the use of the Czech and Polish languages, and the attendant declaration of knowledge and use of the relevant codes. With respect to regional units, this can be illustrated throughout Cieszyn Silesia, whereas the range of available identifications and codes is greater in Zaolzie. Regional identification is marked by the attitude to the local dialect: knowledge and use, but also an evaluation as an element connected to in a particular way the regional and ethnic identification.

The solutions adopted here with respect to the dialect present a scale of defined options:

1. Dialect as a part of Polish
2. Dialect as a part of Czech
3. Dialect as an independent mixed Polish-Czech code
4. Dialect as an independent code, neither Polish nor Czech (yet with permitted influences of Polish, Czech, and also German) – a Silesian language, typologically a creole – particularly noticeable in Upper Silesia<sup>24</sup>.

## 5. Relationship between identity and language in Silesia

In academic literature, disputes regarding the Cieszyn dialect have a long history, especially with respect to points 1-3. Recently, however, in light of the appearance of conflicts, chiefly in Upper and Opole Silesia, regarding the autonomous (creole) position of Silesian, a certain increase of academic literature with respect to point 4 can also be noted.

Equally important is the fact that attitudes to ethnic and regional identification are conditioned by language, personal, and group politics.

In Zaolzie, the pro-Czech declaration carries with it a determination to eliminate the Polish language from public circulation (cf. the question of Polish signs in discussion forums in Trzyniec<sup>25</sup>). Regarding the attitude to the dialect, two solutions are accepted in this instance: a desire to eliminate it, sometimes solely in respect to Polish orthography, or its annexation to the Czech linguistic region with an indication of the lexical coincidence with the Czech language, and a recommendation to use Czech orthography in written expressions in the dialect.

In the pro-Polish case the dialect is an expression of Polishness, just like literary Polish (less well known). There is also the regional (possibly also contemporary cultural, but this is increasingly rare) phenomenon of the region as a historically Polish territory.

In the Polish area, the dialect is an identifier of the Cieszyn region. It is perceived as a defined value, a positive one for those declaring a regional affiliation, and a negative one for those rejecting such an affiliation. The distinct influence of Cieszyn Silesia or Goral identifications on a positive attitude to the dialect, or even knowledge of it, is observable. At the same time, there are instances where people who reject the regional identity actually speak the dialect well, or very well, as was shown by a test for knowledge of the dialect. In these cases, it is seen as an obstacle to Polishness (and to the Polish literary language) (cf. Greń 2002b).

The role of language as a determinant of the related identity is demonstrated, in our opinion, by surveys that consider the psychological bond between these values. In multi-code communities, especially under conditions of diglossia<sup>26</sup>, co-occurrence of codes in the case certain groups and individuals are most commonly studied. This is done by gathering statements and through observation. In more detailed research, taking diglossia into account, the domain of the functioning of specific codes is specified. These types of test are strictly philological and socio-linguistic. They convey the diverse communication which exists in given areas and groups, but can also be an expression of a pragmatic adjustment to demographic conditions (for example, the language situation of Vietnamese immigrant

families in Poland, (cf. Report 2007:98-107; Bialek 2009: 23-33).

However, only the discovery of an emotional and affirmative attitude to the code, which takes into account the structure of identity, may reveal existing connections of the code with a regional or ethnic sentiment. In our studies (Greń 2000; 2002b), this is served by questions about shame or lack of shame regarding the dialect and its use in certain situations. An absence of shame is most often connected with a positive attitude to the identity with which the code was linked, for example, the lack of shame attached to a dialect with a sense of belonging to the Silesian or Goral group. A positive attitude to the code - here the Silesian dialect - also impacts on its wider use, such as in the public sphere or even for official communication. This resulted in a better knowledge of the dialect, which was confirmed by a test of knowledge of it. These surveys also provided for a gradation of responses.

The high standing of the code and the strong sense of belonging to the group for which the code is an identifier, under the conditions of the emergence of a new ethnic offer, to raise a given identification to the ethnic level, may also be reasons for the acceptance of this change. Often this is actually accompanied by a good knowledge of the code, but not always. There have been instances of affirmation of a regional code and regional identification combined with a lack of knowledge of them. However, the opposite also occurs, whereby a good knowledge of the code along with a rejection of it, functions as ballast to a higher, general code (Polish). In such cases, we are dealing with a denial of the identification that is the determinant of the code, namely the dialect.

