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Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

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'Living Together or Next to Each Others?
Everyday Ethnicity in the Town of Chernivtsi in Western Ukraine'

They came out of the cinema. Not everybody knows in the town that this place used to be the Tempel – the greatest synagogue in pre-war Chernivtsi. First a few rabbis came out, then a man carrying the Tora, musicians and around 100 people participating in the celebration. The procession had started. Musicians played Havenu Shalom Aleichem, approximately 20 rabbis surrounded the Tora and happily danced in front of it. All wended to the renovated synagogue and celebrated the day of its opening. The crowd passed the streets of Chernivtsi and the main square. Some people watched the procession from a distance, some smiled politely and some passed it – as if nothing special had happened around them.[1]

The day of the opening of the renovated synagogue in Chernivtsi can be perceived as a kind of culmination point of multiethnic revival, which has been observed in the town since the beginning of the 90s.[2] Last twenty years have been characterized by, on the one hand, the growing interest in ethnic issues observed at the local policy level, and on the other by a sort of ethnic concentration organized mostly by ethnic elites. National associations were reopened and reorganized, temples became more significant, the national press republished, the Jewish school and museum opened just to mention a few characteristics of the multiethnic life in present Chernivtsi.

Although from above it may look like the citizens of Chernivtsi form one multiethnic unit in which every ethnic or national group is equal towards each other and can freely express their culture, the important question is how is it experienced by ordinary people? To what extent are they influenced by macro policies and how and if they identify themselves with the nationhood categories imposed on them?

By describing the significance of ethnicity and to some extent nationhood from below, this paper offers a kind of counterpoint to the mainstream academic literature of the character of nation and state building in post Soviet area, especially in case of Ukraine (Kuzio 1998).

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[1] Fieldnotes gathered on 25th of September 2011 during the ceremony of opening of the new synagogue in Chernivtsi initiated by the Chabad Lubavitch movement.

[2] The town of Chernivtsi is located in South-Western part of Ukraine, close to the borders with Romania and Moldova. It is inhabited by 220 thousands citizens and has the status of a regional center.

According to this, the problem of Ukrainian state and nation formation is seen through the problems of Ukrainian-Russian relations. In my case, by showing the complexity of everyday ethnic self-identification and self-categorization in a Ukrainian town, I want to some extent fulfill this gap.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the problem of everyday ethnicity in the town of Chernivtsi. The emphasis is put on the salient and routine expressions of nationalism (Billig 1995) which ordinary people experience in Chernivtsi. I would claim that although since the beginning of the 90s. the evidences of "hot nationalism" have been not visible in Chernivtsi, it does not mean that ethnicity or nationhood do not matter at all. On the contrary "salient and routine expressions of nationalism" (Billig 1995, 44) can be equally powerful and significant.

Bearing in mind Rogers Brubaker's (2004a) suggestion to investigate ethnicity without taking for granted the existence of ethnic groups, I examine the problem of producing and reproducing the everyday ethnicity in Chernivtsi following Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) framework. For them *talking*, *choosing*, *performing* and *consuming* the nation are the most significant ways in which nationhood is experienced in everyday life.[3] In my analysis because of its spatial limits, I will refer only to the experience of ethnicity of ordinary citizens of Chernivtsi with little attention to local elites discourse. My aim is rather to show why and when elite policy affects certain individuals and produces a sense of *groupness* among them. However, before I turn to my research conducted in the town of Chernivtsi, I would like briefly discuss the theoretical fundaments of following paper. First, I describe the general

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[3] At this point, a few explanations should be provided on my use of the term ethnicity and nationhood. In following paper, many times I use both interchangeably. I claim that in routine expressions of everyday life, it is quite difficult to divide them, and state where ethnicity ends and nationhood starts. However, in following work I refer to the ordinary people's experience, perception, actions many times in response to their interactions with other citizens of Chernivtsi or the elites' discourse. Thus, I will not focus on the state, local, elites policy distinctively, whose activity and presence I would mostly describe through the 'nationess' lens. Moreover following Fowkes (2002) ideas, as cultural anthropologist who bases his research on everyday participant observation, I am more likely to use the term ethnicity (and interested in cultural expressions) rather than nationhood. However, I bear in mind that there is a long scholarly differentiation and theoretical understanding of both nationhood and ethnicity.

problem of ethnicity in cultural anthropology and sociology, placing my approach in the context of primordialist - constructivist debate with reference to the concept of ethnicity as cognition (Brubaker 2004b), then I discuss the concept of everyday ethnicity applied by Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008). Based on this, in the final part of the essay, I would like to answer the question of what kind of community (if they do) citizens of Chernivtsi form.

