Inter-Community Trust-Building in Divided Societies: Managing Common Past and Symbolic Public Spaces

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In the post-communist space, state-nation-building policies collide not only with minorities’ perspectives and interests regarding the distribution of means for community development and the distribution of power, but equally regarding historical policies and the use of symbolic public spaces. Multicultural societies require integrative politics built on trust. Historical reconciliation reshaping relations between groups and between groups and the state being part of this process, how do groups mediate difference and cope with conflict- and hate-prone interpretations of history? Taking stock of the social science literature and observing controversies surrounding the Second World War collective memories and memorials in Eastern Europe, I argue that integrative processes are “from below”: groups build mutual horizontal trust through common management of their shared past and landscapes; the state is participating, not imposing. Linking the often separate literature on social capital, on identity, ethnic conflicts and resolution, on symbolic politics and historical reconciliation, the article develops a framework for inter-community trust-building research.

The paper aims at understanding trust-building processes between otherwise divided groups, particularly in the context of post-communist states all consolidating their independence through (re)building national identity of the majority group. Their nationalizing policies collide with the identity of minority groups; national heroes of the former often happen to represent executioners for the latter, and vice versa. How to manage these « indivisible territories » (Toft 2003) in order to integrate the communities for the heterogeneous societies to function and survive?

Observing Eastern Europe where hostilities between groups are embedded in past grievances (Jedlicki 1999), I pose that the rapprochement of collective memories, through a dialogue on common history, the use of inclusive symbols and reconciliation events, is constitutive of the trust-building process. Contrary to the authors who pay attention to horizontal trust between individuals or to vertical trust in institutions, I propose to look into inter-group interactions and the possibility of constructing it from below, in the context of weak states or states engaged in building national unity (excluding minorities).

Coping with All in One: Executioners, Heroes and Victims

Many countries continue to celebrate May 9, but there have been debates about the meaning of this day and how it should be marked. “Liberation-occupation” dichotomy regarding the presence of the Red Army in the Baltics and in Ukraine during and after the Second World War, are most publicized1. In Ukraine, the debate has focused on the division between veterans of the nationalist militias (UPA), which fought against the Soviets in western parts of the country, and veterans of the Soviet Army. In Soviet times, the militias were harshly punished after the war. Western Ukraine was occupied by the Red Army in 1939, and there the brutalities of the Soviet regime during and after the War have not been forgotten. For the east of the country, the term “occupation” is associated exclusively with the Nazi regime and the term

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1 The following description of conflicts is paraphrasing related electronic press articles from Euro Topics (www.eurotopics.net) and Eurozine (www.eurozine.com).
“liberation” with the Red Army. Western Ukraine sees itself as a victim of both the Nazis and the Soviets and situational collaboration with the Nazis is considered to have been the price for national independence. Most eastern Ukrainians see their past differently: they fought alongside the Russians and hence contributed to the victory over fascism.

In this context, the establishment of the Museum of Soviet Occupation in Kiev, similar to the one in Estonia and Georgia, is controversial. In response to the state-nation-building policies, in September 16, 2007 in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea (eastern Ukraine), an anti-UPA monument has been erected. The monument’s inscription says: “to the soviet citizens killed by the Nazi collaborators, members of OUN-UPA”. It is placed in a region where UPA was absent and were the nationalist ideology was rather minimal and thus can be interpreted as a counter-monument, part of what journalists now call “war of monuments”.

In Estonia, one relic of the Soviet era was the so-called bronze statue: monument of a Soviet soldier erected in the centre of Tallinn in 1947. After Estonia became independent, increasing number of the Russian minority began laying flowers at the statue every year on 9 May, Soviet Victory Day. For a long time this did not particularly bother anyone, but in May 2006 the prime minister declared that the monument symbolised the occupation of the country and should therefore be removed. When the bronze statue was taken to a cemetery, riots against dismantling the Bronze Soldier Monument broke out in Tallinn. Over 1000 people were detained and a Russian citizen died of a knife wound. The local Russians struggle for symbolic recognition, for their right to be represented in the landscape of memory. The problem is that their symbols have been completely devalued with the collapse of the Soviet Union and contradict the new narrative of national history.

The village of Golgapia, at the far end of north-eastern Poland in the Masuria region, manage its symbolic public space in an interesting and intriguing manner. Golgapia’s local history is one of shifting borders and changing populations. Presently inhabited mainly by Poles, its population was composed of Germans (especially while part of Prussia), Jews and Poles. Following a sociological research conducted by Łukowski (2002:241-243), local authorities refuse to appropriate to the Polish group alone the village’s landscape. On the contrary, they emphasize the diversity of cultures and the complexity of local history through keeping and erecting a diversity of memorials and symbols.

Three monuments retain our attention. (1) In 1992, an obelisk “to the memory of sixteen generations of German inhabitants who lived, worked and created in the city of Golgapia” (inscription in German) was put in place. For the present Polish inhabitants, the memorial reflects local history and is part of their local identification (Łukowski 2002:241). (2) In 2002, through a joint initiative with the descendants of Golgapia Jews, a monument is erected “to the memory of the members of the Jewish community of Golgapia, victims of Nazism in the years 1933-1945” with the inscription in Polish, Hebrew and German. (3) Simultaneously, located in the centre of the city, on the Victory Place, is the Monument to the Brotherhood in Arms from 1970. Instead of opting for a concrete set of national symbols, the locality chose to manage its symbolic public space by presenting the totality of its indivisible history. Eliminating the now


3 Studied in detail by Evans (2006), the corresponding Latvian “Museum of Nazi and Soviet Occupations” tries, on the contrary, to show both as enemies and at the same time to explain the context of Latvian citizens joining either the Nazis or the Red Army. By rejecting the whole soviet experience, however, the “Museum says little positive about either the Russian speaking minority or the experience of pro-communist Latvians who lived and built their careers in the system” (Evans 2006:321).
“politically incorrect” memorial and renaming the topographic name of the Place would contradict the chosen option. Goldapia is an example of the socially constructed “small homelands”.