Thus, the relationship between identity (under conditions of multiple identities) and code (under conditions of multiple codes) is relatively clear, when the psychological aspect of knowledge and use of the code or codes is taken into account, and not only the pragmatic aspect.

The specific feature of the Czech–Polish border is that the system of identifying values has undergone certain changes in the last century (and to some degree continues to change up to the present). Changes with respect to identity were, and continue, to occur (cf. Greń 2002b):

1. A change of affiliation: a conversion in an individual sense and in the group sense, which results in the shaping of new ethnic (Silesian) and regional (Zaolzian) identities;
2. A change in hierarchy among competing identities (old, new, and newest hierarchies of ethnic and regional identification).

However, this does not take place solely with respect to declarations and an individual and group awareness. It is accompanied by activities related to the adaptation or development of new elements of identity.

## 6. Values that construct the Silesian identity today

Part of the autochthonous inhabitants, especially in Upper Silesia, reacted to the changes in national affiliation and the necessity or possibility of a nationality conversion by rejecting the proposed national identifications (Polish, Czech, German) and instead chose an identification independent of these (Silesian). The choice of such a nationality option, as the only or the dominant one, carries with it a desire to express their sense of separateness by a separate language. So, for people with a Silesian sensibility incorporated with their Polish (or Czech) national identity, it suffices to state that there is a Silesian linguistic specificity and a Silesian code in the shape of a regional or local dialect. On the other hand, for those who see a Silesian identity as equal to a Polish, Czech, or German one, it is not enough to declare a Silesian linguistic specificity. Instead, they strive to claim and confirm Silesian linguistic separateness and perceive Silesian in the role of a language, not a dialect.

This option is particularly visible in Upper Silesia (not in Cieszyn Silesia) and Opole Silesia. Here, lively discussions take place on the subject of the Silesian language. A Standardization Committee has been established and an official standard has begun to be created. This was a spontaneous process and the main driving force behind it was non-linguists, although now, linguists have also joined in.

We can see (Greń 2009) therefore, that the situation is somewhat different in Upper Silesia than in Cieszyn Silesia. In the former, the emancipation movement with respect to the language manifests itself more weakly. To some extent, this is connected with the continuing and vibrant Polish-Czech linguistic competition in Zaolzie. But even here there are opinions that the creation of a Silesian language might provide an opportunity for Cieszynian dialects. They could function as a common basis (with Upper Silesian dialects) for this new language, particularly if there are some Cieszynian elements in the created standard.

The second area of activity is the area of symbolism. This concerns both symbols present in the material and virtual worlds. In the first instance, there is a clash of aspirations in the marking of symbolic places from the point of view of Polish, Czech, and German history, with regard to monuments (cf. Nijakowski 2006), Polish and German cultural centres, cemeteries etc., and national symbols such as the flag, national emblem, and national anthem. In the second instance, the internet provides opportunities to present such symbols, particularly the flag and the emblem. In this case, Silesian aspirations towards emancipation are more obviously present in the public sphere.

Other elements co-creating identity appear above all in situations of conflict, for instance in polemics. Differences in political history are referred to as ‘standing on opposite

sides of the barricades' and as differences in traditions. Among the Polish-Silesian opposition these are particularly clear in relation to incomers from the east and differences in the level of development of material culture (Silesian is higher than Polish).

Traditions, references to history, and the level of material culture all have historical meanings. They represent a certain inherited value system, which is instrumentalised. This is particularly important in the event of the choice of value systems belonging to a single ethnic identity, e.g. Polish-Silesian as opposed to Czech, Czech-Silesian as opposed to Polish (from discussion forums), or a single Silesian identity (with an inclination to ethnicity) as opposed to both Czech and Polish. This type is particularly visible in Upper Silesia (discussed in more detail below).

These types of values find their confirmation in the world view and stereotyping of ethnic and regional groups, which are assigned other, usually but not always, lesser values within defined categories in the sphere of spiritual-ideological and material culture (cf. Greń 2004).

The next field of identity operations is the issue of territory and its change by incorporating or separating new units.