The concept of ethnicity

In cultural anthropology and sociology, the concept of ethnicity became central in the late 60s (Eriksen 1993). From the beginning it was perceived as an integral part of the idea of ethnic groups.[4] From the first scholarly oriented perspective, ethnic group is perceived as a bounded entity, whose members share objective cultural traits (customs, traditions, clothes and so on), history (the belief in common ancestry), homeland, and possesses a sense of collective identity and share particular myths and symbols (Smith 1999). The critique of this approach came with Fredrik Barth and his fundamental work "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" (1969). According to this anthropologist, ethnic groups are created and negotiated through the boundaries, which distinguish members of one ethnic group from another (Barth 1969, 15). Thus ethnicity is a product of routine social interactions through which mentioned boundaries are constructed. Barth's approach gave the beginning of another perspective of describing ethnicity – constructivist. According to it, ethnicity is an outcome of a process of social classification (Jenkins 1994) through which such categories as race, ethnicity or even nationhood are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated (Ahmed, Feliciano and Emigh 2001).

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[4] In the literature on ethnicity, this approach used to be described as "primordial". However, originally the term refers to the nature and quality of social obligations and ties as naturally given (Fenton 2003, 76).

However, there is a fundamental similarity between the so-called primordialist and constructivist approach, where discussing the problem of ethnicity, both refer to the groups as a fundamental base for later analysis. It does not matter whether we talk about shared common values (Barth 1969, 17), the group belief about their past (Weber 1978, 399) or the commonality of symbols which bound individuals (Cohen 1998, 27), all these approaches take the presence of ethnic group as a starting point.

Nevertheless, the constructionist approach stresses a very important aspect of the process of creating ethnic groups, namely the significant role of elites and the state in the process of social classification. Edwin Ardener (1992) goes even further, claiming that 19th century ethnographers, anthropologists and sociologists were responsible for first describing, naming and classifying different groups of people into ethnic ones. As for him, the process of social categorization has distinct features of power relations contained in the relationship between, on the one hand, those who have the power to name others and, on the other, those who are the subject of these hierarchies. These "struggle over classification" and thus over the monopoly of power to recognize "make and unmake groups" (Bourdieu 1992, 221).

The new approach in social sciences which tried to break up the primordialist – constructionist debate came together with the cognitive turn in the late 70s. As Rogers Brubaker argues, the cognitive approach strengthens and unites both approaches by stressing, on the one hand, the features of ethnicity as naturally given as perceived by many individuals and, on the other, its situational character which depends mostly on the elite's activity (Brubaker, Lovemann and Stamatov 2004).

Brubaker argues that ethnicity together with race and nation should be perceived as a "perspective *on* the world rather than thing *in* the world" (Brubaker 2004b, 32). According to this view, ethnicity is part of cognition – central for human's way of seeing, thinking, talking and acting. This approach allows us to avoid *groupism* – the essentialized way of describing

individuals and groups. In opposition to this, the term *groupness* should be introduced. It treats groups as a temporary event, both highly contextual and situational. The methodological result of this way of conceptualizing the term of ethnicity, race or nation, directs our attention to the individuals and their networks.

Everyday ethnicity

Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues (2006) introduce cognitive approach in their research in Cluj-Napoca. The main aim of the book, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (2006), is to show "how ethnicity works – in politics and in everyday life-without automatically taking ethnic groups as unit of analysis" (Brubaker at al. 2006, 8). In practice, it means focusing on everyday social interactions, networks, institutions, patterns of identification but without assuming that ethnic so called "identities" play a significant role in it. The aim is rather to show why, when and how ordinary individuals identify themselves with a certain ethnicity or "nationess".