Although rarely observed and studied, similar integrative mechanisms and initiatives can be detected through out the region. The present paper tries to fill the gap turning the attention from conflict per se to the processes attenuating it. The purpose is to explore the social science literature looking for directions which would allow us to think about the possibility of integration and trust in divided societies and about the processes conducive to it. In the first section I present the research context and the gap to be filled in. I then turn to the review of the literature from a variety of sub-disciplines, from which I borrow a set of concepts and ideas to construct an inter-community trust-building research framework. The following section presents three cases of integrative initiatives, taken from the sensitive, although non violent, relations between Poles, Jews, Ukrainians and Germans in Poland. It is argued that trust relations between otherwise hostile communities are built through mutual reimagining of myths constitutive of each group’s identity and the transformation of the associated symbolic landscapes. It is also argued that these processes are successful if they are conducted “from below” with the state participating, but not imposing.

**Heterogeneity, Trust and History: Research Context**

Most contemporary literature on democracy and democratization associates “good democratic governance” with “good civil society” and vibrant/robust social capital. Without social cohesion, that is stability, inter-group cooperation, common identity and a sense of belonging, democratic institutions have hard time to work properly. At the same time, most studies concord that there is a negative relation between social capital and heterogeneous societies (Hooghe 2007). The common assumption is that trust in fellow citizens, which with reciprocity and closed networks forms social capital, is based on resemblance. Resemblance in turn is tied to cultural homogeneity. In the context of cultural diversity, institutions are thus said to provide the necessary integrative element. In what follows, I suggest that we should pay more attention to trust-building between communities as opposed, or rather complementary, to trust between individuals and trust in institutions. Furthermore, it is advanced that inter-community trust-building is based on reputation and stereotypes built on past events.

When arguing for the stability of democratic political arrangements, “institutional engineers” concentrate on structures and institutions. Alternatively, philosophers and sociologists emphasize the necessity of trust (Inglehart 1999, Hardin 2002) and of the “appropriate patterns of social life” (Macedo 1996, Fukuyama 1995). The salutary function of trust between individual-citizens (Luhmann in Gambetta eds. 1988, Sztompka 1996) is explained in terms of social capital (Putnam 1993), of commodity (Petit 1995) or of resource (Sztompka 1996, Offe 1999, Good and Dasgupta in Gambetta eds. 1988). Trust relations, understood as the faith in the good intentions of our co-citizens or at least the believe that they are “not ill-disposed” towards us (Weinstock 1999, Sztompka 1996), are beneficial even if - by definition - risky (Baier 1994, Tilly 2005).

In modern, geographically stretched societies, horizontal trust, i.e. trust between all citizens, is impossible and thus replaced by accountable democratic institutions (Dunn in Gambetta eds. 1988, Sztompka 1996, Offe 1999, Fukuyama 1995). In the context of deficient trust on the individual level, it is necessary to implement institutions and laws to protect and
balance the uncertainty of the intentions of the “other”. Authors turn their attention to the study of the citizens’ vertical relations of (mis)trust in state institutions (Braithewaite and Levi eds. 1998). In divided societies, the role of structures is seen as particularly important and necessary. Hooghe suggests that the negative relation between social capital – and trust by the same token - and heterogeneity is caused by segregation rather than by the diversity as such. This mirrors Petersen’s “resentment” in ethnic conflicts caused by structural frameworks, such as social mobility, linguistic and educational constraints or (perceived as) unjust distribution of power between the groups (2002). Hooghe argues that modifying institutional constraints to groups by adopting politics of recognition and minority rights may reduce segregation and resentment opening up the possibility of developing social capital.

Authors such as Offe (1999) or Williams (1998) remark however that political structures are insufficient, incomplete, ambiguous and contested. They recommend to the “institutional designers” not to ignore trust, this “precious and fragile commodity” (Petitt 1995:225) inherent to all efficient societies. Trust makes possible original solutions to conflicting interests and values (on trust and creativity, see Offe 1999). Farther, inter-community trust is important if we consider that individuals often suffer prejudice as members of a stigmatized and marginalized group. There is a gap to be filled in: inter-community trust.

I assume that, similarly to the attribution of trust to individuals following our knowledge of the persons and/or following their reputation (past actions, Hardin 2002), the attribution of trust to groups follows the group’s reputation and the stereotypes associated with it (Hooghe 2007:716). Stereotypes are based however on generalizations “from the past to the future” and are thus limited or deterministic. Instead, trust involves the knowledge and understanding of the present and past injustices as perceived by the groups. 4.  A propos Ross remarks that the goal … is to… allow the groups not to feel threatened by differences in how they see the world. Paradoxically, doing this successfully often requires that these differences be acknowledged and explored rather than swept under the rug… When acknowledgment occurs, more inclusive, less threatening, and partially overlapping narratives and identities can arise from mutual listening and acknowledgment, and a politics that emphasizes possible benefits arising from respect and cooperation develops (2007:47).

Taking into account diverging perspectives serves the integration of difference (Rauschenbah 2000). Bridging conflicting collective memories in order to modify stereotypes contribute to generate trust relations. Bazin argues that “even if reconciliation looks into the past, it is a process fundamentally turned to the future because it has the ambition to allow the elaboration of a common vision of the common future or of a future based on common interest” (2000:44).

The link between inter-community trust and history sounds familiar to those acquainted with international relations literature, particularly with the social-psychological approach to conflict resolution and reconciliation (e.g. Kelman 2004). Indeed, although strategic studies privilege rational and instrumental accounts of identity conflicts, some authors consider affective elements as constitutive of inter- and intra-societal wars. Recent work by Kaufman on symbolic politics (2001), Ross on the role of culture (2007), Crains and Roe et al. on collective memories (2003) and Petersen on hate, fear and resentment resulting from historical myths (2002) are some examples.