In the case of Polish-Czech and Polish-German conflicts, the question of territory is a fundamental issue, described frequently in the literature. The aspects referred to in this conflict are many and varied, encompassing historical, demographic, economic, and political elements. What is interesting for us is the fact that the problem is present in public awareness as a tool to define individual and group identity. In this case, historical and demographic arguments play the main roles, while the other themes occur less frequently. The case is rather different in the event of a rejection of the territorial aspect in the argumentation for Silesian territorial autonomy. The argument is similar, although the conclusions reached have a somewhat different character. The region is a disputed territory, passing from hand to hand. As such, the conclusion was reached that it ought to be an administratively independent autonomous territory (yet not in the sense of a state) and it would provide the territorial base for the Silesian ethnic group. The questions of the borders of such a territory are not entirely clear: in the case of Cieszyn Silesia there is no problem in this regard, as the reference point is the historic Duchy of Cieszyn. In the case of Upper Silesia, the situation is more problematic and analogies to the interwar period do not serve Silesian autonomy due to the change of the borders of Poland in the west. It is not certain, therefore, whether the determining criteria should be demographic, based on the autochthonous population (what percentage of autochthons of the whole population?), or historic circumstances (how should Lower Silesia be treated?). It could be possible to combine the two criteria: Upper Silesia, together with

Cieszyn and Opole Silesia, excluding Lower, where there is practically no autochthonous population predating the post-war migrations. The pragmatic solution is thus accepted, using the criteria of the administrative division of Poland and, more specifically, the contemporary Silesian voivodship. But in this case, what about the Opole voivodship, where the Silesian nation has emerged, and non-Silesian counties in the Silesian voivodship (Żywiec, Kłobuck, part of Bielsko-Biała, Częstochowa etc.)?

A similarly pragmatic approach is employed in the case of any institutions that may demonstrate their Silesian character. This concerns both religious initiatives and local ones based on regionality (cf. Greń 2008). This gave rise to TVS - *Telewizja Silesia* (Silesian television), Silesian radio (several stations), Silesian parties, and social organisations such as *Ruch Autonomii Śląska* (Silesian Autonomy Movement), *Towarzystwo Piastowaniô Ślónskij Mowy "Danga"* (Society for Care on Silesian Speech "Rainbow"), *Pro loquela silesiana* etc., and Silesian writing. Some of these institutions base their activities on the internet, due to the relative freedom and low operating costs.

A Silesian character is also apparent in certain economic initiatives aimed at the local population. This is seen above all in the use of Silesian as a code for communication with potential clients. This kind of activity is also observable in Polish-Czech relations, where the code of the potential clients is used in advertising and trade.

However, in the case of marketing activities, it is rather difficult to talk about an identity-creating mechanism. These activities exploit the fact that such an identity is being created, its expression is sometimes Silesian, and it enters into public circulation and consequently enables its exploitation for public marketing activities. Only in the cases of publishers, radio, television, and commercial activities in the communications field, are we dealing with not only the exploitation of the creation of a target group, but participation in that creation.

History also undergoes processing as a symbolic arena. There is a transformation of historic events and their interpretation<sup>27</sup>.

Despite all of these processes, both in the area of ethnic and regional awareness, and with respect to declarations and actions, the creation of group expressions has not ended. The results are hard to predict. This can be seen in the Czech example, where the differences between the data from 1992 and 2002, indicate that the emergence of an ethnic group neither signifies that the process of its creation is established nor finished. This arises mainly from the fact that the creation of ethnic expressions, such as language, tradition, and history, must continue. Moreover, their effective power is mutable over time and what appears attractive today may lose its attractiveness tomorrow, and *vice versa*.

When attempting to answer these questions, the tradition of identity related solutions must be considered in this territory (cf. Greń 2014).

## **7. History of national processes in Silesia in the nineteenth century**

The modern sense of ethnic identity can be discussed in conjunction with the process of the evolution of the modern concept of nation. The Romantic origins of nations is commonly accepted, especially as related to the Spring of Nations. From a historical perspective, in Silesia in the 18th century, we are dealing with the transformation of an awareness of belonging to a defined Duchy of Silesia (Cieszyn, Opavian, Opolian, Glogovian etc.) and a relation to State organisms (the Czech Crown and Duchies of Teschen (Cieszyn) and Opavian, with Krnov), within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, known as Austrian Silesia, and the remaining duchies under the Prussian Crown, Prussian Silesia. Indeed, this division survived for a long time and became a distinguishing factor for the inhabitants of both Austrian and Prussian Silesia. It referred to all residents, regardless of language, as a determinant of group differentiation. The inclusion of other factors, in addition to territorial nation-creating factors, resulted in certain conflicts during the emergence of ethnic groups living in the jointly defined territories. It was, in fact, necessary to define a symbolic boundary between individuals and groups. This was all the more difficult, the closer the groups were to each other in the symbolic realms of tradition, history, language, and customs. An example of the difficulties in the creation of ethnic groups is the multilingual (and multi-ethnic in contemporary terms) area of Silesia.