One step further is provided by Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008), who describe four ways in which nationhood is negotiated and reproduced in everyday life. The first *talking the nation,* represents the idea how the nation as a discursive construct is legitimized in the elite discourse, to what extent it influences ordinary people and what it means to them. Is this something ordinary people talk about? The second, called *choosing the nation,* refers to the way people's choices are framed by nationhood. In this approach, one should focus on such aspects of everyday life, as choices to read the national newspaper, sending a child to the national school, being part of particular nationally framed institution or religious one, such as churches. The third way in which nationhood is produced and reproduced in everyday life is called *performing* the nation – here the stress is put on the understanding and use of national symbols by people. This approach is partially based on

Michael Billig's (1995) sense of "banal nationalism". For him nationhood is "regularly flagged" mostly by the media, national holidays, elites activity through which "citizenry being unmindfully reminded of their national identity" (Billig 1995, 154). Last but not least, nationhood is reproduced through the *consuming*. In this approach one can study a variety of everyday life features: from the food choices of particular individuals to the shopping and tourism industry (Caldwell 2002). Moreover, by *consuming the nation* Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) understand also the role of public space, the character of restaurants, bars, cafes, squares and parks and the way how they are perceived or consumed by ordinary people.

Setting and methodology

Chernivtsi is a regional center of historical region of Northern Bukovina in Western Ukraine. Nowadays it is inhabited by around 220 thousands citizens, around them are members of 65 different nationalities.[5] Chernivtsi and Northern Bukovina are perceived as one of the most multiethnic places in Ukraine. The town is known also because of its history. In the past it used to be a part of the Austra-Hungarian Empire and was named *Czernowitz* (1775-1918), the Kingdom of Romania with the new name *Cernăuţi* (1918-1940 and 1941-45), The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic - *Chernovtsy* (1945-1991) and from 1991 the Independent Ukraine with its modern name – *Chernivtsi*. Another significant factor in contemporary town, is one of the biggest open-air markets in western Ukraine established there in the beginning of the 90s. It influences not only local economy (it provides the biggest income to the local budget) but also is a multiethnic points of meeting of different groups of newcomers, who came to Chernivtsi from Georgia, Turkey, Moldova and Romania generally

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[5] Based on the All-Ukrainian Population Census from 2001, source: http://city.cv.ua/portal/8/801-801.html, date of use: 15.09.2011.

for trading. However, in this paper I will not refer to this groups and focus on four groups, who are bounded with the long history and culture of Chernivtsi, I mean: Ukrainians, Romanians, Jews and Poles.

I conducted my fieldwork in Chernivtsi in two phases. First, from February till May 2010, I was investigating variety of Jewish institutions operating in the town. I conducted participant observation among the members of Hesed Shushana Foundation, Chabad movement and interviewed the members of the Jewish National House, the Jewish Museum of History and Culture of Bukovinian Jews and authorities from local municipality. The second phase of my fieldwork took place from May 2011 till February 2012. At that time besides the continuation of previous observations, I conducted fieldwork among Polish community gathered close to the local Catholic Church and the Polish National House. Moreover from the year 2009 till 2012, every August I participated and observed the action of cleaning the Jewish cemetery in Chernivtsi and the process of creation the cultural heritage there.

Everyday ethnicity in Chernivtsi[6]

Social anthropology can offer a unique position to investigate ethnicity while focusing especially on the ways "in which ethnic relationships are being defined and perceived by people" (Eriksen 1993, 1) in everyday context. Ethnicity first appear and is constituted through social contact of individuals, who in the result of it define themselves as members of particular group opposite to the Others. In this sense social categorization always bring the division between "us" and "them" (Tajfel 1981, 254). The aim of this part of paper is to show

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[6] I define everyday life following Michel de Certeau (1988) as a realm for routine activities of ordinary people mostly in contradiction to elites activity.

why and when individuals in Chernivtsi identify themselves and categorize the Others as members of particular group.