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4 Collective memory literature has been included into trust-building by Rothstein (2000), although the memory of past events is integrated here into vertical relations of trust granted by citizens to institutions (trustworthiness of institutions based on their past performance).
Kaufman follows Murray Edelman in affirming that myths (in anthropology, “collective memories” in sociology, Crains and Roe et al. 2003:9) and symbols are central to understanding ethnicity (Kaufman 2001:16); they maintain the cohesion of the group (Crains and Roe et al. 2003:11). Ethnic conflicts are thus a result of “each side’s goals, and expectations about the other, [which] came from hostile interpretations of history encoded in each group’s myth-symbol complex” (Kaufman 2001:20). The latter are “[history] narratives as collective memories” (Ross 2007:34) and take root in the concrete spaces, gestures, images and objects (Nora’s “lieux de mémoire”). Kaufman argues that for the conflict to emerge, myths justifying ethnic hostility and providing source to ethnic fears have to be present. These myths can constitute a powerful resource for ethnic leaders, for group cohesion and for group mobilization against the “other”. Inversely, if a group’s myth-symbol complex encourages cooperation, the conflict won’t arise (Kaufman 2001:39). Similarly, Petersen finds that resentment provides the best prediction of conflict emergence in Eastern Europe (Petersen 2002:2). Resentment between groups can be based, among other status related indicators, on disregarded or hostile “symbols such as street names” (Petersen 2002:42) - competing and/or unacknowledged myth-symbol complexes – which affect individuals’/group’s self-esteem (on the role of high esteem, Petersen 2002:45-48, Ross 2007:37). Therefore, in an effort of bringing groups together, ethnic conflict prevention has to take into account the underestimated peacebuilding (Kaufman 2001:40), that is “changing the hostile myths and attitudes in the long run” (Kaufman 2001:215, also Crains and Roe eds. 2003:176-180).

However, most of this literature is interested in the pre-agreement stage of intense conflict resolution: “getting to the negotiation table” and “making a deal” for the violence to come to an end. It is also concerned with mechanisms one can put in place “from above” to facilitate problem-solving workshops as the track II negotiations “carried out by elites having access to top leaders” (Kaufman 2006:208). My study is mainly concerned with heterogeneity in democracies and proposes an inter-community trust-building research framework which will draw some insights from the mechanisms found for immediate conflict resolution but which pays attention to the necessary from below initiatives.

**Hints for the Integration of Diversity: Muddling Through Social Science Debates**

Through establishing connections between the often separate literatures, this section offers research directions for inter-community trust-building. It addresses the questions of if these processes are possible, how and by whom are they undertaken, and ends with an analysis framework – exemplified with case studies in the section that follows.

**On the Possibility**

Two conceptions of identity are usually opposed in the literature: primordialists consider identity as given and hardly mutable, even if Geertz and Shils talk about the perception of its primordiality and Van Evera says identity is not a genetic condition but rather a social one (Hale 2004:459-460); and instrumentalists such as Laitin who believe that shifting identity is possible, reasonable and instrumental to individual’s socio-economic material interests (Gilbert 2000:23-26). The latter group sustain that individuals weigh the (dis)advantages of group membership consciously and that for practical reasons (such as job opportunities) it would be rational to abandon their mother tongue and cultural practices. The conflict evolve thus around the relative
difficulty, not the possibility, of transforming identity. Safran (2004:2) remarks that “minorities do not give up their linguistic heritage without a fight, even if the payoff is significant”. It is by now a widely accepted assumption however that identities are social constructions; they are “situational” and “ever changing” (Hale 2004:466; Young 2002; Máiz and Requejo 2005:2-5; May et al. 2004:9). I propose to follow the constructivist perspective, which draws upon both primordialism and instrumentalism (Hempel 2004): identities are constructed and transformed through long-lasting cultural, historical, and/or political processes that are based in large measure on the emotional and symbolic power of ethnic bonds (Kaufman 2001; Ross 2007).

Over time identity groups are subject to transformations. Constitutive elements of an ethnic identity undergo mutations: culture, language, accounts of history, traditions, rites modify in response to external stimuli. The rapprochement of otherwise hostile communities is thus a possibility; the possibility of trust-building as proposed above is thus confirmed in the literature on identity. It is a process modifying the perception of the division between “us” and “them”. Once this possibility is established, we turn to the question “how”.

**On the “How To” Process**

In addition to the emergence of a set of literature on truth commissions and reconciliation in South Africa, Latin America and the Balkans, there is a debate in sociology, political philosophy and psychology on the political function of forgiveness and of historical reconciliation processes (see for example Labelle, Antonius and Leroux eds. 2005, Lefranc ed. 2002, Derrida 1999, Ricoeur 2000). Following Crains and Roe et al. (2003:32), two views emerge concerning the need for remembering. On the one hand, following the suggestion by Devine-Wright (1999), all conflicting memories should be “forgotten” and new constructions should be put in place. On the other hand, for the reconciliation to occur the need for preventing forgetting is underlined. I would like to stress an intermediary way between “tabula rasa” and “catharsis”: appease conflicting memories through myths transformative processes.

The literature on post-conflict reconciliation offers some insights regarding the mechanisms of the process. Lederach (1999) considers four elements constitutive of reconciliation: truth, mercy, justice and peace. Long and Brecke (2003:28-31) identify similar features: truth-telling and apology for the harm done; forgiveness as a *sine qua non*; partial justice as a compromise. Ross (2004) talks about apology and forgiveness, followed by reparations. However, he finds these elements rarely possible in the heat of the conflict and as an alternative considers acknowledgement of the “other’s sufferings” as a necessary second best. Moreover, Ross puts forward the necessity for reconciliation events such as ritual and symbolic actions, cultural performances showing the parties consider the dispute over. In their concluding remarks, Crains and Roe et al. establish a threefold process for memory reconciliation: “(1) accepting responsibility for past actions of one’s own community; (2) seeking and granting intergroup forgiveness; and (3) appropriating the history of the other community to learn from its experiences” (2003:180). Taking stock from a different set of authors, I will discuss these mechanisms and nuance some items (necessity for forgiveness; truth-telling).

