



Hochschule für
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Master Thesis

Political Economy of European Integration (WS 2020/21)

Felix Rietschel

Structural Change in Lusatia

-

The Empowerment of the Sorbian Population in the Context of European Minority Policies

Author:	Felix Rietschel (Student ID No: 1783915)
First Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Markus Wissen
Second Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Sigrid Betzelt
Submission Date:	March 12, 2021
Word Count:	16998

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Literature Review	8
3. Theoretical Framework	10
3.1. <i>Political Ecology of Rural Areas</i>	<i>11</i>
3.2. <i>Empowerment of National Minorities</i>	<i>14</i>
4. The Spatial Development of Lusatia and the Sorbian Settlement Area.....	20
4.1. <i>Historical Context on the Spatial Implications of Natural Interventions.....</i>	<i>22</i>
4.2. <i>Socio-Economic Data and the Current State of the Energy Transition</i>	<i>27</i>
5. Analysis of the Sorbian Potentials and the Minority Policy Framework	31
5.1. <i>Sorbian Potentials.....</i>	<i>32</i>
5.2. <i>Sorbian Strategy for Structural Change.....</i>	<i>39</i>
5.3. <i>Evaluation of the European Framework of Minority Policies</i>	<i>39</i>
5.2.1. <i>European Framework of Minority Policies</i>	<i>40</i>
5.2.2. <i>German Framework of Minority Policies.....</i>	<i>43</i>
6. Theoretical Evaluation of the Findings.....	48
6.1. <i>Influence of Power Structures on Empowerment</i>	<i>48</i>
6.2. <i>Political Implications.....</i>	<i>51</i>
7. Conclusion	55
Bibliography	58
Annex	69

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Schematic overview of environmental justice conflicts	12
Figure 2: Typology of minority participation in regional development.....	14
Figure 3: The act of protection.....	16
Figure 4: The act of empowerment.	19
Figure 5: The Sorbian settlement area and Lusatia, 2021.	21
Figure 6: Spatial implications of mining activities on the Sorbian settlement area	25
Figure 7: GDP per capita, compared to the German average, 1995 - 2016 (in %)	28
Figure 8: Green Deal Europe.....	31
Figure 9: The Sorbian school system	34
Figure 10: Number of Sorbian learning pupils, 1994 – 2017.....	35
Figure 11: Sorbian associations and organizations in Lusatia	38
Table 1: Nussbaum’s Set of Capabilities	69
Table 2: Social structure of the Sorbian population, 1957 - 1987.....	24
Table 3: Population in the Sorbian core settlement area, 2016.....	27
Table 4: Gross value added per employee, 2016	29
Table 5: Actors in the Energy Transition of Lusatia	70
Table 6: Unemployment rate in the Sorbian core settlement area, 2016	33
Table 7: Framework for European minority politics.....	40
Table 8: Promotion of Sorbian potentials in regional development programs	71
Table 9: Empowerment in minority institutions	72

List of Abbreviation

CoE = Council of Europe

COM = European Commission

EAFRD = European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

ECRML = European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

EP = European Parliament

ERDR = European Regional and Development Fund

ESF = European Social Fund

ESIF = European Structural and Investment Funds

EU = European Union

FCNM = Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

GDR = German Democratic Republic

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

GW = gigawatt

KWSB = *Kommission für Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung* (Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment)

MS = member state(s)

OHTL = *Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft* (Upper Lusatian heath and pond landscape)

OSCE = Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WRL = *Wirtschaftsregion Lausitz* (Economic Region of Lusatia)

1. Introduction

Germany's long-lasting tradition of territorial pluralism is based on the notion of politically independent states culturally linked to each other by the same language (*Kulturnation*). Unlike other federal societies, Germany's federal structure was never intended to empower ethnic minorities. Accordingly, Sorbian demands for self-determination and autonomy were never fulfilled during the past two centuries (Carbonneau, 2019). The historical marginalization of the Sorbian population is particularly evident in the Lusatian mining area, where more than 130 villages have been (partly) excavated to satisfy the Eastern German population's energy needs (Förster, 2014).

The European Union (EU) and its member states (MS) agreed with the European Green Deal to keep the increase in global average temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and limit the global warming to 1.5°C. To meet these ambitious goals, the EU promised in its long-term strategy to support the existing coal regions with additional funding and support measures (COM, 2019). Therefore, the German government decided to pass the Coal Phase-out Act (*Kohleausstiegsgesetz*) to shut down the remaining 84 German coal-fired plants until 2038 (BMWI, 2021). For Lusatia (Upper Sorbian: *Łužica*, Lower Sorbian: *Łužyca*) and the Sorbs, this decision will be a major obstacle and a change at the same time.¹ The energy sector created numerous employment opportunities in a peripheral region, but the expanding industry led to the destruction of Sorbian language spaces and traditional structures and practices. The last transformation period following the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), led to a rural exodus and the loss of the industry that defined Lusatia's economic, social, and cultural identity for nearly 50 years (Gürtler, Luh & Staemmler, 2020: 32). Despite the dependence on the energy sector's gross value, the coal-exit is indispensable from an environmental standpoint.

The contemporary socio-economic situation in Lusatia, as well as the negative implications through the dependence on the retrieval of primary goods in the past highlight the need for a socially just energy transition. The additional funding and the proposed support for a sustainable and socially just transition provide a new window of opportunity for the promotion of Sorbian

¹ Lusatia is divided between Germany, Poland, and depending on the definition, also the Czech Republic (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 40). The focus of this research is only on the German part of Lusatia.

potentials. The creation of local value chains through endogenous potentials that are possessed by national minorities provides an alternative for sustainable and socially just regional development. However, regions can only benefit from the endogenous potentials of national minorities if they are getting empowered accordingly. The paper argues that the existing framework of European minority policies does not offer extended possibilities for the promotion of Sorbian potentials. The research question that derives from this statement is as follows:

“To what extent can specific Sorbian potentials be promoted within the framework of European minority policies?”

This paper’s theoretical framework is based on the assumption that environmental interventions have long-lasting implications on the environmental and social structure of a region. Regional development policies and the accompanying decisions on the use of land often reveal unequal power structures within societies. The current transition period will not only lead to new possibilities for the use of the post-mining landscapes, but it also offers chances for the renegotiation of existing social structures in Lusatia (Langer, 2019). The possibilities of reshaping power structures through social change will be examined through an approach to minority empowerment.

Subsequently, the historical and contemporary situation of the Sorbs will be closely examined in chapter 4. The focus on the critical junctures for the Sorbs in the 20th century will highlight how existing power structures and environmental interventions dictated by external forces contributed to linguistic assimilation and the shrinkage of the Sorbian territory (Carbonneau, 2019: 41). Furthermore, the contemporary socio-economic situation of Lusatia and the relevance of the energy sector and the coal-exit will be explained. Thereafter, the specific Sorbian potentials that can contribute to an increased quality of life and the diversification of the Lusatian economy following the coal-exit will be presented. The strategy of the legal representative of the Sorbs, the Domowina will shortly be introduced to understand how the potentials should be commodified.

The focus of this paper is not the energy transition as such, but rather the transnational and national policies that determine in how far Sorbian potentials can be accommodated in the

regional development process. The European framework for minority policies consists of human rights (protection), language and cultural policies (preservation), and cohesion policy (promotion) (Hoch Jovanovic, 2013). The regional development funds and programs used in the energy transition are part of the EU cohesion policy and thus integral for the promotion of Sorbian potentials. Due to the long history of marginalization, the promotion of Sorbian potentials cannot be feasible without adequate protection and preservation measures. At first, the EU minority policy will be examined in its ability to protect, preserve, and promote the Sorbs. As the EU and its MS share the responsibility regarding the above-mentioned policy fields, it must be examined how European norms and regulations are adopted in Germany. Therefore, it will be assessed to what extent Germany ensures the protection, preservation, and promotion of Sorbs. To conclude the paper, the theoretical framework will be used to understand the findings of the analysis and answer the research question. Furthermore, political implications following the findings will be a starting point for possible alternatives that increase the possibilities for the promotion of Sorbian potentials.

2. Literature Review

Research on the empowerment of national minorities is often neglected in the field of minority studies. As there is no universal definition of the term national minority, this paper will use the definition given by the German state. In Germany, national minorities are defined as autochthonous ethnic groups with a historical settlement area, own language, culture, history and thus identity that separates them from the majority population (Rein, 2015: 12). The literature on the promotion of national minorities in a European context is often focused on the legal aspects of participation and recognition (e.g., Brunner 1998, Toivanen 2005). Hereby, most of the existing literature is focused on the protection and promotion of minority rights based on the notion of minorities as objects in need of directional guidance through law and policy, rather than subject to common societal integration processes (Malloy & Boulter, 2019: 11). This paternalistic approach leads to the assumption that minorities cannot act on their own behalf and influence societal development.

In the past two decades, multiple publications have shown that the potentials of national minorities can be the foundation for innovation processes in regional development (Pan, 2016).

In 2007, a study by the European Academy Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC) highlighted that endogenous potentials of national minorities provide for hard and soft location factors in the context of regional development (EURAC, 2007). The reason why these potentials are often overseen is a lack of broader research in many European regions. The historical experiences of discrimination or the fear of marginalization through ethnic affiliation, impede the collection of quantifiable data (Pan, 2016).

The paper's analysis of the Sorbian potentials will be inspired by the findings of Pan (2010) and EURAC (2007). The findings of these reports suggest though that national minorities possess a long-neglected value in the form of cultural heritage and bilingualism, which is only slowly recognized as a capacity for tourism and cross-border development (Wolf, 2019: 107). Studies in the Danish-German border region have shown that the inherent bilingualism of minority members can strengthen the regional identity and economic integration of a border region (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014). The work of Jacobs, Häfner and Laschewski (2018) provided for a first categorization of Sorbian potentials in a regional development context.

Carbonneau (2019) highlights that the structural change offers a window of opportunity for territorial claims by the Sorbs. The coal-exit highlights a new direction in the European and national energy policy, which also reflects upon the future regional development policies in mining regions. Only a few scholars, such as Vogt et al. (2010) or Pan (2016) connect the empowerment of national minorities to regional development processes. Pan's research (2016) on the empowerment process of the German and Ladin minority in South Tyrol has hereby been one of the most encompassing studies on the successful empowerment of national minorities through territorial autonomy in times of transformation. In a Sorbian context, extended research on various approaches to autonomy and political representation has been done by Elle (2012), Vogt (2012) or Carbonneau (2019). Carbonneau (2019: 29) highlights that the German nation-building process has never been an institutional device to accommodate minorities, as it has been the case in Canada or Spain. Many scholars overlook the monolingual nature of German federalism, which failed to accommodate ethnic minorities such as the Sorbs (Carbonneau, 2019: 29). Even in the Sorbian settlement area, the commodification of the Sorbian language hardly takes place (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019). In general, the potential of minority languages is often neglected, even though there are more than 60 regional or minority languages with an estimated number of 40 million speakers in the EU (Language Diversity, 2013).

Many studies on the empowerment of national minorities are based on justice theories derived from social and political sciences (Malloy, 2014). A starting point for these theories is the assumption of unequal power structures in society that marginalize minorities in comparison to the dominant majority society. Research on the empowerment of national minorities in combination with a political-ecology perspective on spatial development is relatively scarce. In the case of Lusatia, there are only a few studies that connect the current transformation to Sorbian empowerment (e.g., Jacobs & Nowak, 2020). The historical and contemporary situation of the Sorbs can only be understood, when including an examination of the spatial implications of industrial transformation processes on the Sorbian settlement area. Contrary to the traditional economic and technical analyses on energy transition, political ecology uses a holistic approach to understand existing economic, political, and social hierarchies inherent in changing flows of energy and raw materials (Bridge et al. 2018: 166).

Therefore, this paper aims to provide for a first more encompassing attempt to examine how far Sorbian potentials can be promoted in a process of structural change. This work contributes to the work of other scholars who already highlighted the added value of minority potentials in the development process of other European regions. Broader research on the full economic and social value created by the Sorbian cultural heritage and other Sorbian potentials will need further research and cannot be covered in this paper. As many of the existing studies are missing the empirical depth to link the potentials of national minorities with a higher quality of life and an added economic value, further research will be needed to fill in already existing disciplinary points of contact and thus to advance the further development of a research paradigm adapted to the promotion of national minorities. This paper is a starting point for further research and offers a first attempt in mapping the Sorbian potentials in regional development without focusing solely on normative argumentation.

3. Theoretical Framework

For understanding the dynamics of environmental interventions and the societal power structures that marginalize national minorities, the theoretical framework will combine political ecology with an empowerment approach for national minorities. In how far national minorities

can participate in decision-making processes and use their potentials depends on their level of empowerment.

3.1. Political Ecology of Rural Areas

Political ecology offers a useful framework to understand the connection between spatial developments and existing power structures. Hereby, political ecology encompasses various theoretical concepts that see a direct connection between human involvement in nature and social inequalities such as the political and economic marginalization of minorities. Some of these concepts are strongly inspired by Marxist approaches towards the assumption that the costs and benefits associated with environmental changes are unequally distributed among the population, which exacerbates existing inequalities and contributes to new inequalities (Maschke, Miessner & Naumann, 2020). As a conceptual framework, political ecology will be used to expose the hidden costs of the territorially expanding mining industry.

Especially in rural areas, the contemporary land-use is linked to nature conservation and resilience. With the increasing industrialization and urbanization, people in the Western hemisphere saw nature as a retreat and thus as something worthy of protection. Rural regions are places where nature conservation is possible on a much larger scale than in urban areas. The protection of nature is neither neutral nor free of conflict. Most of the norms, programs or measures regarding conservation are highly influenced by neoliberal thinking. On the other hand, the conservation of nature stands in conflict with other forms of land use, e.g., agricultural, or industrial use of land. As these decisions affect the economic and social development of the region, they are often being discussed on a national or transnational level, where the local population has limited possibilities to participate. Furthermore, rural areas are often heavily affected by climate changes since they are heavily dependent on the retrieval and production of raw materials (primary sector) and thus directly depend on the local ecological system. Therefore, measures to adapt to climate changes and to strengthen the resilience of the local ecosystem are of great importance for rural areas. To strengthen the resilience of rural regions, the diversification of local economies, as well as the creation of local networks and aid through public funding is needed. As with nature conservation, all measures to create resilience are an expression of political interest and expose the existing power structures (Maschke et al., 2020: 39).

The environmental justice approach tries to implement the thinking of political ecology concerning regions with minority representation. The consequences of industrialization and modernization processes are globally visible in the form of spatial dynamics in land use patterns and the unequal division of environmental resources. These processes create ecological burdens such as increased industrial pollution, but the spatially unequal distribution of land also creates new social inequalities (Holifield, 2015). Environmental justice refers to the attempt of achieving both environmental and social equity within society. Early attempts to theorize environmental justice was often criticized as being inadequate and incomplete, as they remained tied solely to the distributive understanding of justice, which neglected the integrally related realms of recognition, capabilities, and political participation (Schlosberg, 2007). Through continuous research, environmental justice developed a broad and varied theoretical foundation, which moved into areas that include issues surrounding land rights, cultural values and heritage of affected groups, as well as the participation and empowerment of minorities regardless of their socioeconomic background or ethnicity (Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020: 2). Such justice paradigms are useful to understand which possibilities the Sorbian population has, to act within the context of European regional development.

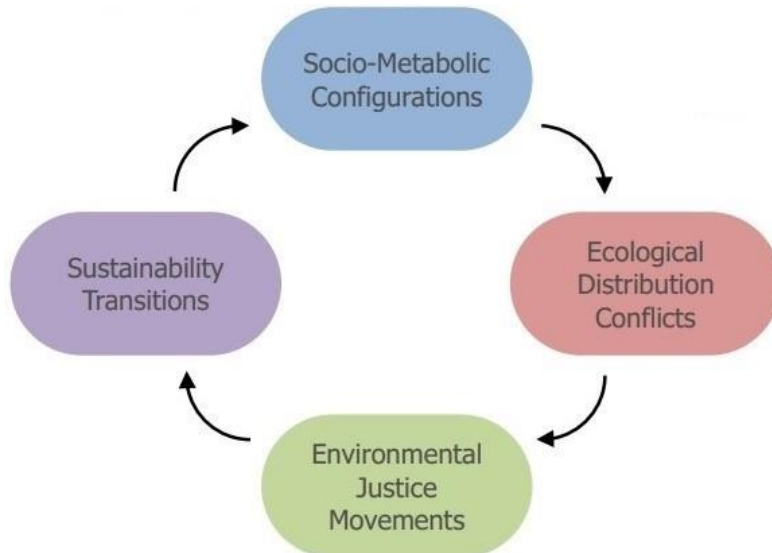


Figure 1: Schematic overview of environmental justice conflicts (source: Scheidel et al. 2018: 16)

Significantly influenced by the works of Martínez-Alier (e.g., 1991, 2003) or Bullard (1994) the focus of environmental justice shifted from solely thematizing concerns of racial and ethnic disproportionate exposures to environmental risks, to an approach that links social injustices,

industrialization, climate change, social exclusion, and environmental problems (Holifield, 2015). In these studies, rural minority populations are disproportionately affected by ecological problems, as they often lack the socioeconomic resources to act on their own. Their missing capacity for codetermination and political participation is often disregarded by the majority population (Maschke et al. 2020). As Scheidel et al. (2018) explain, ecological distribution conflicts evolve through changes in socio-metabolic configurations. Transition periods can be used to transform distribution and power conflicts through collective action (see figure 1).