Coming back to the citation from my fieldnotes, mentioned in the introduction of following paper, an unexpected visitor in Chernivtsi in this day, who witnessed the ceremony of the opening of the renewed synagogue, would have the impression that this is the way how the everyday life in Chernivtsi looks like. Moreover, knowing the number of associations, the presence of Ukrainian, Jewish, Romanian and Polish National Houses and the renovated eclectic architecture in the city center would create the image of Chernivtsi as a multinational or even multicultural cityscape. However, the everyday experience of its citizens is far from this assumable picture. Their experiences are bounded around casual and routine activities – going to work (or several ones) by using overcrowded means of transport, struggling to buy necessary and cheap goods in local markets, from time to time occasionally meetings with friends in local cafes and finally relaxing at home. People organize their social networks in order to fulfill their economic needs, help in finding a new flat, job, emigrating abroad and so on. Hardly ever, ethnicity or nationhood find their central place in these schedules. However, in certain situations people's ways of talking and acting are shaped by their sense of belonging to a particular group. The following part of the paper, will focus on these situations when ethnicity is used by ordinary citizens of Chernivtsi.

Talking the nation

You know, the specificity of Chernivtsi is that you never make jokes about nationalities if you do not know the company. You never know if there are some Jewish, Moldavians, Romanians or Poles among your surrounding – answered Julia[7] when I ask her about what she thinks is

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[7] All the names of people with whom I talked during my research are changed.

the most special about the town. The statement shows the local kind of sensitivity about talking about other groups, which is widely present in many situations.

As was mentioned by other scholars, ethnicity or nationhood is not something people usually talk about in an everyday context (Brubaker et al. 2006, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). The same is true for the citizens of Chernivtsi. In casual situations, the mentioned categories appeared rarely. However, one needs to take into consideration that as a young woman from Poland, to a certain extent I influenced specific responses on people with whom I talked. Most people, who defined themselves as Ukrainians were very open towards me, accepting my presence in their surrounding and talking with me in more intimate way (mostly because I spoke Ukrainian with them). However, especially during the first stage of my fieldwork (where I focused on Jewish culture) very often they showed their amazement and questioned my interest in Jewish culture rather than Polish or Ukrainian. Svietlana was one of them. She used to be my Russian teacher, during our classes she liked to stress her commitment to local Ukrainian traditions (*Bukovinian* – as she named it). As academic teacher she came to Chernivtsi after she married Sviatoslav, whose family belonged to the local Ukrainian – or rather Bukovinian elite. Many times she stressed how they celebrate local traditions at home, and how Bukovinian Ukrainians are distinct and form special group than the others in the country. While being proud of her belonging to the local elite, she many times stressed how Romanians and Moldavians are different. She repeated how both groups are lazy and do not want to learn Ukrainian (*you speak in Russian much better than my Moldavian and Romanian students in Ukrainian*). The presence of other groups in Chernivtsi (such as the Jews) she referred only in the past, when for her Chernivtsi used to be a Jewish town – but this is no longer the case.

Not only the Moldavians and to some extent the Romanians are objects of stereotypes and prejudices. Another significant group are the Jews. Mostly, during our discussions people

refer to this group while talking about the past of the town. However, it does not mean that ordinary people know local history: *you just know that Chernivtsi used to be a Jewish town.* They cannot tell any details about what this actually means. However, in certain kinds of talking, the Jews are perceived as a powerful and influential group in the town. Julia was the only volunteer from Chernivtsi, who joined the workcamp cleaning the local Jewish cemetery.[8] She became one of the most engaged participants, warmly welcomed by the international participants, as *the only local young person who cares about the Jewish cemetery*. Once, when she told me her motivation to join the project, she described the situation of her friend, who was working in a local shop. This friend was badly paid and could not afford basic needs. *I was trying to convince her* – stressed Julia – *that she should join the workcamp. The Jews here are very powerful, many of them are the local deputies. If they just see her here, and then she would ask about the job, they would help her.* Julia, could not give me any details on actually who she bears in mind by referring to "powerful Jews in the townhall", it was more an example of stereotype which is common for many citizens in Chernivtsi.