**Politics of forgiveness: legitimizing the “other” story**

Following Hannah Arendt (1958), to recognize collective responsibility for inflicted harms breaks the vicious circle of repetitive cycles of vengeance. Apologies express respect for the victims’ feelings (Funk-Unrau 2004, also Tavuchis 1991) and offer legitimacy for their
interpretation of the past events (Schaap 2005:104). It opens a space for new relations. Conjointly, the reconciliation process needs the willingness to forgive because, as argued by Charles Taylor, “any parties to public debate that remain fixed in the role of victim will forever be engaged in what can at best amount to a preliminary operation, and can never be part of the actual creation of mutual trust and commitment” (1998:155). The willingness to forgive is sufficient, as forgiveness itself is function of the actions undertaken in the process; forgiveness can remain just a possibility for the trust-building (reconciliation) process to go on in a constructive way (see Schaap 2005:ch.7). The force of apology is thus in redirecting attention to actions – actions aiming at getting to know and eventually understand divergent interpretations of the common past (Nobles 2003:12-13).

**Nation-building and myths: bringing shared-identity-building in**

Since “each side in the conflict will tell a story that justifies its own violence and delegitimizes that of the other side” (Biggar et al. 2003:309), the reinterpretation of history conducive to integrating myths is needed. As Long and Brecke (2003) put it, there is a need for a redefinition of what it means to be a member of an identity group. As far there is little theoretical input on the management of common past in divided societies. Interesting research directions can be found through in the writings on the construction of national identities in the post-soviet space, for example by Schöpflin (2000), and in Smith’s historic ethno-symbolism (1999).

Smith explains the strength of the bonds between members of a nation through its myths, memory, traditions and symbols, which are constantly rediscovered and re-interpreted. Myths are narrations of a community’s history by the community itself. They are not historical truth. They are interpretations, not invented fictions, because they have to relate to facts and to collective memories (“responsiveness”, Schöpflin 2000:87). Myths constitute community’s integrative elements because they create a sense of belonging and pride. They account for “our” territory, “our” Golden Age, for the causes of a nation’s decline and victimization. Myths determine the borders of “us” versus “them”, justify collective claims and mobilize collective action. However, both Smith and Schöpflin regard myths as flexible. Nations - social constructions and imagined communities - are not static entities but rather imbued with fluidities and change. Myths adapt to the needs of the moment, to an external threat, and to structural changes. In fact, “different myths receive emphasis at different times to cope with different challenges” (Schöpflin, 2000:98; also Parekh 2001:203 and Renan’s “collective amnesia”, 1992:41-42).

Since “the imaginative use of symbols, and myths, and of monuments, commemorations, and performances… [are] all directed towards nurturing some form of identity” (Osborne 2001:3), and since the role of politicians, priests, linguists, historians and other public figures is to reinforce the sense of ethnicity, it should be possible to reinterpret and attenuate hostile stories, and to put instead emphasis on those that bear witness to common peaceful past; to contribute to trust-building and to the reinforcement of integrative elements. As Wieviorka puts it: “cultural differences are not only reproduced, they are in constant process of being produced which means that fragmentation and recomposition are a permanent probability” (1998:881). Since myths have to be responsive to collective memories, we cannot invent them. Reinterpretation is about knowing and understanding, rather than about making and inventing. This process should thus conduct to the building of a shared identification, complementary to
and inclusive of cultural diversity rather than to a unified whole (through assimilation or acculturation processes).

**Landscapes: enacting symbolic public spaces “together”**

Symbols are tied to myths and serve to standardize them by forming a communication network, a language without words (Schöpflin 2000:81). Monuments, museums, graves, memorial stones, topographic names, flags and other play a unique role in the creation and reimagining of collective identities. Symbols bring figures from the past to the present putting forward specific myths and their protagonists as present-day heroes. These often conflict with memories of other groups for whom the presumed hero was an oppressor. Observing the objects of commemoration and even the location of commemorations is very informative of the ongoing identity-building (Forest and Johnson 2002, Forest, Johnson and Till 2003, Hoelscher and Alderman 2004). Symbols serve to maintain a certain vision of the world and thus can integrate or divide farther. As illustrated in the first section of the article, the use of symbolic public spaces is subject to heated debates and tension in Central Eastern Europe where, following the fall of the Soviet yoke, each nation and ethnic group is (re)discovering its symbols, usually mutually exclusive. How to manage these “indivisible territories” (Toft 2003)?

Similarly to the reimagination of integrative myths, symbols can take integrative forms. After all, “places, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used, and transformed in relation to practice” (Tilley 1994:33); “the landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it” (Bender 1993:3). Schöpflin sustains that it is not necessary for symbols to be interpreted in an identical way by all groups; what is important is for the symbol to be rallying (2000:81-82). Alternatively, one can think of public spaces where different symbols coexist to form a whole. This would be the spirit acclaimed by Rauschenbach who argues for inclusive account of different perspectives instead one integrative account (2000:24). The case of the village of Gołdapia mentioned in the beginning is one such example: a landscape reflecting the complexity of local history through the preservation of divergent symbols (“small homelands” in Łukowski 2002), instead of the public space be appropriated by one group’s memory. In his concluding remarks, Ross writes that “inclusion in the symbolic landscape offers legitimacy…[and] is a powerful expression of societal inclusion that communicates a mutuality and shared stake in society. It renders the previously unseen seen, gives voice to those once voiceless, and can offer powerful messages to young people and help to reshape relations between groups” (Ross 2007:325).