A justice framework used to investigate the social impacts related to environmental interventions should cover three key elements. The first element is distributive justice, which elicits the distribution of social and economic benefits and burdens among a specific group of individuals. Second, procedural justice reveals fairness in political decision-making processes. It will be observed who is involved in the process and through the typology, in figure 2 it can be explained how far local communities can participate in such processes (Svarstad et al. 2011). Third, the justice of recognition, which indicates the legitimacy of interventions in the eyes of an affected individual or a group. The three dimensions show that the role of social stratification can play an important role in environmental interventions and certain social groups are often poorly recognized compared to others, e.g., ethnic minorities. Existing social differences are often attached to historical legacies of both, privilege and oppression. These social inequalities hinder sustainable transition processes, especially if they are reproduced by institutions (Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). To alter socio-metabolic configurations in a sustainable matter, it is essential to aim for an equal recognition unattached to social status. It is necessary to find a way to facilitate minority perspectives without simultaneously exoticizing or patronizing them. To achieve this, an empowerment and capabilities approach for national minorities must be added to the conceptual framework.

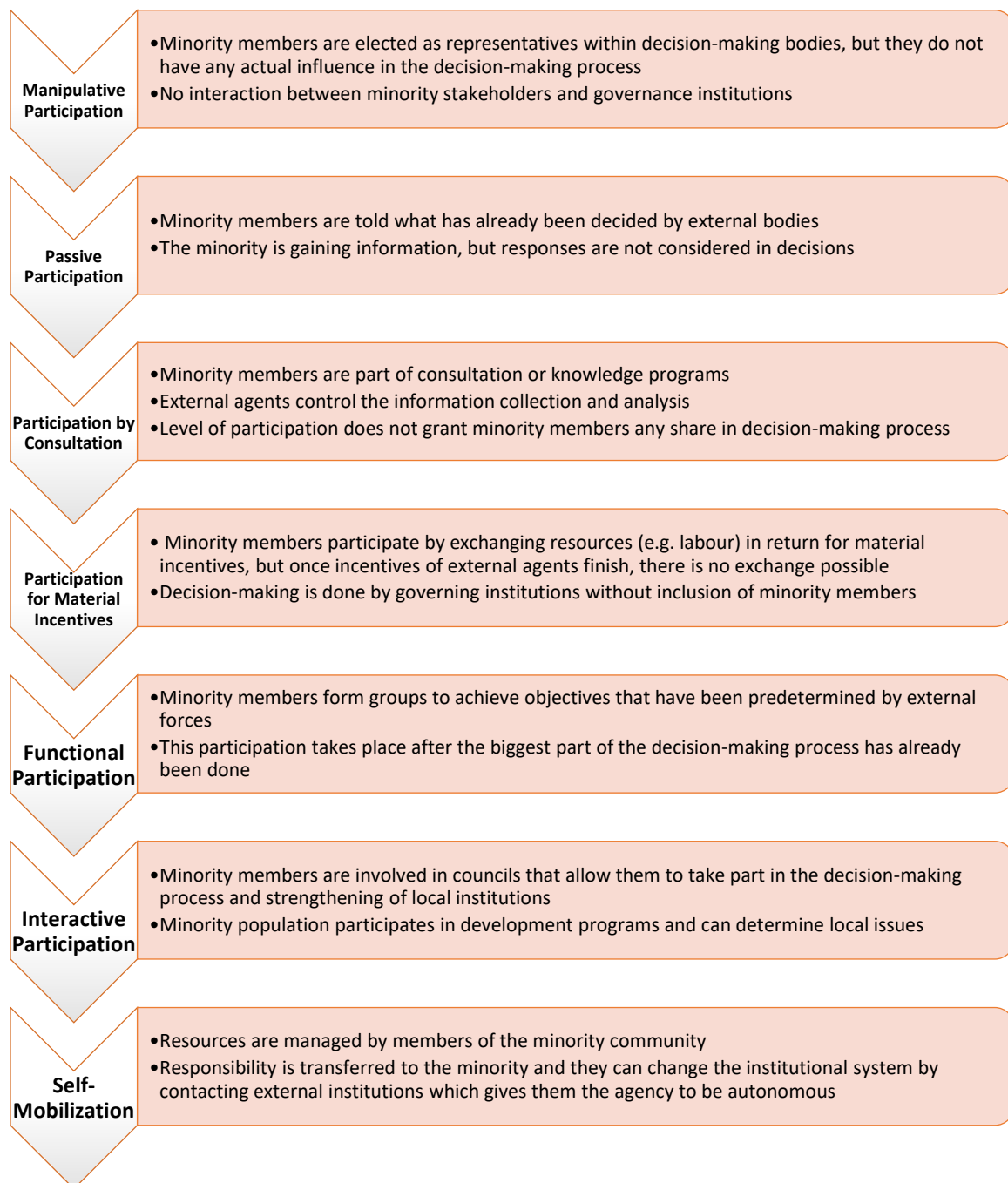


Figure 2: Typology of minority participation in regional development (source: Svarstad et al. 2011: 9-10)

3.2. Empowerment of National Minorities

That everyone should be able to participate in public life is seen as a prerequisite for a modern and democratic society. The reality is often far more complex, and marginalized groups are left out in decision-making processes. Therefore, it must first be clarified why minority groups need other measures of protection and representation compared to the majority population. Second,

it must be explained how the protection of minorities can be beneficial for the development of a region.

The legitimacy of providing special protection to minority groups can be found in various works surrounding European law. According to literature, special protection in the form of self-determination and collective rights is justified if a minority group has experienced strong assimilation policies in the past (Malloy, 2014: 13). The existing social and power structures create an unequal division of authority between different groups in society. Minority groups often find themselves on the periphery of society and are thus dependent on the provision of help through the state's welfare system.² Historically, national minorities possess a marginalized role due to their non-dominant position compared to the majority population, often accompanied by numerical inferiority that leads to difficulties in the recognition and representation of minorities (Cârstocea, 2013: 247).

The protection of national minorities can also have positive effects on regional development. Innovation processes are mostly shaped through the cooperation of various actors in society. The development of technological and social innovations is always a result of the rearrangement of already existing resources. An important source for the innovative capacity of a region are its endogenous resources (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). The endogenous potential of a region can thus form the basis for regional transformation processes. Minorities such as the Sorbs in Lusatia can therefore generate an added value for the development of a region (Schmidt et al. 2018). In the context of regional development, the potentials of national minorities encompass human capital in terms of language, values, traditional knowledge, and culture. Furthermore, national minorities provide social capital in the form of regional and international networks with other minority groups. Besides such soft location factors, minorities possess potentials in the productivity and innovative strength of a region. The multilingual cultural and educational institutions of minorities offer jobs and investment opportunities and are thus seen as hard location factors (EURAC, 2007).

² Compared to the majority population, many groups in society find themselves in a marginalized and powerless position, such as ethnic minorities, women, or low-income workers (Carstocea, 2013).

However, the potentials of national minorities are often overlooked as minorities cannot influence their environment. Various disciplines are concerned with the problem of powerlessness and dependency and try to examine how power relations and other elements in society can affect these situations. To challenge the socially unequal and geographically uneven patterns reproduced by modernization paradigms, a new school of thought has established empowerment as a theory and the conceptualization of empowerment as an approach to overcome situations of powerlessness (Wolf, 2019: 98).

If a state grants a minority group the benefit of protection, it also creates a problematic hierarchical power structure (see figure 3). The state becomes the active provider of protection and minorities are only passive beneficiaries of the state's goodwill. Accepting the role as passive beneficiaries of the state only manifests the marginalized position of minorities, and any welfare system based on this view will only enforce the same structures that caused the marginalization in the first place. The stigmatization of minorities also leads to a self-perceptive view of minority members as incapable of changing their role in society (Wolf, 2019: 98). Therefore, the focus on the protection of minorities cannot only include the protection through the patronage of the state, but it needs practical empowerment processes that actually allow minorities to promote their interests. To understand how minorities can become actors rather than beneficiaries, a perspective on the inherent capacities and potentials of minorities must be applied. Next to the above-mentioned three key elements of justice, the empowerment of national minorities will be linked to the capabilities approach by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (2000).

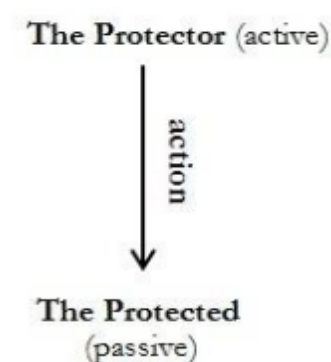


Figure 3: The act of protection (source: Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 86)

Historically, empowerment theories have been used to understand the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s or the struggle for women's political recognition. Empowerment theories are also a common feature in development studies and help to understand how people can improve their living conditions and gain access to economic development. Empowerment can be defined in various ways, but most definitions indicate that empowerment is a transfer of power or authority that aims to increase the self-determination of a previously marginalized community or individual (Wolf, 2019: 100). Power is a matter of authority and thus a possible source of conflict. On the one hand, power can create development, but on the other hand, it relates to oppression and rule (Malloy 2014: 18). In practice, existing social structures and power relations place people into specific groups and hence limit the ability of certain individuals or groups in society to excess or gain power (Wolf, 2019: 100).

To overcome the existing social structures and hierarchies, three closely related dimensions of action can be used. On the micro-level, the concept of individual empowerment describes how individuals seek control over their own life and try to create change for themselves. Individual empowerment can occur on its own, but it will likely still influence the other two dimensions. On the macro level, community empowerment is a collective process of social change within a certain community that can be expressed through the creation of minority organizations and agencies. The last dimension is the notion of empowerment as a professional practice, which refers to the environment surrounding the individual and community with certain social, political, legal and economic structures that influence and shape the development of individuals and communities alike (Wolf, 2019: 101). In the following, the focus will be mainly on the concept of community empowerment and the notion of empowerment as a professional practice.

Studies from the Danish-German border region (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014) or South Tyrol in Italy (Pan, 2016) suggest that minority-run organizations are better equipped to generate empowerment than those that are controlled by authorities. Collective organizations are more resilient to injustice, assimilation, deprivation and can overcome the lack of resources (Sadan 2004: 106). Thus, they are more likely to solve unresolved conflicts within the community. However, this does not mean supporting neoliberal agendas and releasing the state from its duty to provide for marginalized groups. The state still has the role to enhance the capacities of minorities and provide them with an environment that allows their members to take control over

their own affairs. Since the 1990s, the way in which national minorities were allowed to interact with states and organizations has changed significantly in the EU. The concept of a 'Europe of the Regions' initiated economic, political and social developments that gave minorities the possibility to access a larger network of organizations in the areas of inter-regional cooperation and regional development. This development enabled minorities to not only present their concerns on the regional or national level, but also enter the process of policy-making on the European level (Wolf, 2019: 98). However, minority-run organizations do not automatically guarantee accountability and equal representation as they can also represent own interests or create undemocratic structures.

According to Sadan, empowerment takes place in the social sphere. In the research on empowerment of ethnic minorities, there are two aspects of minority existence that require closer examination. First, a community living in conditions of constant marginalization requires control. Second, there is the need for (cultural) autonomy, as marginalized communities must be allowed to live in frameworks that allow them to restore and preserve their culture, language and traditions (Sadan, 2004: 95).³ As mentioned earlier, community empowerment is a collective process of social change. The process of social change connects the micro with the macro level, as individuals are political and have a dependence on one another in a holistic sense. The process of social change does belong to everyone, not only the dominant groups in society (Malloy, 2014: 19).

Empowerment is a process of social change that is only possible within the boundaries of the social structure in which it takes place. Various elements shape the boundaries of the social structure, ranging from basic access to water and electricity to citizenship issues, availability of institutions, political representation, stigmatization, and discrimination. Thus, the powerlessness of certain groups is rooted in the power relations and the disempowering practices that originate in the social system in place (Sadan, 2004: 166). If the social change only constitutes through a patriarchal approach from the outside, it can hinder the empowerment process and perpetuate inequalities and injustices. For ethnic minorities, the long history of

³ There are three types of autonomy. Functional autonomy means that the state transfers certain governmental tasks to minority-run associations. Cultural autonomy can be achieved through the foundation of a public corporation such as a minority parliament, which gains sovereignty in questions regarding cultural or educational matters. Territorial autonomy can only be used in regions, where the minority still has numerical inferiority, such as practiced in South Tyrol (Elle, 2012, 40-42).

oppression and persecution developed a deep distrust towards outsiders. In different European countries, this becomes especially apparent when looking at the difficulties that authorities and researchers find when working with Sinti and Roma communities (Wolf, 2019: 107).

To understand how minority empowerment at the European level can be conceptualized, Sadan's theory based on power needs to be linked to a theory based on rights. The concept of rights identifies rights-holders and duty-bearers. Minority rights are usually defined as affirmative actions, meaning that rights do not protect minorities unless they are claimed.⁴ For instance, minorities have affirmative rights to; minority education, preservation of identity and culture, individual autonomy, participation, and self-government. If minorities start to claim these rights, they are no longer objects of protection but become actors that can act for their protection and promotion (see figure 4). This transition process involves autonomous actions of an individual and collective nature for the agent to become empowered (Malloy, 2014: 21).

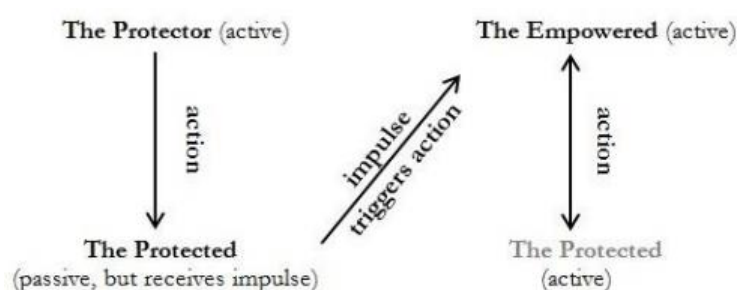


Figure 4: The act of empowerment (source: Schafer-Rolffs, 2014: 87)

Already in the 1980s, Sen and Nussbaum conceptualized empowerment through their capabilities approach. Hereby, justice should not only be discussed in terms of distribution, but rather in how the distributed goods affect the wellbeing and functioning of people and how injustices limit the promotion of their potentials (Nussbaum, 2006). The capabilities approach is a tool to examine to which extent national minorities are capable to determine justice for themselves rather than being exposed to the goodwill of external authorities. Sen's approach focuses on the underlying conditions for people to have functioning lives and freely choose how they want to live (Sen, 2005). Minorities can be deprived of such basic capabilities by government oppression or a lack of financial resources. In addition, Nussbaum's set of ten

⁴ The exception of affirmative minority rights in the context of protection are rights with a negative notion of non-interference, e.g., nondiscrimination (Malloy, 2014: 21).

capabilities emphasizes the fundamental political principles of justice (Nussbaum, 2006). For the empowerment of national minorities, gaining control over the own environment is particularly important, as it highlights the real opportunities of political participation based on personal and social circumstances (see Annex; table 1) (Malloy, 2014: 22). Nussbaum's principle of political participation is also highlighted in Figure 2, which expresses the various forms of participation in regional development processes.

Thus, the promotion of national minorities requires the examination of existing social structures and collective actions as they determine the potential of empowerment. An empowerment process might start through changes in the social structure with legislative changes or funding programs (top-down), but it can also be influenced on the local level (bottom-up).