Nevertheless, the most common statement about Jews is simply: *again these Jews*. It was one of the reactions of my friend, a local journalist in Chernivtsi, while I was talking with her about the festival Meridian Czernowitz, organized in Chernivtsi since 2009.[9] The festival is perceived as a great event in the town especially for its promotion outside. My friend however, did not want to talk about it. She just pointed that *again these Jews* showing her distaste for the publicized form of event and describing the high budget of it.

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[8] From 2008 the project "Mirror of history" is organized in the local Jewish cemetery. The event gathers volunteers mostly from Europe who during two weeks in Chernivtsi, clean the cemetery, meet with local authorities and discover the Jewish past of the town. The project is organized by "Svit Ukraina", nongovernmental organization from Ukraine and with support of *Czernowitz-L*, which is a mailing list of former Jewish citizens of Czernowitz. As researcher, I participated in the workcamp in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

[9] Meridian Czernowitz is a poetry festival which refers to the imagination of the past multilingualism in pre-war Czernowitz. Thus to the event, poets writing in Ukrainian, Polish, German, Romanian and Yiddish are mostly invited.

Language is another important element in framing the context of everyday ethnicity. However, in case of Chernivtsi multilingualism is perceived as one of the past myths (Czyżewski 2008, 89-108). Nowadays, Ukrainian and Russian dominates in public and private spheres. Nevertheless, national houses (in case of Polish and Romanian ones) offer the newspapers in native languages (only Hesed Shushana, foundation directed to poor Jews from the community, publishes its newspaper in Russian). My experience however showed that besides Ukrainian or even more common Russian it is almost impossible to hear a different language on the street of Chernivtsi.

Choosing the nation

Nationhood or ethnicity are also issues of people's everyday choices. Sending a child to national school, reading a nationalist newspaper or visiting certain kinds of institutions can be defined as national choices (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 542).

In Chernivtsi, since the beginning of the 90s, people's opportunities to make choices between different institutions and national options rose. One of the most significant moments was the opening of the Jewish school at that time. It was founded by Jewish organizations in Kiev and sponsored by foreign donors. From the beginning, mostly because of its financial situation, it was perceived as one of the best schools in town. Children whose parents or at least mother were Jews had the priority for entry the school. Lesya described me her struggle to send her daughter there: *My father was a Jew, however my mother was Russian, I do not care that for them I am not a 'proper Jew', I know I AM and thus my daughter is as well.* Only by accident, she managed to find a place for her daughter in the school. Later, Lesya became one of the most active participants gathered around Rabbi Mendel in Chernivtsi.[10]

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[10] Rabbi Mendel belongs to Chabad Lubavitch movement. He came to Chernivtsi in the beginning of 90s. with his family in order to gather the Jewish community. He opened the club-room for teenagers and organized weekly meetings for adults. He initiated the renovation of local synagogues.

Lesya participated in every meeting organized by the Rabbi's wife and always talked about them with full respect, being astonished by their work in the town. Besides the Jewish school, there is no other national school in Chernivtsi. All the others are educated in Ukrainian and are directed to Ukrainians. Only in some of them, children have the possibility to pick up extra classes in Romanian.

In most of the cases the reason for people's choices is external and has economic basis. Many people who participated in my classes wanted to obtain *Karta Polaka* (the Polish Card) with which it is much easier to get a Polish visa and then the permission to work in Poland or the European Union. To get the *Karta Polaka*, you need to pass an interview with an embassy official. Besides documenting polish ancestry, you need to speak the language fluently, know the traditions and be an active member of local associations. The Catholic Church, which is called by locals the Polish Church belongs to them. The same case is with Romanians. Because of the very open citizenship law in Romania (according to which anybody whose ancestors used to live in the former borders of the Kingdom of Romania can apply for citizenship), many people decided to change their passports. In most cases, it is not because they feel a special connection with Romanianess but because simply a Romanian passport is better than the Ukrainian – especially after Romania joined the European Union.