In the 19th century, three state-creating nationalities (with the tradition of statehood) competed for the attention of the inhabitants of the area: German, Czech, and Polish. Each of them presented different criteria (Wódz 1993:15-16): (1) Germany referred to the cultural and administrative criteria: belonging to the German culture, bypassing the language factor, the category of Germans, or Austrians who speak Polish or a mixed language, (2) Czechs in Cieszyn Silesia drew on historical facts: affiliation to the Czech Crown, (3) Poles put forward ethno-linguistic and cultural arguments, for example commonality of language, possibly also cultural connectivity with a Polish environment. Under the conditions of this ideological conflict, a fourth possibility presented itself, namely Silesian autonomy (Jerczyński 2005; 2006). Proponents of this option referred to the Silesian territory and proposed that the linguistic determinant of the group be Polish-German bilingualism with, for example, bilingual schools (Jerczyński 2006:21). The linguistic independence of the group was also possible (a



mixed language – compare Kamusella’s contemporary theory of Silesian as a creole (Kamusella 2005; cf. Wyderka 2004). The main representative of this movement is considered to be the Silesian People’s Party. The Party was founded by Józef Koźdoń, although he probably alluded to the earlier ideas of Theodor Haase, a Cieszyn pastor (Gorzelik 2004:19). The situation was complicated by the fact that within the other groups (Polish, German, and Czech), the Silesian identification also appeared as a parallel regional identification with ethnic Polish, German, and Czech.

In general censuses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mother tongue was adopted as the ethnic determiner. This is completely different from contemporary censuses, which are based on the will of the subjects. At a time when censuses, and also parliamentary elections, increasingly began to refer to nations - through declarations of nationality – an awareness of national units and their groups (national and party fronts) began to play a major role. The process of rousing the masses by the heralds of a Polish, Czech, and Silesian national life, contrary to earlier habits of recognition based on decisive external factors (such as state affiliation or language use declared on official censuses), met with some resistance. This is demonstrated by the results of subsequent general censuses that document the instability of the nationality of broad masses of the population. This phenomenon is referred to by the term “conversion”, though it remains an open question whether conversion is possible when people do not have the need to clearly define their ethnicity. Rather, it seems that from the point of view of identification, that the ease of switching national affiliation in a large population proves that it remains at a pre-national level, in the modern sense. In such cases, people only felt local or regional affiliation because they had a robust nature; the identity at a higher level remained *de facto* in the earlier system of territorial affiliation (with origins in feudalism). This was connected, in modern times, with the elasticity of borders, which prevented the development of a lasting emotional connection with a nation-state entity. The only permanent element was a sense of belonging to the home geo-cultural landscape, deciphered as a local, personal, and possibly regional landscape of Silesia.

Contemporary problems regarding group identification stem from the fact that we are dealing with a process of identification empowerment on the part of a wider group than just the intelligentsia, namely the masses. This is connected, of course, to the ease of realizing any interpersonal, group, and inter-group relationships. It is no coincidence that Silesian identity and the processes accompanying its definition began on a larger scale in the contemporary era and through the mobilisation of the internet. The first cause of some re-evaluations in this area was the opening of borders in the early 1990s, combined with the facilitation of travel (see population movements associated with individual trade). We might even state that only now

are there sufficient conditions for the conscious choice and declaration of a national identity that is not predicated by political circumstances (Kwaśniewski 2004: 76). Of course, the role of opinion leaders is still invaluable. These individuals present a specific proposal and promote it through various means such as social communication, practical activities (publications, websites, language activities), and legal activities (the petition of the Alliance of the People of the Silesian Nation (Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej). Yet, it is the recipients of these proposals who shall take the relevant decision to adopt or reject this identity.