4. The Spatial Development of Lusatia and the Sorbian Settlement Area

Lusatia is an extremely heterogeneous region that is predominantly agriculturally shaped, but also comprises small towns with old and modern industries. Historically, Lusatia has never been a single administrative entity, which led to different cultural, natural, and socio-economic developments within Lusatia. The binding factor throughout Lusatia's history remains its German-Slavic heritage, in the German part of Lusatia visible through the Sorbian settlement area, home of the world's smallest Slavic ethnic group (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 40). The German part of Lusatia has roughly 1.16 million inhabitants and constitutes of four districts (*Landkreise*) - Dahme-Spreewald/Damna-Błota (LDS), Elbe-Elster (EE), Oberspreewald-Lausitz/Gorne Błota-Łużyca (OSL), Spree-Neiße/Sprjewja-Nysa (SPN) - and the independent city of Cottbus in the federal state (*Bundesland*) of Brandenburg, as well as the districts of Bautzen/Budyšin (BZ) and Görlitz/Zhorjelc (GR) in the federal state of Saxony. Except for Elbe-Elster, the legally recognized Sorbian settlement area stretches through all districts and currently encompasses 79 of Lusatia's 204 municipalities (*Gemeinden*) (see figure 5). With 100,000 inhabitants, Cottbus/Chóšebuz is the largest city of Lusatia and within the Sorbian settlement area. The Lusatian districts are mostly characterized as peripheral, apart from Dahme-Spreewald/Damna-Błota, which profits from its proximity to Berlin (Greib et al. 2019: 15).

4.1. Historical Context and Spatial Implications of Natural Interventions

The first Slavic settlers arrived in the largely abandoned area of Lower Lusatia around 1,400 years ago (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 83). Until the 17th century, the Sorbs could preserve their culture and language alongside the dominant German population due to the lack of a centralized Lusatian administrative unit (Kunze, 2003: 13). This changed with the territorial fragmentation of Lusatia following the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The Sorbs were gradually marginalized in the newly established administrative units, which deprived them of a cultural and political center and hindered their intra-ethnic communication (Carbonneau, 2019: 36). The foundation of the German Empire in 1871 meant that a sense of German nationality should be substantially strengthened, and ethnic minorities had to assimilate to German culture and values. Especially in Prussia, the Sorbian language was rapidly replaced by German-Sorbian bilingualism, and upward social mobility was usually combined with the transition from Sorbian towards German nationality. The use of the Sorbian language was hence gradually moved towards the private sphere. The rural catholic Sorbian settlements on the other hand remained in a much higher density Sorbian or at least bilingual speaking, which can be explained through the formation of a Sorbian elite through educational training in the Catholic Seminary of Prague since 1724 (Carbonneau, 2019: 37). The most important documentation on the Sorbian demography at that time is provided by Arnošt Muka's work *Statistika lužiskich Serbow*. According to Muka, Lusatia was inhabited by 185,000 Sorbs at the end of the 19th century (Muka, 1997).

The post-war period of 1918/1919 saw a new sense of Sorbian nationality and growing pan-Slavism, which was expressed through claims of self-governance through Sorbian autonomy or the incorporation to Czechoslovakia. The Paris Peace Conference (1919) did not address the Sorbian claims and the ongoing assimilation process continued in the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) (Carbonneau, 2019: 40). With its rise to power in 1933, the Nazi regime forced the radical marginalization of ethnic minorities. After being initially viewed as Slavic-speaking Germans, the view that Sorbs were a racially inferior Slavic ethnicity prevailed over time. Measures for the gradual removal of the Sorbian language in the public sphere were taken since 1933. In 1937, the formation of Sorbian organizations and the use of the language in school, church, and other public places were prohibited. Plans about a "final solution to the Wendish problem" were

discussed but the end of the war in 1945 prevented the Sorbs from the fate of various other ethnic groups (Förster, 2003).

The Soviet liberation brought new hopes for self-governance or the incorporation of an autonomous Sorbian region in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union and the GDR did not have any interest in such territorial claims, but the incorporation of Lusatia into the political system of Eastern Germany had some positive impacts on Sorbian language and culture. Already in 1948 Saxony passed an own legislation that recognized the rights of Sorbian people (*Gesetz zur Wahrung der Rechte der sorbischen Bevölkerung*). The law was later adopted by the GDR and for the first time, Sorbs gained the support of the state through recognition and funding. The GDR supported the installation of bilingual street signage and many of the formerly forbidden Sorbian institutions were resurrected. In a relatively short time, improvements in the educational system were made and cultural life strived after years of suppression. Nevertheless, the GDR regime demanded full loyalty towards its socialistic ideals and since the 1960s, Sorbian demands for cultural autonomy were viewed as nationalistic (Carbonneau, 2019: 40).

The social structure of the Sorbs changed radically during the GDR-period. Initially, the Sorbian population was characterized by a high density of traditional small-scale farmers. The enforced collectivization questioned the traditional farming practices and land rights of the Sorbian population and in a period of 30 years, the percentage of agriculturally employed Sorbs decreased by almost 30% (see table 2). Already by 1960, 85% of the complete agricultural land in the GDR had been collectivized. The transformation from small-scale family farms to large agricultural production cooperatives (LPG) contributed to the marginalization of the Sorbian language. Unlike small family-owned farms, the large agricultural production cooperatives needed the influx of predominantly German-speaking workers. Apart from the Sorbian Catholic region in Upper Lusatia, most of the Sorbian settlement area witnessed a rapid change in the use of language towards German (Pech, 2020).

Table 2: Social structure of the Sorbian population, 1957 – 1987 (source: Pech, 2003: 127-128)

Social Groups	Share of Sorbian population in 1957, in percentage (%)	Share of Sorbian population in 1987, in percentage (%)
Workers and employees	26.4	52.4
Agriculturally employed	40.7	13.9
Intellectuals	1.1	5.1
Other	31.8	28.6

Next to the collectivization of the agricultural sector, the driving force in the assimilation of the Sorbian population was the increasing industrialization in the form of lignite mining. Before the onset of the mining industry, Lusatia was dominated by textile production, agriculture, and forestry. Initially, lignite was extracted underground or through small mines. It was not until the development of lignite deposits with the associated development of supply and processing industries during the industrial period that the characteristics of Lusatia have fundamentally changed. The technological advancement led to increasing demand for coal and wood, while at the same time the capital of mining companies increased. The heavy increase in open-cast mining made it profitable to relocate and demolish villages, which led to further constrictions of the Sorbian settlement area (Müller & Steinberg, 2020: 19).

With the formation of the GDR, all private mining land was expropriated and belonged to the state. Since Lusatia was the backbone of the GDR's energy supply, it had to be expanded quite rapidly to fulfill the energy needs of the Eastern German population. The constant need for more energy led to the expansion of the production volumes and thus the use of huge areas of land. Villages located in proximity to the mining fields were successively excavated. The greatest number of excavations and devastations occurred therefore during the time of the GDR. Even though the regime framed these excavations as relocations, most places were not relocated but only devastated. Therefore, the excavation of entire communities changed the demographics of Lusatia and the Sorbian population became also in numerical terms a minority in its settlement area. Most of the new residents which worked in the mines did not speak Sorbian nor were they obliged or recommended to learn the language. Schools adapted to the new inhabitants and Sorbian classes became a rarity in the Lusatian mining region (Pech, 2003: 127).

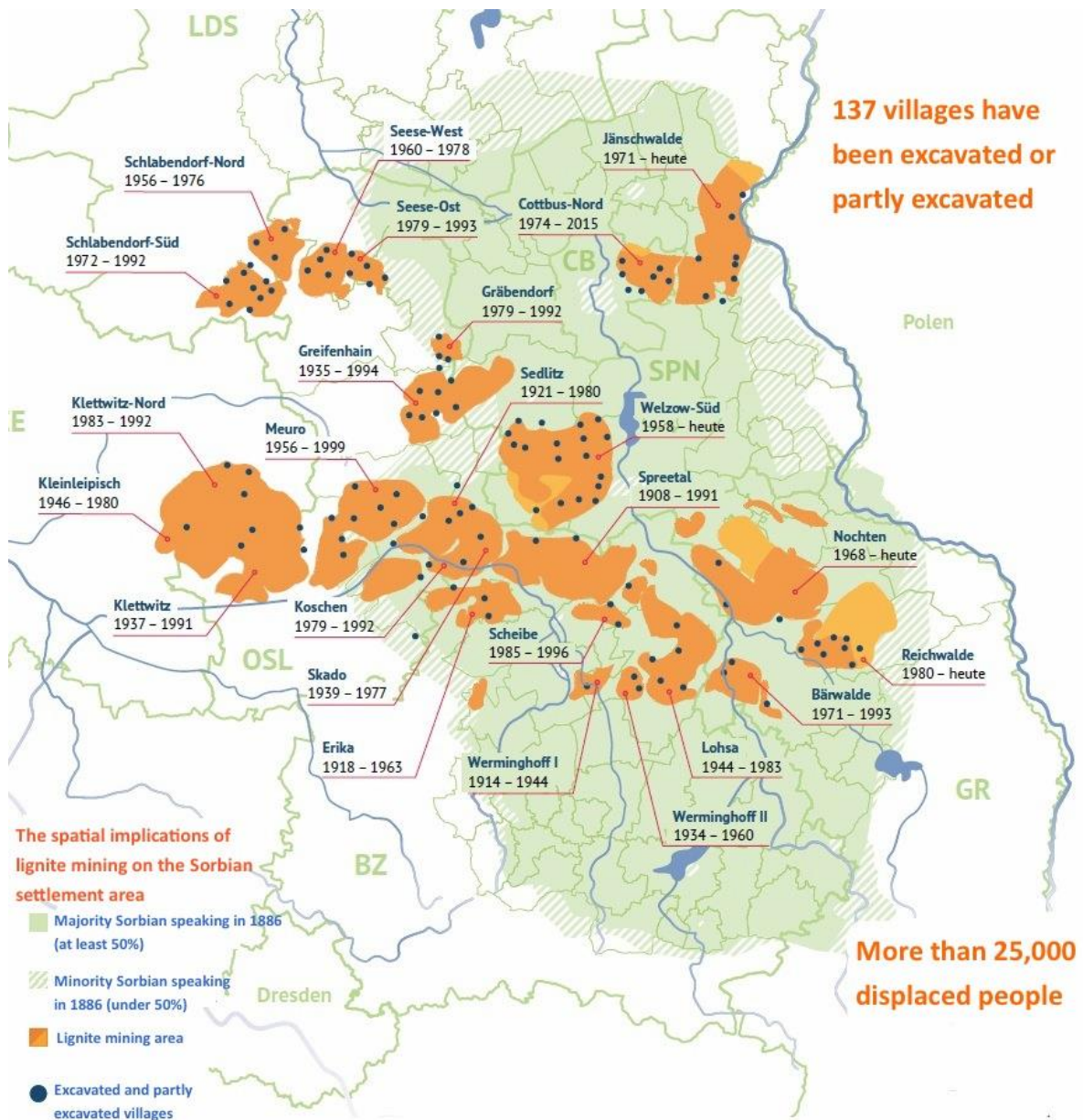


Figure 6: Spatial implications of mining activities on the Sorbian settlement area (source: Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 7)

The political and social change as well as the economic transformation after 1989, led to an abrupt decline in the extraction of coal. Large parts of the workforce emigrated, and the exploitation of nature became visible in the form of contaminated sites in the landscape. These massive transformations (and the failed migration policy of the GDR) led to an outbreak of violence against migrants, where Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy was one of the epicenters. Debates on migration and the massive structural changes of the 1990s are still part of the daily political discourse (Müller & Steinberg, 2020: 22). The fear of the coming coal-exit is used by right-wing populist parties to spark xenophobia. The Sorbian minority has also become a target by

these discourses, which can be seen in the intolerance towards Sorbian identity and language in some segments of the German population (Carbonneau, 2019: 49). Despite the coal mining exit, several villages are still threatened by excavations. In total, 137 villages had been partially or totally excavated since the 19th century, most of them between 1949-1989. Of the replaced inhabitants, roughly 20,000 belonged to the Sorbian minority (Förster, 2014). The increased marginalization of the Sorbian culture and language can be seen in figure 8, which illustrates the constriction of the Sorbian settlement area by the territorially expanding mining industry.

The collapse of the GDR meant that Sorbian political ideals had to be renegotiated. The main concern was not self-governance, but the reorganization of the federal states. The Sorbian settlement area in Lower and Upper Lusatia should be situated in an own federal state, so that the administrative area would not be divided between Brandenburg and Saxony. The Sorbian concerns were neglected when the German government decided on the restructuring of Eastern Germany's administrative landscape (Elle, 2012). The Sorbs are however granted certain special rights in their legally defined settlement area (see figure 5). However, the discrepancy between the legally defined Sorbian settlement area and the area where the language is actually spoken deepened the precarious situation of the linguistic substance in the 1990s. The widespread expectation of German officials neglected the precarious linguistic situation of the Sorbs, where clear quantitative language area boundaries did not exist anymore (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 41).

The misjudgment of the precarious language situation by state authorities had severe effects on the Sorbian population and the numbers of Sorbian speakers dropped in the early 2000s in both Brandenburg and Saxony. Linguistically and geographically, Sorbs must be divided into two groups speaking related standardized languages. Sorbs in Upper Lusatia (Saxony) speak Upper Sorbian, while Sorbs living in Lower Lusatia speak Lower Sorbian (Brandenburg). Determining exact data about the Sorbian population is difficult due to the principle of free self-identification.⁵ Currently, the federal government estimates that roughly 60,000 Sorbs live in Lusatia, around 20,000 in Brandenburg and 40,000 in Saxony (Carbonneau, 2019:28). The number of active speakers in both languages is estimated at roughly 25,000 users (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 83).

⁵ The general principles of international law, including the principle of free self-identification prevent individuals from discrimination based on ethnicity (Elle, 2005).

The predominantly catholic municipalities in the Sorbian core settlement area in the triangle between Bautzen/Budyšin - Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy - Kamenz/Kamjenc offer an almost entirely Sorbian infrastructure that promotes multilingualism in school, church, and organizational life (see table 3).⁶

Table 3: Population in the Sorbian core settlement area, December 31, 2016 (source: STLA Sachsen 2017; Walde 2004)

Municipality (German name)	Municipality (Sorbian Name)	Inhabitants	Proportion of Sorbian inhabitants
Crostwitz	Chróšćicy	1,017	84.40%
Nebelschütz	Njebjelčicy	1,157	66.36%
Panschwitz-Kuckau	Pančicy-Kukow	2,116	50%
Räckelwitz	Worklecy	1,103	61.92%
Ralbitz-Rosenthal	Ralbicy-Róžant	1,697	84.34%
Radibor	Radwor	3,166	70%

4.2. Socio-economic Data and the Current State of the Energy Transition

On January 29, 2019, the Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment (WSB) published its final report on the recommended social and structural development measures in the states where coal is extracted. The main recommendation was to phase out and shut down the remaining 84 German coal-fired plants until 2038. The federal government passed the new Coal Phase-out Act on August 14, 2020 (BMWi, 2021). Many residents fear that the coal-exit will have negative implications on the socio-economic structure of Lusatia. For many decades, people migrated to work in the coal, glass, textile, or steel industries in Lusatia, but with the rapid industrial decline following the collapse of the GDR, thousands of people lost their jobs and left Lusatia in the years following the German Reunification in 1990 (Gürtler et al., 2020). In the following, structural information about Lusatia will help to understand the socio-economic implications of a coal-exit.

⁶ Most Sorbs profess the Evangelical faith, but the Catholic Sorbs fare much better in terms of linguistic vitality (Carbonneau, 2019: 28).

The lignite mining area is situated right in the middle of Lusatia and is the second largest in Germany, behind the Rhenish lignite mining area. Currently, there are four active open pit mines in Jänschwalde/Janšojce, Nochten/Wochozy, Reichwalde/Rychwałd and Welzow-Süd/Wjelcej-juh, and three active lignite-driven power plants in Boxberg/Hamor, Jänschwalde/Janšojce and Schwarze Pumpe/Carna Plumpa (Greib et al. 2019: 15).