The external factor is also visible in the situation of Jewish organizations in Chernivtsi. Almost all of them (besides the Jewish National House which almost does not work) all the institutions offer some benefits for its members. Hesed Shushana's work is directed mostly to help the poorest and elderly people from the Jewish community. It provides them food, medical and social care and many other services. Many people decided to be part of the institution and thus participate in cultural events mostly because of the opportunity to get necessary products. Also, Rabbi Mendel, while organizing the club-room for teenagers offered a scholarship for the best students. Thus, very often the economic position of national

institutions cause tensions between them. This is especially visible in Jewish case as there are four main institutions directed to Jewish community who struggle between each other over the control of resources and then people itself. The personal ties and networks are so strong, that individuals from Chernivtsi clearly know, where they can go and where in the same time should not. For person from outside of community (as I was), the understanding of local specificities is a long and complicated puzzle.

These examples and many others show how people "choose" their nation and make use of their ethnic origin in certain kinds of moments. In many situations, the motive is far from emotional detachment but dictated by economic opportunities. Of course, there are still people – as mentioned Lesya, whose decisions are dictated also by the search of positive and unique identification.

Performing the nation

Urban space is full of symbolic meanings, visible in the shape and place of monuments, names of street, the architecture style of buildings or performed events and celebrations. The rediscovering of the multinational past of Chernivtsi together with attached symbols started in the beginning of the 90s. One of the first monuments raised after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was one in commemoration of Paul Celan, a great poet of Jewish origin who used to live in Czernowitz. However, it is situated in the periphery of the town center, where the most significant is a huge statue of Taras Shevchenko, Ukrainian poet perceived as the greatest national figure in the state's history.

Recently, a new monument appeared in the cityscape – one in commemoration of the victims of the ghetto, which was established in the Jewish quarter of the city in 1941. Originally, the project was to raise a statute with a sign in four languages (Yiddish, Ukrainian, English and Romanian) describing the numbers of victims and the fact that Romanian solders

were responsible for organizing the ghetto in the city. My American friend, who is a part of *Czernowitz-L* explained me the debates about the shape of the future monument.[11] According to her, the Romanian elite of the city were against this original project and because their influence the local Jews decided to temporarily put a stone in the place in signs in English and Ukrainian about establishing of the ghetto in which there is no single part about Romanian involvement in it. For my friend, this example shows that there is a tension between especially Romanians and Jewish elites. Thus, when some volunteers wanted to clean one of the monuments in the place where the first Jews were killed during the Second World War, she wanted to do it in secret without the presence of any officials or media.

The symbolic aspect of the different national groups in Chernivtsi are not only monuments. It is widely visible in the elite's work who use symbols for building a sense of *groupness* among individuals. The description of the opening of the synagogue, mentioned in the introduction is one of them. It is not without reason that the ceremony started in the cinema – the previous Temple. It used to be the greatest synagogue in the beginning of the 20th century. However, the Chabad project and Rabbi Mendel do not have much in common with these time in the history of Chernivtsi (as he is originally from Israel), while starting the ceremony of opening the synagogue in the old Tempel, he linked and legitimized his activities in the urban landscape. However, he stressed his commitment to local history and tradition, in the ceremony the majority was formed of foreign people, who came from Israel or different parts of Ukraine. From Chernivtsi mostly people interested in Jewish culture, scholars, writers, museum workers and so on were present. As for them, this was *the greatest day in history*, a sign of the renewal of Jewish culture. Only some small groups formed the causal visitors of local Jewish institutions who took part in the event. Nevertheless, event was widely discuss in local media and somehow created the sense of *groupness* among not only elites

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[11] About *Czernowitz-L* see footnote number 8.

associated with different Jewish institutions but also people attended them. It was an event, one just needed to be.