## 8. The Silesian identity in the general censuses

The Silesian identification, as a choice (and sometimes the possibility to not choose the others), appeared for the first time in the general census in 1921 in Cieszyn Silesia within the borders of Czechoslovakia (cf. Siwek 1995)) in a form associated with the other ethnicities, and in 1939, in the form of a stand-alone unit. Compare the results of the general census in 1921 and 1930 in Czechoslovakia and in 1991-2011 in the Czech Republic<sup>28</sup>:

The general census in 1921 and 1930 in the Cieszyn Silesia within the borders of Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovak Republic	1921	1930
Silesian-Polish	21 607	20 150
Silesian-German	1 408	191
Silesian-Czech/Czechoslovak	24 299	10 106

The results of the general census in the Czech Republic in 1991-2011

Year	1991	2001	2011
Silesian	44 446	10 878	12 231
% of the population	0,431	0,106	0,117

In the most recent general census in Poland in 2011, a slightly different categorization was proposed, which took into account the heterogeneous nature of the Silesian group. Three degrees of ‘Silesianness’ were introduced: Polish, but also Silesian; Silesian, but also Polish; and Silesian only. A scientific analysis of the results of the census is presented in (Łodziński 2015), where some of the methodological problems of the census are also described (Łodziński 2015:19-186).

## The general census in Poland in 2011

Ethnic identity	The first identity	As the unique	The second identity	The first and the second	With the Polish identity
Silesian	418 000	362 000	391 000	809 000	415 000

Of course, only data from several common censuses may be meaningful in relation to the ethnicization processes of territorial groups, as evidenced by the “withdrawal of Silesianness” in Czech Silesia (incomplete, see above differences between the results in 1991 and in 2001/2011) .

## 9. Conclusions

General censuses are only an external illustration of identification at the level of the national category. Silesian identity can, however, function, and has functioned, in tandem with categories of nationality, as a second, private mode of identification, sometimes hidden for practical reasons, or as a category of identification on a different scale, such as the regional (Silesian-Polish, Silesian-Czech, Silesian-German). This is a potential identity that may or may not be externalized in official acts (including in a general census).

The question of how this potential identification looks today, over the whole of Silesia, remains an open question. Moreover, the development of these identities is currently still in progress. It is not possible to predict today what they will lead to. Will this process culminate with the creation, or perhaps the recognition, of a separate nation? Alternatively, can it be understood as a certain fashion or response to specific contemporary problems (Szczepeński 2004:113), and as the causes disappear, so too will the identity fade away (compare the results of consecutive censuses in the Czech Republic) (cf. Nijakowski 2006:150; Simonides 2004:162-163)? We can add that this process is most apparent in Upper Silesia and Opole Silesia. Here, it has advanced furthest and we can find a group declaring Silesian as their only nationality. The disparity of responses among autochthons articulating a Silesian nationality, however, poses certain problems for the champions of the existence and creation of such a nationality. Indeed, it significantly undermines the reference to a separate Silesian history as a criterion of ethnic differentiation. Yet we should be aware that history is not written once and for all; it is also being created today. As for those who doubt whether this process can lead to the creation, and even the recognition, of a new nation, we must bear in mind that recent history shows that even today, processes for the creation of nations are possible. Consider,

for example, the materialisation of the ethnic and national identity of Macedonians, today recognized, although for a long time not recognised by some of their neighbours (Bulgarians and Greeks, and also by Serbs up until the Second World War).

So, in the social sense, the Silesian identity is a mixed ethno-regional identity (with national aspirations). In an individual sense, however, it is an identity in flux, with a greater or lesser degree of consolidation (cf. Czech 2006:92,193; Szczepański 2004:105,108,114). To some extent, the masses will repeat the experiences of the elites, who underwent the process of nation formation earlier, searching for their identity and changing it at various stages of their lives (Popiołek 1976:178).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The author of this article expresses his sincere gratitude to Ms. Catherine Gibson (European University Institute) for her careful proofreading and useful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> With regard to the distinction, functioning in the literature on the subject, between identity (individual/group construct), and identification (social 'potency') (Kłoskowska 1996), we are interested here in the first concept.