**On the “Who” Question of Agency**

State-(nation)-building and responsiveness: taking “from below actors” seriously

When studying identity-building processes most authors turn to an analysis of state policies. This is quite apparent in the recent literature on state-building in the post-communist/soviet space. There is also an abundant work in political philosophy on “national solidarity” or political/civic identity as necessary for the modern state’s workings. John Stuart Mill emphasized the need of some form of cohesion/homogeneity for liberal democracy to function. In divided societies thus some sort of non-ethnic cohesion is argued for in terms of solidarity, common political identification and trust (see for example Taylor 1998, Weinstock 1999, Parekh 2000, Gilbert 2000, Gurpreet 2002). These political communities are socially constructed, maintained and reinforced through state policies, which aim is to assure state
legitimacy and efficiency. Nora (1996) believed that commemorations were performed to make up for a lack of unity within societies (see also Osborne 2001:7). Appealing to common sentiments and/or interests, states involve themselves in historical politics and commit to a particular interpretation of history in textbooks or in their choice of memorials. Kymlicka talks about the “myth of the neutrality of the state” (Kymlicka and Opalski eds. 2001).

In East European states, notably in Poland, a public debate is carried on surrounding the state proposal to introduce classes on national patriotism to school curricula\(^5\). From the public polemics between historians, politicians and citizens (as expressed in press opinion articles), two camps emerge: for the involvement of the state and against historical politics conducted by the state\(^6\). I suggest that the question is misleading. Since the state is not neutral, in divided societies the question should concern the process of how to get to the promotion of one myth over another, instead of one concerning what should be taught. School curricula should reflect different perspectives and eventually their integration.

Thus, states (might) use myths instrumentally, in function of their current needs. This was the case of the Piast myth used by Polish communist government as opposed to the Jagellon myth used after 1989. The former refers to the Piast dynasty reigning from 966 to 1370 within the current Polish borders and promotes the “Poland for Poles” idea (Davies 1997:152). It served the Polish communist state to justify country’s move to the west after the Second World War and the massive expulsion of Germans (agreed by Allies in Potsdam; Włodarczyk 2002). The latter refers to the Jagellon dynasty (1386-1572) under which Poland, within territories farther to the east including parts of present-day Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, was a tolerant multinational state\(^7\).

Putting forward of the multicultural inclusive myth was not an overnight decision however. The modification, or rather the synthesis of the Piast and Jagellon myths, took place some time before and was orchestrated by non-governmental initiatives. It was in the 1950s within Kultura circles, a Polish historical review published in France that the process was undertaken (Włodarczyk 2002). Over the years, the myths transformation culminated in a new conception of the Polish state: a harmonious multicultural society (Jagellon) within borders (re)established after the War (Piast). This reimagined myth is helpful in Poland’s present eastern foreign policies (no revisionist claims) and in politics of inclusive citizenship. The use of the myth and state policies based on it are no guarantee of integration and trust: after all Jagellon Poland is not pictured as a “tolerant multicultural state” by groups of Ukrainians, Jews or Belorussians. The limited results of “from above” integrative politics are most apparent in the case of Ukraine where state’s historical politics aiming at the integration of east and west – initiatives to reconcile the UPA and Red Army veterans, the renaming of Victory Day into Memory Day-, receive a counter-response “from below” consisting in writing alternative regional histories (Rogers 2006) and putting in place counter-monuments (above).

The problem is in the instrumental “from above” choice of myths from the repertoire. It does not result from an exchange of diverging interpretations. Such an approach tends to obscure differences instead of discovering and understanding them. It tends to impose one vision over another and in so doing to maintain hostile stereotypes. Rather, trust-building is

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6 See Klaus Bachmann, “Walka z wiatrakami” (Struggling With Wind Mills) in Gazeta wyborcza, September 14, 2006, and in September 16, 2006 edition, “Czy państwo ma rzędzić historią” (Should the State Govern History?).
7 Note that for Ukrainians this period is instead associated with expansionist Poles.
about a parallel reimagining process at the societal level. After all, Smyth’s and Schöpflin’s “myths controller” are politicians but equally priests, writers, historians, and linguists. Citing Winter and Sivan (1999), Evans suggests that the reformulation of narratives is a product of interconnected processes operating at the state-level and within the society; after all collective remembrance is a product of people, coming bottom up (2006:325). He then mentions that dissident movements in Eastern Europe all called for history from below because of psychological impact of an imposed official history that bore no resemblance to what people themselves remembered (Vaclav Havel’s letter to Husak in Evans 2006:329). The dichotomy between official and vernacular (from below) forms of memory is also undermined by Forest, Johnson and Till (2004): “mutual interactions among multiple publics and elites… combine to form a complex pastiche of public memory…[through the] participation in the process of memory re-formation” (p.358); “public memory is a process rather than material object or outcome” (p.374).

Wrapping up all the above, I develop the following inter-community trust-building research framework which might be useful while observing and analyzing responses to and the management of history-based tensions.

### Inter-Community Trust-Building Research Framework

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hostility (re)source</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Prevention/Management</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History and symbols</td>
<td>Competing collective memories resulting in hate/resentment/mistrust between groups</td>
<td>From above (picking up from below initiatives)</td>
<td>-State historical politics (curricula, museums, topographic names, etc.); -recognition of difference; -excuses; -official discourses/texts; -inclusive citizenship</td>
<td>-State participation -sanction of and support for the process</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contested symbolic public spaces</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Potential violent conflict</td>
<td>From below</td>
<td>-excuses/forgiveness; -competing perspectives uncovered; -reimagined collective memories; -textbooks re-written; -history competitions, seminars; -public debates; -set of integrative myths and symbols</td>
<td>-societal participation -knowing and understanding different perspectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of trust and social cohesion for the political community to function</td>
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**Putting It All Together: Inter-Community Trust-Building in Action**

Although minority groups represent a small fraction of the total Polish population, studying their interaction with the majority and the state institutions sheds a great deal of light on the political processes of identity transformation. *Because* these are tiny groups, with no real economic or mass mobilization leverage, the importance of symbolic politics in inter-ethnic
relations is clear. As Ross put it, the latter is much harder to observe in the heat of a real conflict when physical security fears “hide” the underlying fears of group extinction, its culture, including its sacred icons and sites (2007:37).