Consuming the nation

"Nations are not natural or enduring givens, but politically contested and historically contingent social constructs" (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 549). They are products of various types of elite activity, they are produced and performed to create a special kind of national solidarity. Organized events by Hesed Shushana, the opening of the synagogue, sending one's child to Jewish school, visiting a Catholic church and many others have one common element. Their goal is to create a strong sense of *groupness* among the individuals as belonging to a bounded national group. The open question is, to what extent people *consume* the products created by the elites. As the mentioned examples show, the sense of *groupness* among different individuals can be shaped by the feelings of embodied pride in the case of Ukrainian – Bukovinian identification, national sensibilities, while being careful what kind of jokes you make in unknown surroundings or raising and negotiating the form of new monument, symbolic performances (expressed in the ceremony of opening the synagogue) and endowed architecture (particular places perceived as belonging to certain groups). However, everyday acts by people are hardly ever framed in a national way. Although every national house publishes its own newspapers, they are accessible only in these institutions. They refer mostly to national traditions, customs or famous persons from Chernivtsi. There is no reference to local events and policy. On the other hand, hardly ever some information of the activity of local associations appear in the main local media.

However, the kind of lack of interest in the press published by national houses in certain situations people form a kind of *groupness*. Meetings organized by Rabbi Mendel gathered a huge group of people. I participated in one of them because of the Purim. I was

invited by my friend, Lesya, because this was a common weekly meeting with friends. At the beginning, the Rabbi's wife gave a speech about being happy in life. My friend repeated to me all the time that *she is a true Jew, because she wears a wig, has four children but is slim and always looks good. She has always her house in order and cooks traditional food.* After the talk, woman initiated by the Rabbi's work started to dress up in costumes and chose the best one calling her the queen Ester. After this, a huge meal was served with traditional Jewish food. The meeting was in a pleasant and cheerful atmosphere and although the purpose was religious there was almost no mention of this. The sense of *groupness* shared by participants was very strong. However, for organizers (so Rabbi and his family) the most important was a religious aim of the meeting, for woman – meeting with their friends and occasion to broke up with the everyday routine.

Conclusion

Talking, choosing, performing and consuming the nation are four ways through which nationhood is produced and reproduced in an everyday context. They show that although 'hot nationalism' is not the case of many communities, the powerful and significant aspects of 'salient ethnicity' are present in many forms and situations in the way ordinary people see themselves and others.

The aim of this study was to show the specificity of multiethnic life in Chernivtsi, seeing and experiencing by ordinary people. I was trying to omit the essentialist *groupism* and introduced Rogers Brubaker's (2006) idea to investigate ethnicity without groups. However, ethnicity or nationhood are not something ordinary people talk about, or frame their choices, still these categories are present in many situations of their everyday life. The common feature of them (so when people *talk*, *choose*, *perform* and *consume*) is that are connected to the presence of national associations, through which people try to gain certain privileges

(economic, social but also cultural entertainment and self-esteem). The activity of these institutions rely on foreign funds and donations. Moreover, because of their unequal financial position some tensions can be observed in forms of struggles to be the most representative institution for all of the members of particular nation. Thus, institutions cause not only a kind of national detachment of people affiliated to them, but very often the division of people, who are choosing this one from which can benefit the most (and then almost automatically are excluded from the other).

Ordinary people very often talk and perceived the members of other national groups in forms of stereotypes and prejudices. For Ukrainians, especially Moldavians and Jews (and to some extent Romanians) are perceived as threat to the Ukrainian-Bukovinian character of the town (or more correctly, how they want to see it) and interests or positions of Ukrainians themselves.

Last but not least, a very important question is raised from my observation. What kind of local community do the citizens of Chernivtsi form? I would claim that in the lack of the presence of open interethnic conflicts, the citizens of Chernivtsi hold far from tolerant attitudes. They form a kind of *uncommunity* (Blokland 2003), in which ethnicities are not constructed to actively include or exclude. People in everyday life live between called *again these Jews* – a hidden aversion to Others and *the greatest day in the history* – occasional appreciation towards Others. *You know, there are these national houses, they are these people who belong to them but they all are somehow invisible…they do not produce any distinct quality* – concluded my local friend who wanted to describe the phenomena of the multiethnic Chernivtsi. This show that the everyday experience of multiethnic communities (which one of the case is Chernivtsi) are far more complicated that the sometimes simplified picture of only Ukrainian-Russian debates center for the majority of literature on nation and state building in Ukraine, seeing from above.

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