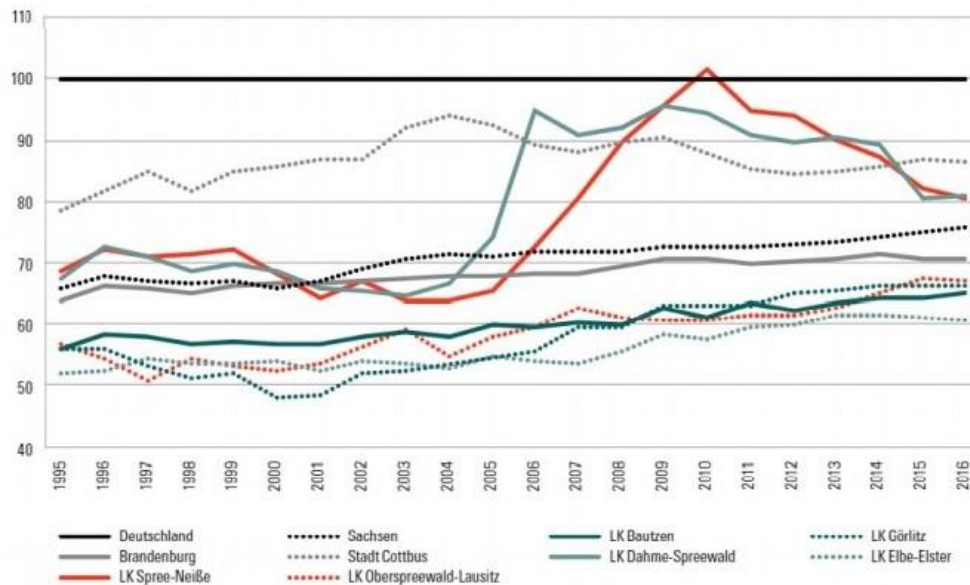


Figure 7: GDP per capita, compared to the German average, 1995 - 2016 (in %) (source: Greib et al. 2019: 16)

In comparison to the German average, Lusatia is an overall underachieving economic area. As seen in figure 7, the GDP of all Lusatian districts was nearly constantly under the German average between 1995 and 2016.⁷ The only economic sector in Lusatia, which saw continuous productivity gains since the German reunification was the energy sector. In 2016, the gross value added per Lusatian employees was in nearly all economic sectors below average (see table 4). The only exception is the gross value added per employee in the energy sector, but the general increases in the other sectors narrow the gap to the energy sector (Greib et al., 2019: 22). The dependence on the energy sector can also be seen in other business sectors. Every directly employed mining worker creates roughly one additional employment opportunity in Lusatia. It is estimated that 10,000 to 16,000 direct and indirect jobs are created through the

⁷ Except for Cottbus/Chóšebuz in 2005 and Dahme-Spreewald/Damna-Blota and Spree-Neiße/Sprowja-Nysa in 2006, the GDP was even lower than the respective federal state average (Greib et al. 2019).

mining industry. The energy sector provides for a relatively high salary range compared to other sectors in Lusatia. The main challenge of the coal-exit will be to provide for similar well-paid jobs in the region and replace the energy sector's accumulated gross-value added per employee (Greib et al. 2019: 27).

Table 4: Gross value added per employee, 2016 (source: Greib et al. 2019: 21)

	2016		
	Lusatia		Germany
	EUR per year	in % of German average	EUR per year
Total	52,968	81.6%	64,896
Energy sector	204,503	145.8%	140,272
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	22,988	81.8%	28,097
Construction sector	40,935	74.3%	55,078
Manufacturing sector	50,214	58.3%	86,058
Service sector	50,214	83.5%	60,103

A forecast by the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation calculated that until 2030, the employment potential is expected to decrease by more than 210,000 people compared to 2010. Due to the ageing population, the number of younger employees will decrease more. The demographic structure of the energy sector already confirms such decreasing trend. In 2011, around 40% of employees in the energy sector were older than 50 years. From 1995 to 2016, Lusatia's population decreased from 1.43 million inhabitants to around 1.16 million inhabitants (Greib et al. 2019: 25). This demographic development creates some challenges for the future. The costs for maintaining and expanding public infrastructure will rise due to the shrinking workforce, which could also imply that the educational infrastructure will be reduced. The decreasing number of inhabitants will also make it difficult for companies to attract skilled personnel. On the other hand, the ageing population will also significantly mitigate the negative effects of the coal-exit in terms of employment (Greib et al. 2019: 26).

In the GDR, Lusatia was the backbone of the energy industry. Nearly the whole territory of the GDR was supplied with electricity originating from Lusatia's open-pit mines. During the 1980s, nearly 80,000 people were directly employed in the energy sector, which shows why the

historical legacy of lignite mining still characterizes the economic, social and cultural identity of Lusatia. With the political transformation due to the German Reunification, the lignite industry had to adapt to the new competitive conditions on an international market. As a result, the productive capacity was reduced which meant that many open pit mines closed and roughly 90% of the workers in the coal industry lost their work during the 1990s. In 1999, only 8,000 people were still directly employed in the Lusatian energy sector, which indicates how the socio-metabolic configuration changes shattered the daily habits and securities of Lusatian inhabitants and led to a rural exodus where in some areas up to 30% of the population left (Gürtler et al., 2020: 32). The unemployment rate has fallen in recent years, but the districts of Lusatia still had in 2017 a higher accumulated unemployment rate (7.4%) than the German average (5.7%) (Seibert et al., 2018: 39).

The energy transition will lead to another structural change for the socio-metabolic configuration of Lusatia. The remaining power plants and mines are fueling the conflict over sustainable regional development and ecological compatibility. All three Lusatian lignite power plants are among the ten most emission-intensive industrial power plants in Europe (Gürtler et al., 2020: 32).⁸ The coal-exit until 2038 is therefore indispensable from an ecological standpoint, but the socio-economic implications on Lusatia's inhabitants should not be disregarded. The German government has already decided that 5 GW lignite capacities will be shut down until 2022 and another 6 GW need to be shut down until 2030. However, there are no concrete guidelines on how to achieve these goals until 2038 (Greib et al. 2019: 38).

The European Commission (COM) aims at the transition towards a climate-neutral economy until 2050. As two of thirteen European pilot regions in the transition towards a carbon-free economy, Brandenburg and Saxony will gain additional funding through measures integrated in the European Green Deal (COM, 2020a). To support the transition towards a climate-neutral economy, the long-term budget for the 2021-2027 programming period is with a sum of 1.85 trillion Euro the largest in EU history (see figure 8). Alongside the long-term strategy of the EU, MS are supposed to develop and propose own national strategies for the energy transition (COM, 2019). With the climate protection plan 2050 (*Klimaschutzplan 2050*), Germany is following the aims of the European Green Deal. The plan emphasizes that the coal-exit can only

⁸ All remaining plants and mines are operated by the LEAG, a joint brand of the *Lausitz Energie Bergbau AG* and *Lausitz Energie Kraftwerke AG*.

be achieved through a regional and industry-oriented political strategy involving subnational authorities, the private sector, and affected employees in the decision-making process (COM, 2020: 75). Therefore, the German government appointed the KWSB as a commission that presents recommendations on structural measures intended to contribute to the spatial development of the remaining coal regions in Germany (KWSB 2019: 2). The structural change will provide for a window of opportunity for the Sorbs to renegotiate social structures and spatial developments. In how far Sorbian interests are represented in such development processes will be examined in the next chapter (see table 5, Annex for an overview of relevant actors in the energy transition).



Figure 8: Green Deal Europe (source: Own illustration, Lausitz Magazin 2020: 81)

5. Analysis of the Sorbian Potentials and the Minority Policy Framework

After highlighting the historical marginalization of the Sorbs and examining the contemporary socio-economic situation of Lusatia, this chapter has the aim to provide an overview of the Sorbian potentials for the regional development of Lusatia. Furthermore, the Domowina's strategy for the promotion of Sorbian potentials in the light of the structural change will be

presented. At the end of this chapter, it will be analyzed how far Sorbian potentials can be promoted within the existing framework of European and national minority policies.

5.1. Sorbian Potentials

Innovations are a catalyst for regional development and structural change. The endogenous potentials of national minorities can create value for the societal and economic development of a region. In how far the potentials of national minorities have a positive effect on productivity and growth depends on the extent to which their resources and competencies behave in a complementary manner (EURAC, 2007).

Demographic location advantages

The Sorbian population, especially in the Sorbian core settlement area of Saxony (see table 3), has certain soft location advantages compared to other municipalities in Lusatia. First, the Sorbian municipalities of the core settlement area did not experience the same exodus as many other municipalities in Lusatia since the German reunification (Walde, 2004). In 2016, the proportion of under 15-year-olds was considerably higher in the six Sorbian municipalities (16%) than in the rest of Saxony (13%) (Budarjowowa, 2018: 169). At 4.5%, the combined unemployment rate of the six Sorbian municipalities is lower than the Saxonian or German average of 10.0%, respectively 6.8% (see table 6). Theodor Vogt (2012: 231-232) concluded that the actual unemployment rate of Sorbs could even be lower than that. This cannot be determined with certainty due to the principle of free self-identification, but intensive research suggests that unemployment and poverty are less likely to incur in Sorbian communities. The explanation for the low unemployment rate can be found in a conservative working ethos and stable social structures within the six predominantly Sorbian-speaking municipalities.

Table 6: Unemployment rate in the Sorbian core settlement area, annual average 2016 (source: own calculations, Budarjowa 2018: 167, BA 2017)

	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
Crostwitz	426	19	4.5%
Nebelschütz	563	14	2.5%
Panschwitz-Kuckau	931	38	4.1%
Räckelwitz	450	12	2.7%
Radibor	1,258	79	6.3%
Ralbitz-Rosenthal	796	36	4.5%
Sorbian municipalities in total	4,424	198	4.5%
LK Bautzen	119,272	7,890	6.6%
Saxony	1,574,307	157,862	10.0%
Germany	31,443,000	2,690,975	6.8%

Multilingualism – Sorbian educational infrastructure

Language is commonly seen as one of the main characteristics of a collective identity. For the identity of national minorities, language is often the most visible characteristic that separates them from the majority population (Toivanen, 2005: 191). For many Sorbs, multilingualism is inherent and an integral part of everyday life. However, the linguistic situation differs within the Sorbian settlement area. Most native speakers can be found in the Sorbian core settlement area of Saxony, while there is no area with a similar linguistic vitality in Lower Lusatia (Carbonneau, 2019: 28). The preservation and revitalization of the Sorbian language(s) is thus the most important task in the structural change. Various initiatives are aimed at promoting and preserving the two Sorbian written languages.

Currently, the Sorbian educational infrastructure consists of 41 day-care centers and 15 after-school facilities, 41 primary schools, nine secondary schools and four grammar schools where Sorbian is taught as a native, secondary, or foreign language, or through the WITAJ-program (figure 9). All Sorbian schools are public schools and the number of pupils that learn Upper or Lower Sorbian as a native language has increased in the last years (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 43). The unequal linguistic situation between Lower and Upper Lusatia, and the different education systems of Brandenburg and Saxony led to different ways of language teaching. The number of pupils who learn Upper Sorbian as a mother tongue increases along with a positive demographic trend in the Sorbian municipalities since the 2000s (see figure 10).



Figure 9: The Sorbian school system, 2019/20 (source: Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 20)

As the Sorbian population of Brandenburg was to a higher extent affected by assimilation and devastations, Lower Sorbian is more endangered (Carbonneau, 2019: 28). In 2019, a total of 4,545 pupils learned one of the two Sorbian languages as a native language in school. The number tends to increase in the coming years, as the number of Sorbian day-care children has significantly increased in the past years (Budarjowa, 2019: 6). The political change after the German reunification led to an upswing of the Lower Sorbian language. Both the states of Brandenburg and Saxony supported programs to revitalize and preserve the Sorbian languages

in the Sorbian settlement area. One of the main aims is to digitalize the language and both Sorbian languages have now some of the most modern online dictionaries for minority languages (Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 26).

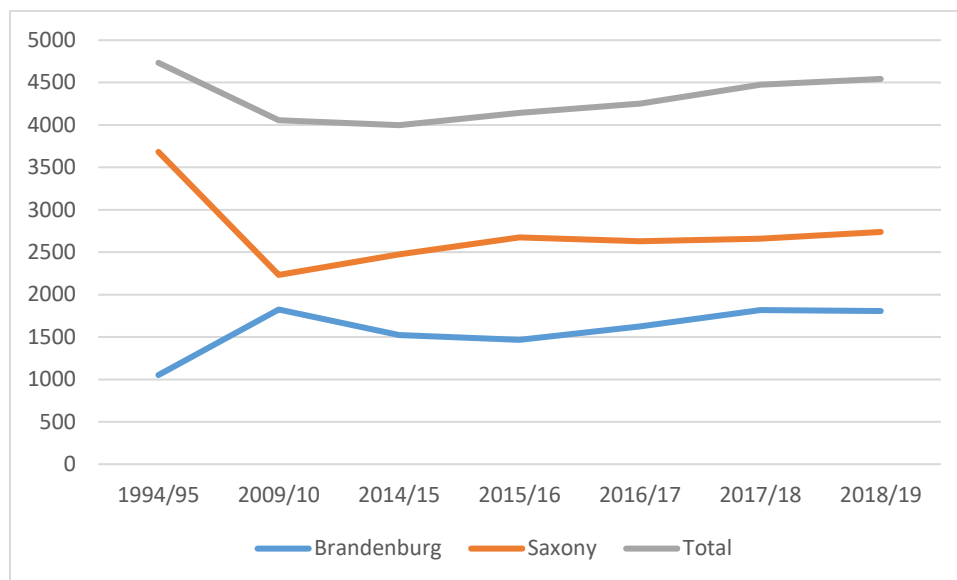


Figure 10: Number of Sorbian learning pupils, 1994 – 2019 (source: Budarjowa, 2019: 6)

The main actors in the revitalization of the Sorbian languages are the registered Sorbian Schools Association (*Serbske šulske towarsto z.t.*) and the WITAJ language center, both under the trusteeship of the Domowina. Since 1991, the Sorbian Schools Association represents the interests of the Sorbian population in the fields of pre-school education and in the educational system from elementary, middle, and high schools to universities. Next to the Sorbian Schools Association, the WITAJ language center was founded in 2001 (Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 21). The so-called WITAJ-model aims to playfully engage non-native children to learn the Sorbian language through part-time or full-time immersion in its day-care centers.⁹ The model is based on language learning schemes from Québec and Bretagne, where minority languages could successfully be revitalized through the long-term immersion of children (and adults) with the principle of “one person – one language” (Budarjowa: 2018: 33). Integrated into the WITAJ-model are currently six day-care centers with roughly 450 children in Saxony and 120 in Brandenburg. Furthermore, 18 day-care centers with individual language groups can

⁹ Language immersion is a method of language acquisition in which a person (mostly children) learns a language by diving completely into the language. Pedagogues will only speak in the language to be immersed (Laurén, 1999: 23).

be found in Saxony (11) and Brandenburg (7). Furthermore, around 2,000 German pupils learn Sorbian as a foreign language based on the 2plus-program in Saxony (Budarjowa, 2018: 141). Children in the Sorbian settlement area get the opportunity to complete a multilingual education starting from day-care centers onwards. Another advantage are the close ties to other Slavic-speaking countries, in particular the Czech Republic. In several Sorbian primary, secondary and grammar schools can pupils learn the Czech or Russian language as a fourth language (Budarjowa, 2018: 190). In comparison with other EU countries, only 34.5% of pupils in Germany learn a third language, which is considerably lower than the EU-average of 58.8% (EURACTIV, 2017). Pupils in Sorbian secondary schools learn at least three languages before graduating and even four languages when graduating from grammar school.

International networks

Sorbian institutions, especially the Domowina, have built up an international network with other national minorities and ethnic groups, especially with Slavic folk groups such as the Carinthian Slovenes. The relations are hereby used for the exchange of knowledge between minorities, but also for educational and cultural exchange programs. The Domowina is part of the Society for Threatened Peoples, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL), or the biggest umbrella organization for national minorities in Europe, the Federation Union for European Nationalities (FUEN). As part of these networks, the Domowina hosts large projects in Lusatia, such as the annual international folklore festival in Crostwitz/Chrósćicy, the international bagpipe festival in Schleife/Slepo, the European football championship of national minorities (EUROPEADA) in 2012, the 2014 world congress of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF) or the annual seminar of Slavic people. These events highlight that the Sorbian culture and language create an added economic and cultural value for Lusatia (SMWK, 2018: 36). Furthermore, the Lusatian border region (*Euro-Regions Neiße* and *Spree-Neiße-Bober*) benefit from the Sorbian language as a binding factor towards the Slavic neighbor states of Poland and the Czech Republic.

Culture and Tourism – Sorbian cultural infrastructure

There is a high density of Sorbian organizations and associations in sports, culture, or politics (see figure 11). The foundation for today's network of Sorbian cultural institutions was established during the 1950s. Current institutions that were founded during that time include the Institute for Sorbian Ethnography (1951, nowadays the Sorbian Institute), the Sorbian

National Ensemble (1952), the Institute for Sorbian Studies at the University Leipzig (1951) and the only professional bicultural theater in Germany, the German-Sorbian Folk Theatre (1948). Furthermore, a Sorbian radio station, an own publishing house (Domowina Verlag), newspapers, magazines and museums were established in the 1950s (Carbonneau, 2019: 40).¹⁰ With its establishment in 1991, the Foundation for the Sorbian People (*Založba za serbski lud*) provides the financial basis for the further development of Sorbian cultural infrastructure (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 43).