**Jedwabne: Anti-Semitism or Anti-Sovietism**

On July 10, 1941 in Jedwabne, Poland, a group of Poles circled Jewish residents of the village, hit them with wooden sticks while dragging them across the village, before setting them on fire. There is no doubt as to the participation of Poles in this terrible execution. The controversy arises regarding the interpretation and explanation of the massacre in the Jewish versus the Polish historiographies, and thus their respective myths constructions. For the former, the killing reflects general Polish attitude towards Jews; for the latter, it has to do with the collaboration of these particular Jews in the occupation of the region by the Soviets.

The twentieth century history of Polish-Jewish relations is subject to tensions as Poles interpret it through the stereotype of “communist Jew” – heritage of an instrumental use of the Jewish question by the communist government - , and Jews through the stereotype of “anti-Semite Pole” (see Wróbel 1997). Consider for example the explanation provided in a Polish textbook by Roszkowski for the 1946 Kielce pogrom: it is placed in the context of the communist power consolidation when the communists were discrediting the Polish resistance (AK) by associating it with anti-Semitism (see Blatman 1997:36). On the other side, the Jewish account of the history of Poland leaves out the context of the traumatism of Polish partitions, of the Nazi and the Soviet occupations, to such an extent that young people in Israel wonder “how humans can live in Poland”

Since the publication of a highly contested book by Jan Gross *The Neighbors*, in 2000, we observe the beginning of a new process. Although highly controversial, I suggest it is part of a trust-building process. The publication relates Jedwabne events from an anti-Polish perspective - as perceived by the Poles – and marks the beginning of a heated public debate. Numerous press articles, conferences, radio and TV programmes addressed the questions of: the number of victims which is estimated by Gross to 600 and by the Polish National Institute for Memory to 300; the role of the Nazis who have just occupied this zone after the Soviets have retreated; the collaboration of the Jews in the previous Soviet occupation of the zone; the status of executioners, were they dissenters or simple Polish citizens; the occurrence of similar acts, was it a unique event or a generalized hostility (Tymowski 2002).

Although extremely controversial, by making the subject public and by opposing the official version of the facts, the book unleashed an unprecedented debate concerning common but conflicting past. One of the consequences was the apologies presented by the Polish Catholic Church first and only then by President Kwaśniewski in May and June 2001, respectively. These apologies resulted from the exhibit of diverging memories and from “from below” debates. They sanctioned farther reconciliation process even if the results of a 2002 survey in Poland revealing that the Jewish minority, which accounts for 0,0028% of the Polish population, is considered the most threatening minority group to the Polish state and to the Poles (!), jumping

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10 Uhlig Dominik, “Polski antysemityzm ma się dobrze” (Polish Antisemitism is well), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 28, 2005, [http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj](http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj)
from an 11% to 14% of Poles feeling threatened between 1992 and 2002 (mostly because of Gross’ book). As history professor Jan Grabowski noticed, the recognition of inflicted suffering legitimized the victims’ perspective and opened up a new space for the Polish historiography. The open confrontation allows to discover and to gain knowledge of divergent interpretations. This does not imply integration, but the process of trust-building is possible only if the perspectives are all “on the table”.

Some indicators of the ongoing process are apparent. The American Jewish Committee officially denounced the often used expression of “Polish concentration camps”, specifying that they were Nazis camps installed on the territory of occupied Poland. In the Polish press, one can read opinion articles by Polish Jews calling for breaking with old stereotypes. A university students’ initiative results each year in student exchanges between Israel and Poland and in joint participation in the annual March of the Living in Auschwitz. In so doing, Polish and Jewish young people “re-appropriate” this memory place together. An ONG, Centre for Civic Education (CCE), initiated an educational project which brings Holocaust survivors to primary schools to tell their story. Another constructive indicator of the trust-building process is the introduction in 2005 of a textbook on the history of the Polish Jews into the school programme. The textbook is the result of a combined work by Polish and Jewish historians sponsored by the American-Polish-Israel Foundation Shalom, Polish Ministry of Education, Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education and Remembrance and Research. It is complementary to the history of Poland textbook; presented “on the side”, not yet as an integrated part of the whole. Although controversies surrounding the presentation of the facts in the publication are open-ended, the debate has been transformed for the divergent interpretations are now recognized and actions are undertaken. These actions are mostly “from below” initiatives with the state responding to the public opinion and participating in the process through contributing, for example, to the funding of the Polish Jews Museum in Warsaw and the Galicia Jews Museum in Krakow. CCE’s programs are partially funded by the state, but as the author was told by one of the project managers, Marianna Hajdukiewicz, this funding is subject to revision each time the government coalition changes; depending on the history politics embraced.

**Pawlokoma: UPA-AK Controversy**

Following Bogumiła Berdychowska, history is the only source of conflict between Poles and Ukrainians. Between 1941 and 1944, the eastern part of Poland, of which Volhynia region inhabited mostly by Ukrainians, has been occupied by the Nazis and was playground for four competing forces: the III Reich, USRR, Polish Resistance Army (AK) and the Ukrainian nationalist movement (UPA-OUN). The Poles fought against the Nazis while Ukrainians aspired to independence with German help. As enemies, Poles and Ukrainians engaged in systematic

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attacks and exterminations (*Polska-Ukraina* 2003:64). Violent incidents such as massive executions, village and monument destructions, were current, resulting in 70-100 thousands Poles and some 30 thousands Ukrainians killed, only between February 1943 and July 1944 (Chałubczak and Browarek 2000:87, *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie* 2004). After the War, Polish communists proceeded with homogenization policies and targeted particularly the Ukrainian resistance to the Polish state in the east. In 1947, Vistula Action forced Ukrainians to leave “en masse” their homes to be installed in the “recovered” from Germany western territories of Poland. The communist propaganda, disseminated in school curricula, presented Ukrainians as natural enemies of the Poles, “traitors” or “fascists” (Kiesielowska-Lipman 2002:139).