<sup>3</sup> Scientific literature about identity is very rich, cf. e.g. papers about theoretical problems of the notion (Carter 2013; Cherrier 2007; Côté 2002; Edwards 2009: 15-25; Korte 2007; Owens 2010; Oyserman 2011; Spencer-Oatey 2007; Stets 2003; Stryker 2000; Walker 2013).

<sup>4</sup> I appreciate the attempts to make a more detailed description of the concept, for example (Brubaker - Cooper 2000: 6-8,10,11).

<sup>5</sup> It means 'the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia'.

<sup>6</sup> The number of questionnaires in these categories was as follows: the function and role of the dialect: 1739 in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and 352 in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia; the national, ethnic, and regional identities: 632 in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and 352 in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia; the ethnic and regional stereotypes: 593 in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and 310 in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia; the hierarchy of territorial terms (see below): 404 in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and 256 in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia.

<sup>7</sup> [www.ox.pl/forum](http://www.ox.pl/forum); [www.trinec.cz/diskuze](http://www.trinec.cz/diskuze); [www.gazetacodzienna.pl](http://www.gazetacodzienna.pl); [forum.gazeta.pl/forum/~/](http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/~/) Slask Cieszynski; [www.republikasilesia.com](http://www.republikasilesia.com); [www.lauba-slonsko.pl](http://www.lauba-slonsko.pl); [www.slonzoki.de](http://www.slonzoki.de); [www.slonsk.de](http://www.slonsk.de); [www.echoslonska.com](http://www.echoslonska.com); [www.waco.bloguj.pl](http://www.waco.bloguj.pl); [www.blog.chesio.com](http://www.blog.chesio.com) (all since 2006).

<sup>8</sup> They were also the basis for part of a book (Greń 2000). Here, however, we present a somewhat different interpretation of the data than in the book.

<sup>9</sup> Details were published in a book (Greń 2000: 102-199)

<sup>10</sup> This is confirmed by observations in other fields, such as internet discussions.

<sup>11</sup> Only one respondent in Poland rejected the Polish identity and one was not sure of his national

identity.

- <sup>12</sup> Compare in this respect the statements of educated (although not only educated) Zaolzians. For the pro-Polish section, the major regional identity is Zaolzian. For the pro-Czech, it is Silesian, and later Zaolzian and Cieszynian. The Zaolzian identity is relatively young and it aspires to the position previously occupied by Silesian-Cieszynian. Simultaneously, it is strongly connected with Silesian. It arises from the fact that, in the concept of All Silesia – part of Silesia, there is an exchange at the second level. Instead of Cieszyn Silesia, it is replaced by Zaolzie. Furthermore, on the level of nationality, a Zaolzian identity is connected equally to Polish. The connection is through the Cieszynian identity (possibly also Silesian). It is beginning to be connected to the Czech identity too, as a part of the Czech Republic, yet at the time of the survey, the connection was still more to Polish than to Czech.
- <sup>13</sup> Villages in Cieszyn Silesia are large, often with several thousand inhabitants. They are divided in to several - sometimes up to a dozen - clearly separated hamlets.
- <sup>14</sup> At this time, as previously, each respondent obviously entered his own answer. In some questionnaires this was expressed by the defined name of a place, such as a hamlet, and such answers were considered acceptable.
- <sup>15</sup> In the course of this survey, we tried to define the extent of this concept in Cieszyn Silesia: does it cover historic Upper Silesia, and therefore Cieszyn Silesia, or does it now appear in the narrower, modern sense?
- <sup>16</sup> A reference to the administrative unit of Northern Moravia Region, of which the Silesian counties on the Czech side of the border are a part, which can be seen as an attempt to define the influence of the administrative system on the awareness of Cieszynians from Zaolzie.
- <sup>17</sup> Ties to Slovakia are of a very loose and sporadic nature. The term was used in the questionnaire largely as a placebo.
- <sup>18</sup> A constant element among all of the systems was the high position of the family (cf. Szczurek-Boruta 1998), for which reason I elected to omit it here.
- <sup>19</sup> Remember, that the survey was conducted at a time when Poland was anticipating accession to the European Union.
- <sup>20</sup> The results (in % of all questionnaires) of these three categories were as follows: I. 57.96% in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and 66,12% in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia; II. 33,08% in the Polish part and 22.31% in the Czech part; III. 8,96% in the Polish part and 11,57% in the Czech part.
- <sup>21</sup> It means ‘instability of the national affiliation, changing of the national affiliation’.
- <sup>22</sup> See below: changes in the national censuses, (cf. Lipowski 1992: 64).
- <sup>23</sup> ‘The situation is complicated by the fact that the selection of a defined identification and primary code is not always objective with respect to the linguistic possibilities of the ‘choosing’ unit. This is due to the variance between the psychological and linguistic factors. It may occur that a person declaring affiliation to a particular community does not possess knowledge of its internal code,