According to the German UNESCO-committee, Sorbian social customs and festivals are an intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2019: 62). The Sorbian cultural heritage offers two unexploited potentials for Lusatia. First, the intangible cultural heritage that directly generates economic value for the region, such as traditions that are linked to the production of a material good (embellishment of Sorbian Easter Eggs). Second, intangible cultural heritage that indirectly generates economic value, such as traditions that initially have a non-material value for those who practice them (Albert & Meißner, 2014: 15). These are fairy tales, dances or other social rituals that are practiced throughout the whole year and offer a high identity creating value, as can be seen in the festivities around the maypole (*Maibaum*) or the resurrected traditional dance lime tree (*Tanzlinde*) (Langer, 2019: 80). These traditions cannot only be measured based on their economic value, as they are also a source of identification in a region that suffered from enormous transformations.

¹⁰ Among the newspaper and magazines that are still active is the daily Upper Sorbian newspaper *Serbske Nowiny*, the weekly Lower Sorbian newspaper *Nowy Casnik* or the monthly culture magazine *Rozhlad*. Furthermore, the Sorbs have a monthly TV program in the Central German Broadcast, MDR and a quarterly program in the Broadcast Berlin-Brandenburg, RBB (Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 13).

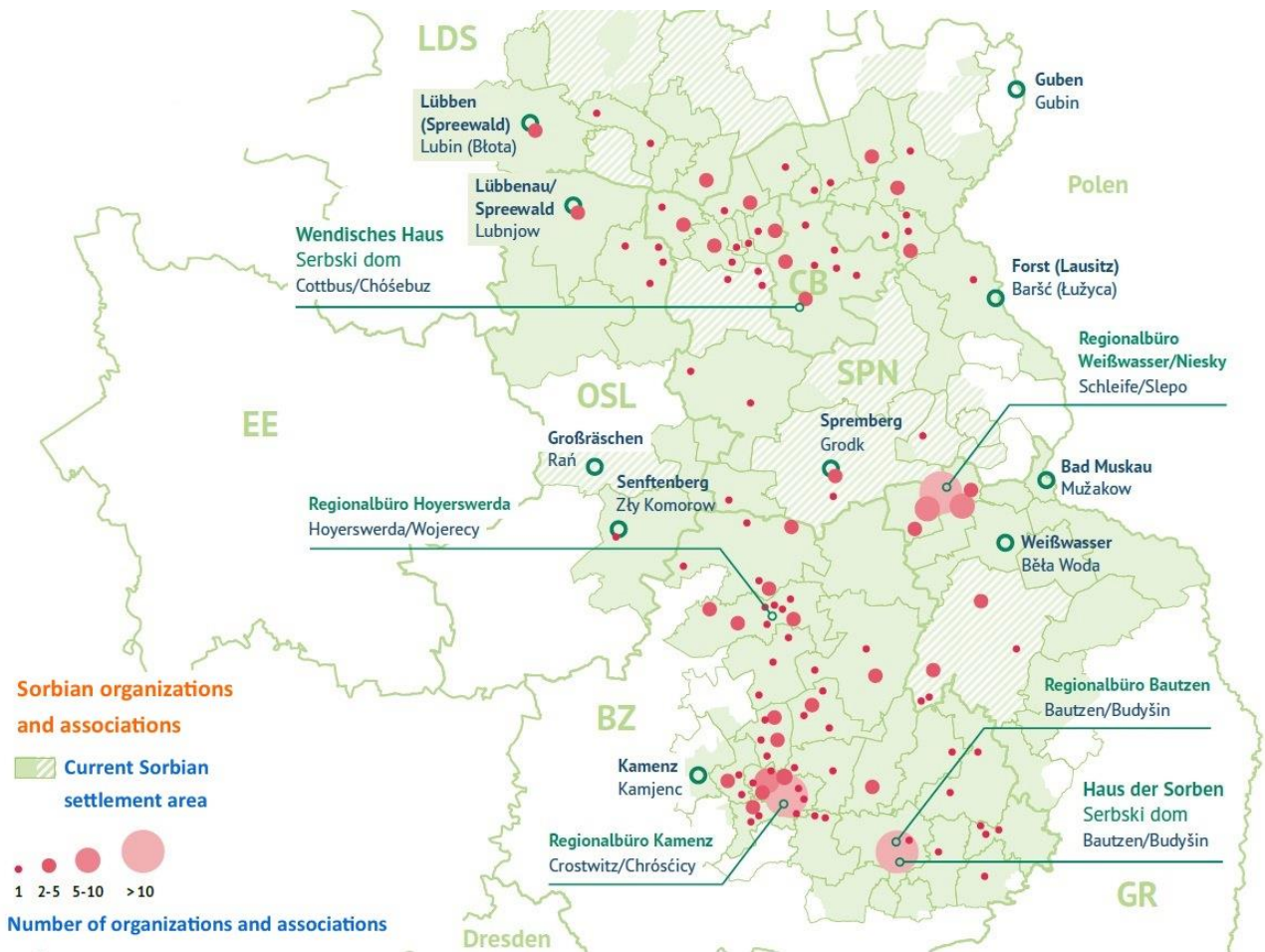


Figure 11: Sorbian associations and organizations in Lusatia (source: Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz, 2020: 23)

In conclusion, the multilingual Sorbian school system must be considered an asset for the general educational system and the competitiveness of pupils in an increasingly globalized labor market, where multilingualism is seen as an asset. The promotion of the Sorbian school system does furthermore create additional work opportunities, as day-care centers and schools cannot only be regarded as educational and social institutions, but also as commercial enterprises that offer various employment opportunities. The same can be said for Sorbian cultural institutions, which are an important factor in the diversification of the Lusatian economy. Furthermore, the Sorbian culture and language helps to increase the quality of life in Lusatia and creates a positive image of an internationalized region, which can build bridges and generate added value in a cross-border context (Laschewski et al. 2020). The international networks of the Sorbs are an important contribution to the European vision of intercultural dialogue and a 'Europe of regions' (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 46). Thus, the Sorbian potentials must be seen as a positive location factor for Lusatia.

5.2. Sorbian Strategy for the Structural Change

As the political representation of the Sorbs, the Domowina published a policy paper concerning the energy transition. In the document, the Domowina addresses a Sorbian strategy on the challenges possessed by the structural change. The transformation of the Lusatian energy sector is not only seen as a challenge, but also as a unique chance to seek compensation for the loss of cultural and linguistic substance. The aim is to gain recognition in the political decision-making process and thus see a reflection of Sorbian interests in the regional development policies (Domowina, 2019: 1). For that purpose, the policy paper defines three overarching goals.

Due to the historical and impending loss of linguistic substance in Lower and Middle Lusatia, language-promoting measures are prioritized in the Sorbian strategy. The current Sorbian settlement area is much larger than the area where Sorbian is actually spoken. Therefore, projects in the post-mining landscape should include measures for the revitalization of the Sorbian language through the expansion of Sorbian cultural infrastructure. Current plans include the construction of new Sorbian day-care centers and a minority research center in Schleife/Slepo (Domowina, 2019: 2). Secondly, the Domowina aims for the regional valorisation of the Sorbian language and cultural heritage. Through a comprehensive dialogue with all relevant actors and multipliers in Lusatia, the valorisation of the intangible cultural heritage should take place. Ultimately, this should lead to a wider acceptance and identification with the Sorbian heritage (Domowina, 2019: 2). Thirdly, multilingualism and biculturalism should help to strengthen the economic development and create a livable and innovative future for Lusatia. In particular, the Sorbian language should be used to strengthen the ties with other Slavic countries and minorities (Domowina, 2019: 3).

5.3. Analysis of the European Framework for Minority Policies

As explained, the Sorbian potentials represent a positive location factor for Lusatia, but they can only be commodified if they are being recognized and promoted as such (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 45). It needs specific measures to allow minorities to gain control over their environment and promote their potentials. In the current chapter, it will be observed to what extent the existing minority policy framework of the EU and Germany protects the Sorbs and allows for the promotion of their potentials.

5.3.1. European Framework of Minority Policies

Currently, there is no uniform minority policy in the EU, nor does a universal definition of ‘national minority’ exist (Rein, 2015: 10).¹¹ With the ratification of the Copenhagen Criteria in 1993, the treatment of national minorities became a recognized part of European politics and minority protection was no longer seen as a strictly national affair. Starting with the Maastricht Treaty, the EU influences the discourse on the protection of minorities mainly through declarations of intention and conditionality imposed on candidate states (Hoch Jovanovic, 2012: 363). On the European level, three areas are relevant for the protection, preservation, and promotion of national minorities (see table 7).

Table 7: Framework of European minority politics (source: Hoch Jovanovic, 2013: 97)

	Protection (human and minority rights)	Preservation (EU culture and language policy)	Promotion (EU cohesion policy)
Treaty on European Union (TEU)	Art. 2: human dignity, freedom, equality, human rights and minority rights, etc. Art. 6 & 7: guarantee and remedy	Art. 3: respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, safeguard of cultural heritage	Art. 5: subsidiary principle
Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)	Art. 10 & 19: non-discrimination, the Race Directive 2020 and the Equal Employment Directive	Art 165: Education and linguistic difference Art. 167: culture policy	Art. 174-178: EU Cohesion policy, regional development
EU Charter of Fundamental Rights	Art. 21: Non-discrimination (national minority)	Art. 22: cultural, religious and linguistic diversity	-
Other	ECJ: Case Law European human rights law (CoE): FCNM, ECRML, ECHR, ECtHR EP & Commission (annual reports)	Periodical initiatives (Culture 2000) Ad hoc projects (European Year of Languages 2001) EP resolutions: safeguard of minority languages	Structural Funds (e.g. ESF) Periodical initiatives (e.g. LEADER, Interreg) Committee of Regions

The protection of national minorities should be guaranteed through EU’s non-discrimination legislation (secondary law with binding effects on MS) (Hoch Jovanovic, 2012: 367). With the political and social transformations of the early 1990s, the EU shifted the responsibilities of minority protection mainly to the Council of Europe (CoE), and partly to the organization for

¹¹ In a European context, only a proposal of a “European Convention for the Protection of Minorities” did include a definition of a national minority. However, the proposal was drafted by the Venice Commission in 1990, but it was never adopted (Malloy, 2013: 58).

Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its appointed High Commissioner on National Minorities, which has an advisory role in ethnic conflicts (Popova, 2019: 25). Overall, the CoE is the foremost promoter of minority rights and developed a framework for the protection of national minorities. The framework for the protection of national minorities consists of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML) and the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCNM). Both documents came into force in 1998. With the ratification, MS are bound to submit a report to the CoE containing information on measures taken to implement the principles of the FCNM and the ECRML (BMI, 2020: 92-94). To protect the rights of minorities, MS should actively combat discrimination, promote equality, help to preserve, and develop the identity, language, culture, and tradition of national minorities (e.g., access to media or education). This proves to be an unsatisfactory legal basis, which gives individual MS the freedom to decide for whom they apply the framework. Another issue is that the international (and German) human rights system is based on the protection of individuals rather than groups, which means that minority associations such as the Domowina do not have the right to enforce collective action in the name of the minority (Elle, 2012: 37). Under the leadership of the FUEN, various national minority organizations are lobbying for a more encompassing European minority rights framework. The claims are represented in the Minority SafePack initiative, which gained more than one million votes and became the second-largest citizens' initiative in the history of the EU. Despite the backing of the European Parliament and the governments of Germany and the Netherlands, the COM rejected the initiative's proposals and concluded that the objectives of the initiative are already being supported within the existing minority rights framework (Wowčer, 2021: 1-2).

Next to secondary legislation and EU principles, an integral part of EU politics is the stipulation of cultural and linguistic diversity. The development of EU treaties led to the adaptation of the diversity principle, which serves as a soft approach to regulate the preservation of minority cultures and languages, the so-called cultural and language policy. The FCNM and ECRML are meant to provide solid platforms for monitoring if educational systems of MS respect the rights of national minorities. The regional development policies and the economic assistance attached to it help to promote national minorities and their cultural identities. The regional aspect of the cohesion policy is particularly relevant for the promotion of cultural traits and empowerment processes (Hoch Jovanovic, 2012: 368). In the regional policy, the EU shares the competencies

with the MS, whereas language and cultural policy are handled in a coordinative fashion. The EU refers to cultural and linguistic diversity as a core value of the EU and intends to safeguard the diverse cultural heritage through periodical programs and budgetary schemes (Hoch Jovanovic, 2012: 368).

In the last programming period, one of the core objectives of the EU cohesion policy was the social inclusion of ethnic minorities, which should be guaranteed by MS (COM, 2020a). The advantage of regional policy instruments is that they do not necessarily have to run through centralized states, but rather require that certain decision-making mechanisms be facilitated and handed down to regional levels. Therefore, minorities can become active participants in EU-initiated programs, such as programs aimed at economic development in border regions (Hoch Jovanovic, 2012: 376). In Lusatia, six EU-funded programs support regional and cross-border development, while offering bottom-up approaches to engages local actors in rural development (see Annex, table 8, for an overview on regional programs). The focus of the programs is to strengthen cross-border relations, infrastructure, tourism, and economy. In the 2014-2020 programming period, all LEADER-regions and Euro-regions mentioned the Sorbian culture and language as a potential for tourism and cross-border networking. Five regions used the EU-funding, for mostly small-scale, measures aimed the promotion of Sorbian cultural heritage and the preservation of the educational infrastructure in Lower Lusatia (SMWK, 2018; MWFK, 2017). However, none of the EU-programs is specifically aimed at Sorbian actors. During the last programming period only one EU-project was specifically supporting a Sorbian institution. The development of the Sorbian online lexicon (SORABICON) was funded through the ESF and should help to digitally preserve and promote the Sorbian culture and language. The Sorbian Institute, in cooperation with the Technical University Dresden implemented the lexicon within three years (Sorbisches Institut, 2019).

The EU cohesion policy with its regional development funds and programs promotes certain projects regarding the Sorbian culture and language. Especially the LEADER-method's focus on local participation includes Sorbian actors and views the Sorbian language as a potential that needs further promotion (SMWK, 2018: 88). In terms of participation, Sorbian members are involved in councils and advisory boards, that allow them to participate in the decision-making process and strengthen their local institutions. As all advisory boards consist of predominantly non-Sorbian members, the extent of promotion of Sorbian potentials is limited.

5.3.2. German Framework for Minority Policies

With the ratification of the FCNM and the ECRML, the German state declared itself responsible for the protection of its national minorities. Alongside the Danes, Frisians and Sinti and Romani, the Sorbs are recognized by the German state as a national minority (Carbonneau, 2019: 42). Even though Germany recognized national minorities as ethnic groups, minority members are German citizens, and their status as ethnic groups does not have any relevance in international law (Rein, 2015: 13). The recognition as a national minority and a protocol note in the German Unification Treaty from 1990, grants the Sorbs specific rights in their legally defined settlement area in Brandenburg and Saxony (Elle, 2005: 11). Based on the fundamental freedoms of the German constitution, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity is prohibited, even though there are no specific regulations aimed at the protection of national minorities. Any attempts to include such claims into the German legislation were rejected and the responsibility for minority protection was shifted to the federal states (Pech, 2003: 143). Therefore, the protection of the Sorbs is specifically guaranteed through the minority legislations of Brandenburg (1994, *Sorben/Wenden Gesetz*) and Saxony (1999, *Sächsisches Sorbengesetz*). The legislations should guarantee that protection measures are adapted in accordance with the FCNM and the ECRML. In Brandenburg and Saxony, Sorbian is a legally recognized language and can be used in public institutions in the Sorbian settlement area.¹² The municipalities in this territory must provide for Sorbian language teaching and a minimum level of public bilingualism (e.g., bilingual signage on government-related buildings) (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 84).

The spatial dimensions of the Sorbian settlement area are still subject of debate in many municipalities where inhabitants do not feel affiliated to the Sorbian heritage. Many inhabitants that first came to Lusatia during the expansion of the mining industry in the GDR do not have any affiliation with Sorbs and see the term ancestral settlement area (*angestammtes Siedlungsgebiet*) as a reference to a historic territory that not reflect the contemporary situation. Fulfilling the minimum level of public bilingualism and the provision of Sorbian education are therefore seen as a burden by some municipalities that attempt to legally detach themselves from the defined Sorbian settlement area (Elle, 2005: 22). Despite the legal recognition of the Sorbian minority, the lack of education on national minorities, as well as the upswing of

¹² In Saxony since 1999, and in Brandenburg first through an amendment of the *Sorben/Wenden Gesetz* in 2014 (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 84).

xenophobic tendencies in Eastern Germany has led to an upswing of discriminatory acts in the form of vandalizations of Sorbian signage or violent attacks on Sorbian speaking adolescents (SMWK, 2018: 96).