The interpretation of history varies. The account of Pawlokoma events by the Polish historian Zdzisław Konieczny versus the Ukrainian historian (in Canada), Petro Potichny, is one example. In March 1945, AK commits a massacre in the village of Pawlokoma (in Poland, some 40km from the present Ukrainian border). Konieczny sustains that AK did not kill children and women, “only” some 150 men and that the massacre was retaliation for previous assault of UPA on Poles. Potichny accounts for over 365 dead and presents the event in a larger context of the general Polish attitude towards Ukrainians during the Nazi occupation\(^\text{16}\). Justifications diverge and the tensions amount when the question of commemorations and enacting landscapes emerges. Such tensions were current in eastern Poland in the 1990s when the Ukrainian minority was illegally erecting UPA memorial stones (Malikowski in Szczepański ed. 1997:210-213).

When looking deeper into relations between Poles and Ukrainians, some initiatives of rapprochement surface. In the beginning of the 1990s, Ukrainians in Poland started erecting monuments commemorating the UPA. After numerous confrontations, there is now a common commission for symbolic public spaces which reached a compromise on the inscriptions allowed on UPA memorials (from now on: “dead for Ukrainian freedom” without mentioning UPA military grades and other details). At the very local level, initiatives for common remembrance have been detected by NGOs and since then sponsored: a primary school history teacher took the initiative to expose the children to the regional history taught from different perspectives; a Catholic priest in Przemysl started fund raising in his parish in order to restore Orthodox church items and the Orthodox cemetery. A number of seminars have been organized between Polish and Ukrainian historians, each ending in a bilingual publication of documents and debates (*Polska-Ukraina* 2003). The first seminar was initiated by a non-governmental research centre KARTA, editing a historical review (Traba 2001:350). Interrupted for funding reasons, the seminars resumed in 1996 following a joint - and quite non-expected - initiative of the Association of AK Soldiers and the Organization of Ukrainians in Poland. These initiatives “from below” resulted few years later in official gestures: in 2002 the President Kwaśniewski condemned the Vistula Action; in May 2006 Presidents Kaczyński and Youshchenko inaugurated together a memorial in Pawlokoma.

However, trust-building processes encounter obstacles when the state chooses to sweep under the rug some facts and interpretations. A heated debate and anti-Ukrainian sentiments resurfaced when the Polish state ignored the 65\(^\text{th}\) anniversary of the Volhynia massacres where thousands of Poles – women and children included – were killed by the UPA. The trust-building process was frustrated because Poles felt there was lack of reciprocity: they did acknowledge the sufferings of Ukrainians but the victims were on both sides. The lack of apologies coming from the Ukrainian state together with the Polish state silence took the reconciliation processes few steps backward. The reason for the Polish state to act in that sort was not to undermine Ukrainian

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
already difficult state-(nation)-building process. On the diplomatic level, Poland is “with” Ukraine in her EU aspirations and against “Russian imperialism”.

The trust-building process is tumultuous, long and prone to stalemates but it may have positive results, similar to the reconciliation process between Poles and Germans – although, conflicts of values and interests should be consider never-ending (Crick 2002).

**Germans: Enemies of the Polish People? Not Quite After All**

The process of trust-building between Poles and Germans started in October 1965 when Evangelic Church of Germany issued a “Memorial” recognizing Polish sufferings. A month later, the Polish Catholic Church issued a letter “to German brothers in Christ” (Holzer 2000:73) offering forgiveness and demanding forgiveness in return (Rauschenbach 2000:25)\(^\text{17}\). Despite tense relations during the Cold War, with the signature of a Poland-RFA treaty recognizing Oder-Niesse border in 1970, some space for rapprochement is opened up. In a gesture of reconciliation, Chancellor Willy Brandt visited Warsaw where he knelt (Rauschenbach 2000:22). Moreover, a commission is established for the revision of history textbooks.

The idea of trust-building matured subsequently within the underground Solidarność movement in the 1980s, with Jozef Lipski publication *Two Homelands – Two Patriotisms* calling for reconciliation. It is thus no surprise for the new post-communist elites to promote the process and express their own grievances for the sufferings of the expelled Germans (for example, Bronisław Geremek in Bundestag in 1990, in Rauschenbach 2000:25). From the other side, German President Herzog participated in the 50\(^\text{th}\) anniversary of Warsaw Insurrection. These are signs of the willingness to see different perspectives and to understand divergent versions of the same history, but the process is not merely “from above” since numerous initiatives come “from below”.

In 1991 a Polish-German Young People Cooperation is put in place allowing 5300 teenagers to participate in exchanges in 1992; this number reached 75000 in 1995 and 130000 in 2000 (Tomala 2004:141). The exchanges are organized according to a number of activities of which exploration of common history is part. Another joint initiative, coming from the Körber Foundation in Germany, the KARTA Centre and the Stefan Batory Foundation in Poland, consists in organizing history contests at the secondary school level. The aim is to bring the students to do a research on the story of a person or a family from the now western part of Poland; a research which would lead the students on both sides of the border to reevaluate their “givens” and reflect upon the choices made by these inhabitants in a complex context of War. A compendium of the most interesting papers, published in 2003 (edited by Wancerz-Gluzy and Bucher-Dinç), is organized along three themes: “side by side”, “one against the other” and “together”. It is available in libraries across the country.