and is not even aware of the fact, particularly in multi-code situations, where the codes do not significantly differ from one another. Therefore, not every declaration of knowledge of (and use of) a code is accompanied by actual use and knowledge.’ (Greń 2002b: 59).

<sup>24</sup> The influence of the theories advanced by Tomasz Kamusella is visible on this world view option. Kamusella argues that the Silesian language evolved as a creole language by mixing two languages: Polish and German (cf. Kamusella 2004).

<sup>25</sup> [www.trinec.cz/diskuze](http://www.trinec.cz/diskuze)

<sup>26</sup> Functionally differentiated multiple codes.

<sup>27</sup> This concerns issues both involving Polish-Czech relations, such as the dispute over Zaolzie, and Polish-German relations concerning the dispute over Upper Silesia, the plebiscite, and Silesian Uprisings. Together with the attempt to create a Silesian identity, there could be a Silesian ‘verification’ of the following facts: Józef Koźdoń’s activities; the Silesian uprisings (to what extent were they Silesian and to what extent Polish?); facts from personal histories, such as the signing up by parents and grandparents, to *Volksliste* (list of national affiliation), with *Wasserpolsch* or *Goralenvolk* nationality (Class 3) or with German nationality (Class 2, i.e. *Volksdeutsch*); the influence of the resurgence of German nationality after the political changes of the 1990s. The first attempts to write a Silesian history from the Silesian (autonomous) point of view are under way.

<sup>28</sup> Taken from [www.czso.cz](http://www.czso.cz) (cf. Zahradnik 1991).

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## **Tożsamość na pograniczu blisko spokrewnionych etnosów na Śląsku**

**Zbigniew Greń**

Artykuł prezentuje rezultat badań prowadzonych przez autora na Śląsku, przede wszystkim na Śląsku Cieszyńskim, od ponad dwudziestu lat, a skoncentrowanych na problematyce tożsamości mieszkańców pogranicza polsko-czesko-słowackiego. W związku z ruchami autonomistycznymi na Górnym Śląsku, w ostatnim okresie również ten obszar objęty został badaniami. Przedmiotem badań są, z jednej strony, relacje międzyetniczne, z drugiej strony, wyznaczniki etniczności funkcjonujące w badanym regionie. W analizie uwzględniono zarówno wyniki z badań terenowych, w tym ankietowych, jak i dane oficjalne, uzyskane w narodowych spisach powszechnych w Polsce i w Czechach. Wzięto pod uwagę również dotychczasowe wyniki badań naukowych z tego zakresu oraz argumenty i fakty pojawiające się w dyskusjach prowadzonych na forum publicznym, zwłaszcza w Internecie. Analiza tych wszystkich danych pozwala na wyciągnięcie wniosku, że na Śląsku mamy obecnie do czynienia z przeobrażaniem się śląskiej tożsamości regionalnej w śląską tożsamość etniczną, jako alternatywę polskiej, czeskiej lub niemieckiej tożsamości etnicznej. Wprawdzie pierwsze próby wyodrębnienia samodzielnej śląskiej tożsamości etnicznej pojawiły się już w wieku XIX, lecz obecnie przybrały one na sile. Nie obejmują one jednak całego historycznego Śląska, koncentrując się na Śląsku Górnym i Opolskim, a nawet i tam nie zawsze mają one charakter separatystyczny – pełnej odrębności od pozostałych etnosów. Tak więc tożsamość śląska ma, w sensie społecznym, charakter mieszany, etniczno-regionalny, a w sensie indywidualnym często jeszcze jest nie w pełni ustalona, charakteryzuje się dużą dynamiką a nawet zmiennością w czasie (co oddają na przykład wahania liczby pro-śląskich deklaracji w kolejnych spisach powszechnych).