Despite demands by the CoE in its periodical reports, public institutions reacted with indifference to discrimination. Institutional discrimination of Sorbian can be seen in missing bilingual signages or the constant depiction of Sorbian in a smaller font beneath German names on existing bilingual signages (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019). In various cases, district administrations renewed public signage without using the Sorbian lettering. According to the norms of the ECRML, such practices are institutional discriminations of minority languages. Institutions often demand a motivation for the use of Sorbian in the public space, which reproduces negative stereotypes in the society and lead to justification constraints for Sorbian speakers (Domowina, 2020: 6). The allocation of Sorbian schools in figure 9 highlights, that the protection and preservation of Sorbian language is not ensured in the Sorbian settlement area. The protection efforts merely cover the precarious linguistic situation in Lower Lusatia. Only the Sorbian core settlement area is a safe space for Sorbian, as the educational system covers the transfer of knowledge and thus enables the development of a Sorbian identity.

The distribution of financial resources is next to legal protection the most important prerequisite for starting empowerment processes from a top-down approach. Since 1998, the German government, as well as Brandenburg and Saxony have jointly funded the Foundation for the Sorbian People, which is in charge of funding Sorbian cultural institutions and projects. The yearly funding is hereby earmarked and 75% of the funding is used for the Sorbian institutions, while the rest is spent on projects that help to preserve and revitalize the socio-economic livelihood of the Sorbian population (Założba za serbski lud, 2020). The Foundation for the Sorbian People's council does not only consist of members elected by the Domowina respectively the Sorbian councils of Brandenburg and Saxony, but also of six employees of governmental institutions and three municipal employees (Elle, 2012: 41). In general, the financing agreement offers the possibility to fund the promotion of the Sorbian language and culture, but there are a few inconsistencies in the funding scheme. Unlike other national minorities, the Sorbs do not get funding from the German Ministry of the Interior, but the funding of the Sorbs is delegated to Germany's Commissioner for Culture and Media. This strategy raises questions as the Commission for Culture and Media is primarily focused on

urban culture and not rural culture. In general, the German government and its bodies have over the years prevented any real long-term commitment to the promotion of minorities and even used legal means to fathom possibilities for stopping further funding (Vogt, 2012: 231). Thus, it must be concluded that the German government sees the funding more as a burden than a commitment towards the norms set out by the CoE and the OSCE. The current funding scheme must be seen as a partial return flow of an additional contribution from the Sorbian community to the German state and its social system, e.g., in the form of payroll taxes. Especially if considering the low unemployment rate in the Sorbian core settlement area and the added value through the cultural and educational system, it must be stated that the current financing agreement does not create an additional expenditure for the German economy, it can rather be assumed that there are considerable additional payments to its social system (Vogt, 2012: 233).

The current funding situation can thus be described as an incomplete functional autonomy, that hinders long-term planning and the self-mobilization of Sorbian actors. Before the first financing agreement was signed in 1998, the Foundation for the Sorbian people received 20.4 million Euro annually between 1991 and 1997. The first financing agreement meant a reduction of the annual budget to 16.4 million Euro in 1998. In the following years, the budget was reduced by 1.0 million Euro annually. With the second financing agreement in 2007, the annual budget was raised to 16.8 million Euro, but this could not cover the costs for the Sorbian institutional infrastructure and roughly 70 employees within Sorbian institutions had to be laid off until 2013 (Budar, 2020: 1). After annual negotiations between 2013 and 2016, the third financing agreement could be signed in 2016, which raised the annual budget to 18.6 million Euro. The next financing agreement is currently not finalized, but the federal government already agreed to raise their annual funding from 9.3 to 12.2 million Euro (Założba za serbski lud, 2020).

In terms of participation, the German state and the states of Brandenburg and Saxony established minority institutions that should represent the interests of the Sorbs (in Brandenburg and Saxony) and off all recognized national minorities (on national level). Except for the Commissioner for Emigrant and Minority Issues of the German Government, all bodies are consultancy bodies (see Annex; table 9). The Councils must be heard by the state parliaments and the federal government in all matters concerning the Sorbian minority (BMI, 2020). In Brandenburg and Saxony, the Councils on Sorbian Affairs are meant to represent the interests

of Sorbs and constitute of Sorbian members. The extent of the impact of Sorbian representatives on decisions by the Brandenburg and Saxonian parliament is unclear, and their participation may be merely symbolic (Elle, 2012: 20). In the context of empowerment, consultancy roles are not sufficient to gain control over one's environment. The representation of Sorbian actors in governmental councils only gives the Sorbs the chance to participate in the counseling of knowledge, but decisions in political matters are made by external forces.

The current window of opportunity for the Sorbs is provided by structural changes following the changes in energy supply, away from nuclear and fossil fuels towards renewable energies (BMWI, 2021). As the energy transition will bring significant changes in society and economy, the KWSB indicates in its final report that spatial development and decisions on the use of post-mining land are federal tasks (KWSB 2019: 2). To guarantee a socially just transition in coal mining regions, the federal government passed the Structural Change Act (*Strukturstärkungsgesetz*) on July 3, 2020. Through the initiative of the Domowina and other Sorbian actors, the German state agreed to acknowledge its responsibility for the support of measures that promote the preservation and revitalization of the Sorbian language, culture, and tradition in the Structural Change Act.¹³ This specific reference to the Sorbian population provides an important legal basis, as it recognizes the Sorbs as an own actor in the transition process. Furthermore, the Saxon government included in its Spatial Planning Act of 2010 (*Gesetz zur Raumordnung und Landesplanung des Freistaates Sachsen*) that Sorbian representatives must be consulted in spatial changes in the Sorbian settlement area (SMWK, 2018: 86).

With regards to the KWSB, the 28 members in the commission consist of actors from business, politics, environmental associations, trade unions and the countries and regions concerned. The members have not been democratically elected but were appointed by the German government (Greib et al. 2019: 38). The composition of the KWSB indicates that the interests of the economic and political actors outweigh the concerns of environmental and human rights groups. While the German state supports the transition of the Lusatian mining area with 3.612 billion Euro allocated to Brandenburg and 2.408 billion Euro to Saxony, the government also decided

¹³ *Strukturstärkungsgesetz §17, Nummer 31: „Maßnahmen zur Förderung der Bewahrung und Fortentwicklung der Sprache, Kultur und Traditionen des sorbischen Volkes als nationaler Minderheit“.*

to support the LEAG in the transition with roughly 1.75 billion Euro until 2038 (BMWl, 2020; Scheid, 2021). Despite the coal-exit and the rapid decline in mining activities since the 1990s, the political power of the energy sector can still shape the public discourse in the structural change. The LEAG published a phase-out plan for its remaining facilities, where some measures for the socio-cultural development of the Sorbian population were considered with the preservation of two villages in the municipality of Schleife/Slepo (SMWK, 2018: 88). The LEAG abandoned its initial plan to resettle various villages in the coming years, but still claims that the resettlement of the Sorbian village of Mühlrose/Miloraz is necessary to extract the remaining coal reserves. Despite protests by environmental groups and the Domowina, the company will likely be able to continue with the planned excavation (Nauschütz, 2021).

The federal structure of Germany allows the states of Brandenburg and Saxony to take a leading role in the implementation of measures regarding regional development. With regards to Lusatia, the two states represent their interests through a joint policy paper of the Lusatian districts (WRL). Based on the specifications of the EU and the German government, the WRL created a joint policy paper with recommendations, goals, and project ideas for the energy transition until 2050 (*Entwicklungsstrategie Lausitz 2050*). Members of the Domowina, and other Sorbian institutions participated in the development of the strategies, which is reflected in the inclusion of Sorbian concerns in the joint policy paper of the six Lusatian districts. The Sorbian language and heritage are potentials in tourism, cross-border relations and strengthening of the regional identity. Measures to promote the language and culture should be included in the transformation of the post-mining landscape (WRL, 2020: 20). The Saxon government stated that it will consider further measures that stipulate the socio-cultural and infrastructural development of the Sorbian settlement area (CoE, 2018: 36). Even if the main aims of the Domowina policy paper are included in regional strategies, clear measures for the promotion of Sorbian potentials are still missing. For instance, despite having a strategy until 2050, no indications are made to what extent the Sorbian potentials should be commodified, e.g., no indication on the expected number of new Sorbian speakers until 2050. To include such milestones would be useful for monitoring improvements in areas with a precarious linguistic situation, like in Lower Lusatia.

6. Theoretical Evaluation of the Findings

This chapter will evaluate the findings of the previous chapter in combination with the theoretical framework in order to indicate how social structures and inherent power relations influence minority empowerment and spatial development. In the second part, an outlook will be given, and the political implications of Sorbian empowerment will be discussed.

6.1. Influence of Power Structures on Minority Empowerment

Historically, industrial modernization processes are visible in the form of spatial dynamics in changing land-use patterns and the creation of social inequalities. Lusatia's spatial development was closely related to industrial transformation processes in times of upswing, crises, or wars. The expansion of the coal industry, and the collectivization of the GDR's agricultural sector transformed Lusatia's landscape and increased the marginalization of the Sorbs. Looking at the contemporary situation of the Sorbs, it must be stated that spatial developments might not only affect natural habitats, but they can also be drivers in the loss of language, culture and thus identity. Attached to changes in the industrial landscape are existing hierarchies that are tied to historical legacies of privilege and oppression. Transition periods such as the current structural change offer windows of opportunity to transform such unequal power structures through collective action. The example of the Sorbs shows though that the missing capacity for codetermination and political participation is often disregarded by governmental institutions and the majority population.

In the early years of the GDR, the Sorbs gained constitutional rights and public bilingualism was made mandatory. However, the extensive political control mechanisms of the regime, the influx of German-speaking workers and the large-scale collectivization and industrialization, led to the destruction of traditional Sorbian village structures followed by a massive loss of linguistic substance in Middle and Lower Lusatia (Pech, 2003). The political transformation of the 1990s exchanged the socialist-Marxist economic system with a capitalist market-economy. The lignite industry had to adapt to the new competitive conditions on an international market, which resulted in the reduction of the productive capacity. Roughly 90% of the workforce in the coal industry lost their work during the 1990s and the industry that defined Lusatia's economic, social and cultural identity for nearly 50 years had to be replaced (Gürtler et al. 2020:

32). The following rural exodus provided a window of opportunity for the Sorbs to regain territorial losses and revitalize their language. Despite the lack of binding protection mechanisms on the European level, it must be stated that the development for the Sorbs was rather favorable since the 1990s. After the German reunification, the Sorbs were recognized as a national minority and the German state, as well as Brandenburg and Saxony provide periodical reports on the status of the Sorbian culture and language (BMI, 2020: 102).

However, the relation between the Sorbs and governmental institutions is reflected by a problematic hierarchical power structure that is rooted in the monolingual German concept of a nation. Measures for the protection of national minorities are thus closely tied to power relations (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 82). This becomes visible when looking at the dependence of the state's goodwill in the funding of the Foundation for the Sorbian People. The financing of the Sorbian cultural and educational system is not freely negotiable, as the federal government decides on the extent and length of funding programs. This creates a hierarchical structure where critical remarks towards the German state could lead to lesser funding and thus workplace insecurity for members of the Foundation for the Sorbian People (Vogt, 2012: 230). State support for national minorities reflects the concept of the monolingual German nation, as state support was initially focused on German minorities abroad (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 81).

Looking at European and national efforts of recognition, funding, and fairness in political decision-making processes, it must be stated that many measures are often rather symbolic than empowering. The majority population has a purely instrumental perception of the use of Sorbian and there are no mechanisms in place that could change this view. Unlike other minority regions in Europe (e.g., Catalonia), there is no normalization in the public use of Sorbian. There is no social consensus on the public use of Sorbian, as Sorbs are bilingual and thus capable of using German in public (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 96). This creates an unequal power structure, where the German dominance is not meant to be contested. Furthermore, the commodification of Sorbian hardly takes place and the economic potentials are rarely used, even in tourism. The German state defined Lusatia's potential as a central European region that connects Eastern and Western Europe but does not mention the endogenous bilingualism of the Sorbs as an asset in closer cross-border relations. The promotion takes mostly place on a regional level, where the

states of Brandenburg and Saxony have recently included the Sorbian language and culture as a potential for tourism and cross-border networking.

As a predominantly rural area, Lusatia possesses a high dependence on the retrieval and production of raw materials and thus directly depends on the local ecological system. To strengthen the resilience of Lusatia, the diversification of local economies, as well as the creation of local networks and aid through public funding will be needed. As the findings highlighted, resilience and conservation efforts are an expression of political interest and expose the existing power structures. The existing framework of European minority policies does not offer extended possibilities for the support of national minorities. As an element of social action, the current structural change reflects this unequal power structure (Langer, 2019: 75). Increasing demand for socio-ecological transformation processes has become an omnipresent element of public debate with regards to the handling of raw materials as well as the general environmental degradation and climate change (Schmitt 2017: 92).

With the aims of the European Green Deal and the EU Cohesion policy, the COM expressed the need for a socio-ecological transition and the inclusion of ethnic minorities. The rejection of the Minority SafePack initiative and the political and financial contributions provided to some of the biggest financiers of brown energy, highlight that the norms, programs, or measures regarding the promotion of national minorities as well as regional development policies are still heavily influenced by neoliberal agendas and economic interests. The regional development programs offer certain possibilities for the promotion of Sorbian potentials, as they are not distributed through the state and thus regional actors are not dependent on the state's goodwill. The lack of specific funds for national minorities still creates dependencies on the majority population in bicultural areas. As the Sorbian minority is in most parts of its settlement area in the numerical inferiority, there is a widespread lack of willingness by the majority to include Sorbian concerns, but also a lack of collective action by the Sorbs to challenge such practices (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019: 101). The lack of collective action can be explained in the intra-Sorbian debate about the representation of Sorbian interests. Many Sorbs who are not from the Catholic core settlement often feel underrepresented in the public discourse on Sorbian representation (MWFK, 2017: 26).

The research question can be answered as follows: The regional dimension of the European framework for minority policies offers possibilities for a promotion of Sorbian potentials, but the extent depends on existing social power structures, which in the bicultural area of Lusatia do not allow for an actual empowerment and thus promotion of Sorbian potentials. Since there are no regional development programs in place that specifically aim at Sorbian actors, the promotion of potentials still depends on the goodwill of the majority population, which has historically not allowed for Sorbian self-mobilization.

6.2. Political Implications

It has been examined how the current European framework for minority politics protects the Sorbs but still hinders the promotion of Sorbian potentials. In this subchapter, the political implications following this paper's findings will be examined. Possible measures of the EU and Germany, as well as the intra-Sorbian organizational structure will be revised in terms of empowerment.

Concerning protection and empowerment, the government or the EU can provide the first impulse through which the receivers of empowerment are enabled to take control over their environment (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014). The German government as well as the state parliaments of Brandenburg and Saxony, agreed to a funding program as well as the creation of Sorbian councils and federal political bodies that support national minorities. The current national structure does not allow for the actual empowerment of the Sorbs as they are mostly passive beneficiaries of the state's goodwill, which means that Sorbian potentials cannot be promoted. The EU will need to become an active promoter of transnational minority rights and introduce binding mechanisms for the realization of the principles of the ECRML and the FCNM. The European cohesion policy and its attached funds should be diversified and specifically aimed at national minorities, such as successfully practiced in the German-Danish border region (EURAC, 2007). Also, on the national level, the existing funding structure is dysfunctional and needs to be revised, as it is currently not a self-supporting system. Closer cooperation between the governments of Saxony and Brandenburg will be needed in the revitalization and promotion of the Sorbian language. The structural change will not provide for the opportunity to create a new federal-state as proposed during the German reunification, but closer cooperation between

the Lusatian districts will be decisive in combating spatial differences and creating synergies to diversify the economy.

The EU can contribute to a positive development through its vision of a ‘Europe of regions’, which can enhance the capabilities of the Sorbs to take control over the own environment. Regional programs such as the LEADER program are a promising exception to the top-down approach of minority protection and acknowledge the potential of cultural heritage as a positive contribution to the quality of life in Lusatia (Laschewski et al. 2020). The biosphere reserve OHTL highlights that the post-mining landscapes can be used in an ecological manner that preserves nature while simultaneously including measures that stipulate the promotion of the Sorbian culture and language (SMWK, 2018: 93). Sorbian municipalities such as Nebelschütz/Njebjelčicy offer best-practice examples for the promotion of language and culture combined with the transition towards climate neutrality. Much of the new building stock in the municipality follows strict limitations regarding sustainability and the municipality produces three times as much energy through solar-panels, biogas, and wind power than it consumes itself (Schönfelder, 2017). Such measures could be applied for the recreation of natural reserves and become be a starting point for the revitalization of Sorbian infrastructure in the post-mining landscape. As the lignite mining area is part of the legally defined Sorbian settlement area, the legal possibility to use the post-mining landscape for language revitalization projects is given.