Between historians, the meetings were numerous. Since 1993, there is also a commission for solving tensions around, erected in the west, memorials for German soldiers combating during the First and the Second World Wars and exhibiting the symbols of iron crosses and Wehrmacht helmets (Suchoński in Halczak ed. 2006:147-155). Contested topographic names were also object of the commission’s work. To avoid names such as Hitlersee for Szczedrzyk village, a compromise was reached excluding the names imposed during the III Reich beginning from 1933. In contrast to the one-sided project by Erika Steinbach from the Federation of the Expelled, Germany (BdV) – who never accepted the boundary on Oder-Niesse - to create in Berlin a Centre Against Expulsions emphasizing the suffering of Germans with little regard for

\(^{17}\) In 2005 a memorial has been erected in Wroclaw to commemorate the beginning of this process.
the War context and for other victims of the same policies through out Europe (on the controversy, see for example Heimerl 2006), two local museums, one in Rinteln, Germany and one in Środa Śląska, Poland, organized an exposition on expulsions 1939-1949 presented in both localities. The idea was simple: to present the story of nine German expellees from Poland and of nine Polish expellees from Soviet Ukraine. Furthermore, a bilingual book on the exposition has been published18. Another project is discussed to create a Museum of Western Territories in Wroclaw which would present the story of the region through the prism of various groups settled in the region voluntary or by force after the War: the Polish survivors of gulags, survivors of the concentration camps, the massacre in Volhynia, Ukrainians, Lemks and Roma settled here during the Vistula Action, expelled Jews and Germans and those who are still in the region. The Museum is a joint initiative “from below” and is supported by minority groups, of which the German and the Ukrainian organizations are part19.

One measure of the extent to which these initiatives have positive outcomes for establishing trust relations between the two groups is the 2002 survey when compared to the 1992 one20: the perception of Germans as hostile to the Polish interests and people dropped from 26% to 10%.

Again the process of building trust is frustrated each time there is ambiguity as to the position of the governments. As Leszek Kołakowski says, the project of the Berlin Centre Against Expulsions where the suffering of Germans would be put forward in order to construct a victimization myth balancing the German sentiment of culpability21, is a deliberate threat to the Polish-German reconciliation22. It is so because Erika Steinbach is a Christian-Democrat member of Parliament supported by politicians from CDU/CSU and also by politicians such as the powerful Prime Minister of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber23. The present Chancellor, Angela Merkel, never opposed the project and in July (?) 2008 gave her “o.k.” although she is reluctant as to Mrs. Steinbach to be at the head of the Centre. The approval for the project together with the place BdV occupies on the political arena and its continuous demands for reparations for the expellees from Poland – never officially opposed by Germany – are reviving frustrations and anger among Poles.

**Conclusion**

Following our review of different social science sub-fields, I argued for an inter-community trust-building which would include affective historical elements into the analysis framework and into the practice. The paper is a contribution to the debates surrounding heterogeneous democracies: the need for vertical trust in institutions is complemented by

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20 Uhlig Dominik, “Polski antysemityzm ma się dobrze”, op.cit.
22 Cited by Perret, ibid.
23 “Sojusznik pani Steinbach” (Mrs. Steinbach’s ally), Rzeczpospolita, May 16, 2005.
horizontal trust between groups; memory politics are introduced into debates on social capital. The “how to do” question is explored in the paper and a research framework is proposed. Besides an invitation to cross-cut the social science sub-disciplines, more empirical, on-site research in different regions should be conducted in order to enhance the proposed framework and to better understand interactions between communities and between groups and state institutions in heterogeneous democracies. To evaluate changes in attitudes, surveys should be conducted and compared. However, after the review of the literature and the three case studies, some conclusions can be drawn.

Trust-building between groups is a process of myths transformation; not “truth-telling” but putting diverging perspectives on the table. The coexistence of diverse history interpretations, their knowledge and understanding transform history accounts contributing to the alleviation of hostile stereotypes. The process comprehends apologies or acknowledgement, i.e. gestures legitimizing the perspective as expressed by the victims. These gestures constitute a “moment” of the process; they do not necessarily start it and they certainly do not end it. Since the account of national history is composed of a set of myths, the rapprochement consists in their collective reimagination. State historical policies can contribute to the establishment of integrative myths but they have to be sustained through an anterior or parallel dialogue within the society – a public debate involving historians, journalists, public figures, artists, all from different generations; a dialogue conducive to the knowledge and understanding. Inter-community trust-building is a process “from below” where the state is not imposing a particular vision but is instead participating, sanctioning and supporting the initiatives. Its participation is necessary. Instead of the question “what” historical politics to adopt, the state should be looking into “how” to integrate the diversity of the indivisible history. The resulting enactments of landscapes are mostly compromises on the use of symbols. Rare are examples of symbols being integrated: when interpretations blend in to form an indivisible whole; where former hostile symbols form part of “our” set of symbols. One such example is the “small homeland” of Goldapia described in the beginning, where diverse memorials coexist allowing the passerby to question his own convictions, to render it more flexible, to transform his perspective and eventually to internalize the “other”. The willingness to understand is sufficient for the trust-building process (risks are inherent). Taking into account, considering divergent perspectives serve the integration process.

While most commentators are interested in conflicts, this article invites researchers to see beyond protests to observe somewhat hidden in the heat of action “from below” initiatives integrative in spirit. Matching the inter-community trust-building framework developed in the paper, some commentators believe that the dispute about the bronze statute might be an opportunity for Estonians and the Russian minority in Estonia to learn to coexist. The tensions have resulted in fora for dialogue and in internet chat sites exchanging ideas for the most suitable future enactment of the symbolic space left after the statute. Moreover, in a gesture of recognition, after all, the Prime Minister placed flowers at the foot of the displaced monument. Estonians, Russians and rusophones now need to speak openly about historical events like the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet occupation.

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