The positive impact of strengthened minority rights could be seen in the regional development of South Tyrol. During the implementation of the Second Statute of Autonomy in 1972, the coexistence of the three language groups – Italian, German and Ladin – was reorganized and the region subsequently developed from Italy’s poorest to the economically strongest region of Italy (Pan, 2010). The material livelihoods of the Ladin and German minorities were improved, while the socio-cultural and natural environment remained intact. The principles of spatial planning were aimed at endogenously developing villages through decentralized concentration, meaning that the creation of cultural, economic and public infrastructure was based on area-wide development. The minority policy, organized through a separate regional budget and flanked by other measures such as the establishment of three official languages, has made a significant contribution to the cultural and economic upswing of the region (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 44). Even if the framework for minority rights in South Tyrol is covered by territorial autonomy, the logic behind the promotion of the endogenous potentials can be transferred in

certain aspects to Lusatia. The Sorbian cultural and educational system already experiences a certain degree of cultural autonomy from the German government, but the municipalities in the Sorbian settlement area would need corresponding measures that help to protect the endangered linguistic substance, for example through increasing the municipalities' scope of action as enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government of 1985 (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 45). Furthermore, the Sorbian language needs to be promoted in the public space. Promising approaches such as the 'active offer' principle can be used to promote the equal use of Sorbian and German in the public space (SMWK, 2018: 36).

The current situation resembles an incomplete functional autonomy, but there are several possibilities to empower the Sorbs and thus promote their potentials. Empowerment efforts on the macro level are most effective as individuals can empower each other and a psychological change sets in that creates a feeling of control over the own environment. The collective empowerment of the Sorbs is thus best achieved through minority-run associations, as they are more resilient to injustice, assimilation, and can overcome a lack of resources (Sadan 2004: 106). In the last decade, a public debate about the representation of the Sorbs arose, where the Domowina received criticism within the Sorbian community. Critics argue that the Domowina, due to its organizational structure, can only represent its members but does not have the democratic legitimation to represent all Sorbs (Pernthaler, 2010: 539). Therefore, some Sorbs suggested the establishment of a cultural autonomy represented through a Sorbian parliament, the *Serbski sejm*. The current representation of Sorbian actors in governmental councils only gives the Sorbs the chance to participate in the counseling of knowledge, but decisions in political matters are made by external forces. Proponents of the *Serbski sejm* argue that an own parliament would be the only possibility to democratically represent all Sorbs and enhance the possibilities to gain collective rights against the German government (Elle, 2012: 31). The Sorbian parliament would be based on a representation model developed by Peter Pernthaler for the Carinthian Slovenes in the 1990s. In the Pernthaler-model, so-called ethnic chambers only consist of democratically elected minority members (Pernthaler 2010: 542).

However, such ethnic parliaments presume the existence of ethnically static nations. As the Carinthian Slovenes, the Sorbs can most likely be seen as a nation in an ethnic-cultural context and with regard to its status as a national minority without a kinstate, but they are not a nation in the sense of international law. A state in the sense of international law includes that a group

of people should share the same territory and have ethnic and cultural common features (Elle, 2012: 32). The Sorbian settlement area is instead characterized by economic and social entanglements between the Sorbian and German population and clear ethno-cultural boundaries cannot be defined (Tschernokoshewa, 2011: 12). The claim that a Sorbian parliament is best suited to decide about Sorbian interests and therefore, German authorities should be excluded from the decision-making process and transfer their competencies to the Sorbian parliament assumes that there are clear ethnic boundaries, which is not the case in Lusatia (Elle, 2012: 32). Contrary to empowerment, ethnic minority parliaments can especially in bicultural regions lead to an increasing polarization which creates new ethnic boundaries contrary to EU's vision of a "Europe of regions" (Marko, 1995: 425).

Within the current structures, an enhanced promotion of Sorbian interests can be achieved through strengthening the Domowina's position as the legal representative for the Sorbs. Opponents of the Domowina argue that it is not the legal representative of all Sorbs. However, the Sorbian legislation of Saxony states that the interests of the Sorbian people can be represented through an umbrella organization of Sorbian associations, which is the case for the Domowina (*article 5 SächsSorbg*). The Domowina offers a pluralistic structure, where everyone can become a member. The status of the Domowina, also does not indicate that it can only represent its members, as other organizations and citizen initiatives usually represent the interests of more people than just their members (Elle, 2012: 30). Furthermore, the status as a registered association must be revisited, as it means that the Domowina lacks the right to initiate proceedings on behalf of the Sorbian minority in matters of e.g., discrimination (Elle, 2005). Through the strengthening of the Domowina and a new funding structure for the Foundation for the Sorbian People, a representation of the Sorbs could be guaranteed in a democratic and effective manner (Vogt, 2012). A new funding structure should give the Domowina more power in the distribution of the financial assets, which would enable it to represent the interest and concerns of all Sorbs in the Sorbian settlement area. For this purpose, more Sorbian associations should be included in the organizational structure of the Domowina, which would increase the potential of individual empowerment within the Sorbian community.

As minority-run organizations do not automatically guarantee accountability and equal representation, the Domowina must increase its transparency using democratic instruments such as open elections and member surveys. That such measures can improve the position of a

minority organization has been proved by the Council of the Carinthian Slovenes (*zbor narodnich predstavnikov*), which introduced elections that are open for all Slovenes and not only members (Elle, 2012). A strengthening of the current institutional landscape seems to be the most realistic option to promote Sorbian potentials in a bicultural area such as Lusatia. A complete cultural autonomy would increase the risk of social division created by ethnic boundaries and territorial autonomy will not be renegotiated under the current state structure.

7. Conclusion

The pronounced vision of the EU is to create a ‘Europe of regions’ through its cohesion policy. In theory, this provides for a resilient and sustainable option in the transition away from heavy industry towards climate-neutral energy systems. The Covid-19 pandemic has recently shown that regional value chains are indispensable for a resilient economy. However, in a structurally diverse environment such as in the EU, regional development cannot be realized in a balanced manner if the instruments and institutions that should ensure stability are not considering the social and environmental dimension of economic development. Therefore, regional development must include the endogenous potentials of regions. For Lusatia, this means that the Sorbian population must be enabled to shape its environment using its potentials.

The findings of this paper highlight that decisions on the use of the post-mining landscapes are primarily discussed on a national and European level, despite the social and economic effects on the local population. The initiated regional development programs allow for participation possibilities and can thus enable the promotion of Sorbian potentials. In practice, the lack of binding mechanisms and diversified funding for national minorities limits the possibilities for such promotion. Especially in bicultural areas as Lusatia, the minority cannot be promoted through such programs if the majority population does not recognize their potentials. The EU is not a frontrunner in minority promotion as it primarily influences the discourse through declarations and conditionality imposed on candidate states. The EU might refer to cultural and linguistic diversity as a core value, but MS often decide on the implementation of measures. The periodical reports of the CoE helps to monitor and analyze issues but they are not sufficient to empower the development of minority identities for social change. The regional level of EU

policy can thus only promote Sorbian potentials if the existing social structure provides for such opportunities.

Since the fragmentation of Lusatia in 1815, the German state never accommodated Sorbian autonomy in any form, be it cultural or territorial. Sorbian efforts for the unification of the Sorbian settlement area in a single administrative unit were systematically ignored. Thus, it can be concluded that the ‘monolingual’ German nation-building process never prioritized the inclusion of ethnic minorities (Carbonneau, 2019: 49). The positive development in terms of legal and cultural recognition since the 1990s, have been overshadowed by institutional and societal indifference to Sorbian concerns, therefore hindering their promotion. Participation possibilities for Sorbs are often rather symbolic. The existence of the Sorbs does not change the German dominance in the public space, where bilingualism is rather seen as a burden than a potential (Marten & Saagpakk, 2019). An incomplete functional autonomy will not promote, let alone protect the Sorbian language in the long run. The valorisation of Sorbian language and culture can therefore hardly take place in Lusatia. Looking at the continuously precarious linguistic situation in Lower and Middle Lusatia, it becomes clear that legal minority protection as practiced in the past has not made any progress and merely covers for the cultural and linguistic losses. The educational system in most parts of the Sorbian settlement area does not offer a complete Sorbian education as practiced in the core settlement area of Upper Lusatia. For the revitalization of language and culture, more measures will be needed than the transgenerational transfer of the language, it needs the acceptance of the environment and increased support of institutions. Only if an area-wide Sorbian educational offer is guaranteed, will the situation of the Sorbs be strengthened through the constant transfer of knowledge, language, culture and thus identity.

The structural change highlights that unequal power structures that persist with regards to the marginalization of the Sorbs. The Sorbian minority has seen certain windows of opportunity for territorial autonomy but in times of shifting power structures and crises, the majority population did not transfer power to the Sorbian minority. If it wants to preserve its cultural and linguistic diversity, the EU and its MS must act on legislative changes and further participatory measures. As the analysis of this paper suggested, territorial autonomy is not sufficient in a bicultural territory of Lusatia, as it could lead to new ethnic conflicts and increased xenophobia against people with Sorbian identities.

A partial cultural autonomy could be achieved through the strengthening of the Domowina as the legal representative and a new long-term funding strategy by the state and the EU (through specific programs and funds aimed at minorities). Until now it must be stated that Sorbian potentials have only been recognized to a relatively limited extent. Nevertheless, empowerment processes could be triggered from within the Sorbian community. The debate on the representation of the Sorbs engages community members that might previously not feel as Sorbian or have not been politically engaged. In addition to the preservation and revitalization of the language, the complete valorization of the Sorbian cultural heritage will provide the greatest challenge for the Sorbs. The structural change is a starting point to valorize the cultural heritage and utilize it in spatial development and thus reverse the existing social structures of Lusatia.

Bibliography

Albert, M.-T., Meißner, M. (2014). *Leitfaden zur Inwertsetzung des immateriellen Kulturerbes in der Lausitz*. Cottbus: Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg, Lehrstuhl Interkulturalität, UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies.

BA – Bundesagentur für Arbeit. (2017). *Der Arbeits- und Ausbildungsmarkt in Deutschland - Monatsbericht Dezember und Jahr 2016*. Nürnberg.

BMI – Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat. (2020). *Nationale Minderheiten Minderheitensprachen und die Regionalsprache Niederdeutsch in Deutschland*. 4th edition.

BMWi – Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie. (2021). Kohleausstieg und Strukturwandel. [Online] available at: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Wirtschaft/kohleausstieg-und-strukturwandel.html>, accessed on January 11, 2021.

BMWi – Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie. (2020). *Bund-Länder-Vereinbarung - Zur Durchführung des Investitionsgesetzes Kohleregionen (InvKG)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/B/bund-laender-vereinbarung-invkg>.

Bridge G., Barca S., Özkaynak B., Turhan E., Wyeth R. (2018). *Towards a Political Ecology of EU Energy Policy*. In: Foulds C., Robison R. (eds) *Advancing Energy Policy*. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, pp.163-175.

Brunner, G. (1998). *Menschenrechte von Minderheiten: Individualrechte, Gruppenrechte oder Selbstbestimmungsrecht?* In: *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften*. Vol. 39 Menschenrechte. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, pp.103-124.

Budar, J. (2020). *Plody ze serbskeje zahrody*. In: *Serbske Nowiny*. Lětnik 30, číslo 252. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, p.1.

Budarjowa, L. (2018). *20 lět Witaj - 20 Jahre Witaj*. 1st edition. Bautzen: Serbske šulske towarstwo z.t.

Budarjowa, L. (2019). *Rozprawa předsydstwa SŠT 2019*. [Online] available at: https://www.sorbischer-schulverein.de/_download/rozprawa_28.9.2019_se_final_SS__3_.pdf, accessed on December 18, 2020.

Bullard, R.D. (1994). *Dumping in Dixie: Race, class and environmental quality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Carayannis, E. G., Campbell, D. F. (2012). *Mode 3 Knowledge Production in Quadruple Helix Innovation Systems*. New York: Springer New York.

Carbonneau, J.-R. (2019). *German mononational federalism and the Sorbian quest for territorial autonomy*. In: Pan et al. (eds) *European Journal for Minority Studies*. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, pp.26-53.

Cârstocea, A. (2013). *Democracy, participation and empowerment*. In: Malloy, T. H. (eds) *Minority Issues in Europe. Rights Concepts, Policy*. Vol. 1. Berlin: Frank & Timme, pp.247-272.

Claassens, L. J. (2016). *'The woman of substance and human flourishing: Proverbs 31:10–31 and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach'*. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 32(1), pp.5-19.

CoE – Council of Europe. (2018). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Sixth periodical report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter – Germany.

COM – European Commission. (2019). *Coal regions in transition*. [Online] available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/EU-coal-regions/coal-regions-transition_en, accessed on November 15, 2020.

COM – European Commission. (2020). *Arbeitsunterlage der Kommissionsdienststellen. Länderbericht Deutschland 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0504&qid=1603885768389&from=EN>.

COM – European Commission. (2020a). *EU-Regionalkommissarin Ferreira in der Lausitz zu Gesprächen über Strukturwandel und künftige Kohäsionspolitik*. [Online] available at: https://ec.europa.eu/germany/news/20200124-ferreira-lausitz_de, accessed on September 21, 2020.

Domowina. (2019). *Positionspapier der Lausitzer Sorben. Łužica/Łužyca/Lausitz – eine Kompetenzregion – zwei Völker – viele Chancen*.

Elle, L. (2005). *Das Rahmenübereinkommen des Europarats zum Schutz nationaler Minderheiten und die Minderheitenpolitik in der Lausitz*. Bautzen: Kleine Reihe des Sorbischen Instituts.

Elle, L. (2012). *Sorbische Interessenvertretung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. Bautzen: Kleine Reihe des Sorbischen Instituts.

EURAC. (2007). *Kompetenzanalyse: Minderheiten als Standortfaktor in der deutsch-dänischen Grenzregion – Miteinander, Füreinander*. Europäische Akademi Bozen/Bolzano im Auftrag des Landtages von Schleswig-Holstein. EURAC Research.

EURACTIV. (2017). *Bildung: Viele deutsche Schüler lernen keine zweite Fremdsprache*. [Online] available at: <https://www.euractiv.de/section/eu-innenpolitik/news/bildung-viele-deutsche-schueler-lernen-keine-zweite-fremdsprache/>, accessed on December 21, 2020.

Förster, F. (2003). *Die nationalsozialistische Wendenzählung von 1939 und der Einfluss ihres Ergebnisses während des Zweiten Weltkriegs*. In: Pech, E., Scholze, D, (eds) *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand*. Sonderausgabe der Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, pp.73-101.

Förster, F. (2014). *Verschwundene Dörfer im Lausitzer Braunkohlenrevier*. Schriften des Sobischen Instituts. 3rd revised and extended edition. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag.

Greib, M., Wörlen, Ch., Richter, F., Witt, U., Troost, A. (2019). *Teil 1. Struktur- und Industriepolitische Alternativen für die Lausitz*. In: Nach der Kohle. Alternativen für einen Strukturwandel in der Lausitz. Studien 4/2019, 1st edition. Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung, pp.9-72.

Gürtler, K., Luh, V., Staemmler, J. (2020). *Strukturwandel als Gelegenheit für die Lausitz – Warum dem Anfang nach der Zauber fehlt*. In: Lausitz, APuZ 6-7/2020. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp.32-39

Hoch Jovanovic, T. (2012). *Present experiences in the Europeanisation of national minority groups. Revaluating the EU's Role Beyond the Power of Membership Conditionality*. Centre international de formation européenne. 2012/2, No. 364, pp.359-378.

Hoch Jovanovic, T. (2013). *Europeanisation*. In: Malloy, T. H. (eds) *Minority Issues in Europe. Rights Concepts, Policy*. Vol. 1. Berlin: Frank & Timme, pp.75-103.

Holifield, (2015). *Environmental justice*. In: Perreault, T., Bridge, G., McCarthy, J. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. New York: Routledge, pp.585-597.

Jacobs, F., Nowak, M. (2020). *Mehrwerte Schaffen – Wie der Strukturwandel in der Lausitz von der sorbisch-deutschen Mehrsprachigkeit profitieren kann*. In: Lausitz, APuZ 6-7/2020. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp.40-47.

Jacobs F., Häfner D., Laschewski L. (2018). *Strukturentwicklung in der Lausitz/Łužyca. Empfehlungen für einen Aktionsplan im Bereich Sorben/Wenden*. Bautzen: Sorbisches Institut.

Kunze, P. (2003). *Die Sorbenpolitik in der Ober- und Niederlausitz vom Wiener Kongress bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*. In: Pech, E., Scholze, D, (eds) *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand*. Sonderausgabe der Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, pp.13-38.

KWSB – Kommission für Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung. (2019). *Kommission „Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung“. Abschlussbericht.* Berlin: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie.

Langer, M. (2019). *Strukturwandel in der Lausitz: Der Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Naturverhältnisse und die Bedeutung für Sorben/Wenden.* In: Schmidt, M., Middendorf, L., Purwins, S. (eds) *The Power of Political Ecology - Tagungsband zur ersten augsburger.forschungswerkstatt.* Universität Augsburg: Institut für Geografie, pp.75-82.

Language Diversity (2013). *Fakten.* [Online] available at: <http://language-diversity.eu/knowledge/fakten/>, accessed on November 28, 2020.

Laurén, Ch. (1999). *Språkbud. Forskning och praktik.* Vaasan yliopiston julkaisu.

Lausitz Magazin. (2020). *Das Modell für Europa - Warum der Green Deal nur mit der Lausitz gelingen kann.* Cottbus: zwei Helden. pp.66-96.

Malloy, T. H. (2013). *European International Law.* In: Malloy, T. H. (eds) *Minority Issues in Europe. Rights Concepts, Policy.* Vol. 1. Berlin: Frank & Timme, pp.51-74.

Malloy, T. H. (2014). *National Minorities between Protection and Empowerment: Towards a Theory of Empowerment.* In: *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe.* Vol. 13, No. 2, 2014, pp.11-29.

Malloy, T. H., Boulter, C. (2019) *Minority Issues in Europe: New Ideas and Approaches.* Vol. 2. Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Marko, J. (1995). *Autonomie und Integration. Rechtsinstitute des Nationalitätenrechts im funktionalen Vergleich.* Studien zur Politik und Verwaltung, 51. Wien-Köln-Graz.

Marten, H. F., Saagpakk, M. (2019). *The monolingual habitus of German society challenging the interests of an autochthonous minority language: Linguistic landscapes in the Sorbian*

“capital” of Bautzen / Budyšin. Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies. Vol. 13, 3, 2019, pp.77-106.

Martínez-Alier, J. (1991). *Ecology and the poor: a neglected dimension of Latin American history*. Journal of Latin American Studies, vol. 23, pp.621-639.

Martínez-Alier, J. (2003). *The environmentalism of the poor: a study of ecological conflicts and valuation*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Maschke, L. Miessner, M., Naumann, M. (2020). *Kritische Landforschung. Konzeptionelle Zugänge, empirische Problemlagen und politische Perspektiven*. Studien 1/2020. Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

Muka A. (1979): *Statistika lužiskich Serbow*, Budyšin. 1884–1886. 5. Auflage unter dem Titel Serbski zemjepisny słowničk. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag.

Müller, W., Steinberg, S. (2020). *Region im Wandel – Eine kurze Geschichte der Lausitz(en)*. In: Lausitz, APuZ 6-7/2020. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp.15-22.

MWFK – Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Forschung und Kunst. (2017). *1. Bericht der Landesregierung zur Lage des sorbischen/wendischen Volkes im Land Brandenburg*. Potsdam.

Nauschütz, S. (2021). *Leag fördert weniger Kohle – Proschim und Welzow bleiben, Mühlrose nicht*. [Online] available at: <https://www.dnn.de/Region/Mitteldeutschland/Lausitzer-Doerfer-Leag-foerdert-weniger-Kohle-Proschim-und-Welzow-bleiben-Muehlrose-nicht>, accessed on February 2, 2021.

Nussbaum, M. (2000). *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, M. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2021). *Besser leben – wie und wo?* [Online] available at: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/de>, accessed on January 15, 2021.

OHTL – Oberlausitzer Heide und Teichlandschaft. (n.d.). *Kooperationen*. [Online] available at: <https://www.biosphaerenreservat-oberlausitz.de/de/content/kooperationen>, accessed on January 12, 2021.

Pan, Ch. (2010). *Südtirols Regionalentwicklung als Erfolgsbilanz. Vom Konfliktfall durch Minderheitenschutz zum Mehrwert*. In: Vogt, M., Sokol, J., Bingen, D., Neyer, J., Löhr, A. (eds) *Minderheiten als Mehrwert*. Schriften des Collegium Pontes. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Pan, Ch. (2016). *Minderheitenschutz und Wirtschaft*. In: Pan, Ch., Pfeil, B. S., Videsott, P. (eds) *Die Volksgruppen in Europa. Handbuch der europäischen Volksgruppen*. Vol. 1, 2nd revised and extended edition. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, pp.343-383.

Pech, E. (2003). *Eine Vorzeigeminderheit? Die Sorben in der DDR*. In: Pech, E., Scholze, D. (eds) *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand. Sonderausgabe der Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung*, pp.102-129. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag.

Pech, E. (2020). *Der „sozialistische Frühling“ in der Lausitz. Die Kollektivierung der Landwirtschaft und die Sorben*. In: Lausitz – Łužica – Łužyca. Aspekte der Beziehungs- und Verflechtungsgeschichte einer ost-mittel-europäischen Brückenlandschaft. [Online] available at: <https://lausitz.hypotheses.org/1304>, accessed on September 18, 2020.

Pernthaler, P. (2010). *Gutachten über die Errichtung einer Körperschaft als öffentliche Vertretung der Sorben (Wenden)*. In: Vogt, M., Sokol, J., Bingen, D., Neyer, J., Löhr, A. (eds). *Minderheiten als Mehrwert*. Schriften des Collegium Pontes. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 537-556.

Popova, Z. (2019). *Minority Empowerment*. In: Malloy, T. H., Boulter, C. (eds) *Minority Issues in Europe: New Ideas and Approaches*. Vol. 2. Berlin: Frank & Timme, pp.17-49.

Rein, D. (2015). *Zum Anspruch der Sorbinnen auf weibliche Formen des Nachnamens*. Gutachten ohne Auftraggeber. Bautzen: Kleine Reihe des Sorbischen Instituts.

SächsSorbG (1999). *Sächsisches Sorbengesetz vom 31. März 1999, zuletzt geändert durch Artikel 59a des Gesetzes vom 27. Januar 2012*. Retrieved from: http://www.sachsen-gesetze.de/shop/saechsgvbl/1999/7/read_pdf.

Sadan, E. (2004). *Empowerment and Community Planning*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers.

Schaefer-Rolffs, A. (2014). *Minority Politics in Practice: Protection and Empowerment in the Danish-German Border Region*. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*. Vol. 13, No. 2, 2014, pp.80-103.

Scheid, L. (2021). *Kritik am Milliarden-Vertrag mit Braunkohle-Unternehmen*. [Online] available at: <https://www.euractiv.de/section/energie-und-umwelt/news/milliarden-vertrag-braunkohle-leag-rwe-kohleausstieg-kritik/>, accessed on February 22, 2021.

Scheidel, A., Temper, L., Demaria, F., Martínez-Alier, J. (2018). *Ecological distribution conflicts as forces for sustainability: an overview and conceptual framework*. *Sustainability Science* 13, pp. 585-598.

Schlosberg, D. (2007). *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press UK.

Schmidt, S., Müller, F. C., Ibert, O., Brinks, V. (2018). *Open Region: Creating and exploiting opportunities for innovation at the regional scale*. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 25 (2), pp.187-205.

Schmitt, T. (2017): *Dürre als gesellschaftliches Naturverhältnis. Die politische Ökologie des Wassers im Nordosten Brasiliens*. Stuttgart: Erdkundliches Wissen- Band 162.

Schönfelder, J. (2017). *Nebelschütz lebt den Wandel. Ein schönes Beispiel für die praktische Gestaltung der "neuen Lausitz".* [Online] available at: <http://www.lausitzerperspektiven.de/de/aktuelles/blog/nebeschuetz-lebt-den-wandel>, accessed on January 14, 2021.

Sen, A. (2005). *Human Rights and Capabilities*. Journal of Human Development, 6(2), pp.151-166.

SMWK – Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst. (2018). *Fünfter Bericht der Sächsische Staatsregierung zur Lage des sorbischen Volkes*. Dresden.

Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz (1994). *Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden) im Land Brandenburg vom 7. Juli 1994, zuletzt geändert durch Artikel 2 des Gesetzes vom 15. Oktober 2018*. Retrieved from: http://bravors.brandenburg.de/gesetze/swg_2014#8.

Sorbisches Institut. (2019). *Abgeschlossen im Juni 2019: ESF-PROJEKT "SORBENWISSEN"*. [Online] available at: <https://www.serbski-institut.de/de/ESF-Projekt/>, accessed on January 14, 2021.

Staemmler, J., Priemer, J., Gabler, J. (2020). *Zivilgesellschaft im Strukturwandel. Vereine und Stiftungen in der Lausitz*. DOI: 10.2312/iass.2020.023.

STLA – Statistisches Landesamt des Freistaates Sachsen. (2017). *Bevölkerung des Freistaates Sachsen jeweils am Monatsende ausgewählter Berichtsmonate nach Gemeinden*. Retrieved from: https://www.statistik.sachsen.de/download/010_GB-Bev/Bev_Z_Gemeinde_akt.pdf.

Strukturstärkungsgesetz. (2020). *Strukturstärkungsgesetz Kohleregionen vom 8. August 2020*. Retrieved from: http://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBI&jumpTo=bgbl120s1795.pdf.

Svarstad, H., Sletten, A., Paloniemi, R., Barton D.N., Grieg-Gran, M. (2011). *Three types of environmental justice: From concepts to empirical studies of social impacts of policy instruments for conservation of biodiversity*. PolicyMix Report Issue No. 1. Oslo: NINA.

Svarstad, H, Benjaminsen, T. (2020). *Reading radical environmental justice through a political ecology lens*. *Geoforum* 108 (2020), pp. 1-11.

Toivanen R. (2005). *Das Paradox der Minderheitenrechte in Europa*. *SWS-Rundschau* (45. Jg.) Heft 2/2005, pp.185-207.

Tschernokoschewa, E. (2011). *Die hybridologische Sicht. Von der Theorie zur Methode*. In: Tschernokoschewa E., Keller, I. (eds) *Dialogische Begegnungen. Minderheiten – Mehrheiten aus hybridologischer Sicht* (Hybride Welten, 5). Münster, pp.13-30.

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2019). *Wissen. Können. Weitergeben. - Bundesweites Verzeichnis Immaterielles Kulturerbe*. 3rd revised edition. Bonn: Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission.

Vogt, M., Sokol, J., Bingen, D., Neyer, J., Löhr, A. (2010). *Minderheiten als Mehrwert*. Schriften des Collegium Pontes. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Vogt, M. (2012). *Empfehlungen zur Stärkung der sorbischen Minderheit – durch Schaffung eines abgestimmten Selbstverwaltungs-, Kooperations-, Projekt- und Institutionsclusters*. *Europäisches Journal für Minderheitenfragen* EJM 5. Wien: Verlag Österreich, pp.211-429.

Walde, M. (2004). *Demographisch-statistische Betrachtungen im Oberlausitzer Gemeindeverband »Am Klosterwasser«*. In: *Lětopis* 51, 2004, pp.3-27.

WRL – Wirtschaftsregion Lausitz. (2020). *Entwicklungsstrategie Lausitz 2050*.

Wolf, S. (2019). *Minority Empowerment*. In: Malloy, T. H., Boulter, C. (eds) *Minority Issues in Europe: New Ideas and Approaches*. Vol. 2. Berlin: Frank & Timme, pp.97-112.

Wowčer, J. (2021). *Žadyn lěpši škit mjeńšin*. In: *Serbske Nowiny*. *Lětnik* 31, číslo 11. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, pp.1-2.

Założba za serbski lud. (2020). Stawizny, wustawki a financowanje Założby. [Online] available at: <https://stiftung.sorben.com/hornjoserbsce/zalozba/stawizny-a-financowanje/>, accessed on December 18, 2020.

Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz (2020). *Lausitz / Łužica / Łužyca. Die Sorben/Wenden – Verbinden die Lausitz.*

Annex

Table 1: Nussbaum's Set of Capabilities (source: Claassens, 2016: 8-9)

1. Life	- ability to have a normal life, not dying before one's time.
2. Bodily health and integrity	- ability to have access to basic goods, such as food, shelter and health care.
3. Bodily integrity	- ability to be free from violence and the right to enjoy one's sexuality.
4. Senses, imagination, thought	- access to education, freedom of expression and religious experience in addition to the ability experience pleasurable activities
5. Emotions	- freedom to express human emotions (e.g., fear, grieve) without fear of recrimination.
6. Practical reason	- ability to form an own conception of what seems good and being able to apply it to one's own life.
7. Affiliation	- ability engage freely in various forms of social interaction. Being treated as a dignified being which equal worth compared to others.
8. Other species	- ability to show concern and be in relation to animals, plants, and nature.
9. Play	- ability to laugh, play, and have time for recreational activities.
10. Control over one's environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to engage in politics and possess rights of political participation, free speech, and the freedom of association. - ability to own property both individually and/or collectively. - right to seek employment on an equal basis with others.

Table 5: Actors in the Energy Transition of Lusatia (source: own illustration)

European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main instrument to support the increasing convergence between regions and MS are European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and regional development programs. • The Green Deal Europe should guarantee to keep the increase in global average temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and limit the global warming to 1.5°C. The long-term strategy of the EU aims thus at the creation of a social just, prosperous and climate neutral economy until 2050 (COM, 2019).
German State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate protection plan 2050 (<i>Klimaschutzplan 2050</i>), follows the guidelines of the Green Deal Europe for regions in transition • KWSB sets up proposals for socio-economic and environmental concepts for the remaining coal regions. • The aim is to develop sustainable industrial value chains in Germany (KWSB 2019: 10).
Brandenburg and Saxony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Interests of Brandenburg are represented through the Commissioner for Lusatia and the <i>Wirtschaftsregion Lausitz (WRL)</i>, a cooperative association of the six Lusatian districts. • The interests of Saxony are represented through a Commissioner for structural developments and the Saxonian Agency for Structural Change (<i>Sächsische Agentur für Strukturentwicklung GmbH</i>). • In the regional development strategies of Brandenburg and Saxony, the economic and social structure of Lusatia should be improved in sectors such as: infrastructure, innovation and research, economic support and development, labour development, marketing, culture and tourism, cross-border development and citizen participation (WRL, 2020).
LEAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2016, the LEAG is the operator of all remaining lignite mines and plants in Lusatia. • The company has around 7,000 employees in its Lusatian mines, power plants and headquarters in Cottbus/Chóśebuz. The number of employees cannot be given with complete accuracy, as the LEAG is restrictive with giving public information about its affairs (Greib et al., 2019: 29).
Domowina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The umbrella organization for Sorbian associations and organizations in Lusatia, the Domowina (founded in 1912) acts as the legally recognized representative of the Sorbs. • The Domowina has 7,300 members divided in more than 200 local groups and 13 supra-regional associations (Jacobs & Nowak, 2020: 43-44).

Table 8: Promotion of Sorbian potentials in regional development programs (Source: own illustration, SMWK, 2018; MWFK, 2017; Elle, 2012)

Regional program	Sorbian participation
Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft (LEADER-Region)	One member of the Domowina in the regional advisory board.
Lausitzer Seenland (LEADER-Region)	One Sorbian member of the Sorbian Culture tourism association.
Spreewald-Plus (LEADER-Region)	Currently no Sorbian representative.
Spree-Neiße-Land (LEADER-Region)	One member of the Domowina in the regional advisory board.
Neiße-Nisa-Nysa (Euro-Region)	One member of the Domowina in the regional advisory board.
Spree-Neiße-Bober (Euro-Region)	One member of the Domowina in the regional advisory board.

Table 9: Empowerment in minority institutions (source: BMI, 2020)

Institution	Affiliated to	Sorbian Representation	Empowerment
Commissioner for Emigrant and Minority Issues of the German Government	German government	No	No
Minority Council and Secretariat	German government	Yes, the Domowina is part of the Minority Council.	Yes
Advisory Committee for Questions Regarding the Sorbian Minority in the Ministry of Interior	German government	Yes, one member of the Foundation for the Sorbian People, and three members of the Domowina.	Unclear
Council of Sorbian Affairs	Saxony state parliament	Yes, four unsalaried members are elected by Sorbian institutions and municipalities of the Sorbian settlement area can propose the candidates.	Unclear
Council for the Affairs of Sorbian/Wendish People	Brandenburg state parliament	Yes, five unsalaried members are elected by Sorbian institutions and municipalities of the Sorbian settlement area can propose the candidates.	Unclear

- *Die Eidesstattliche Erklärung ist Teil der Abschlussarbeit und wird in die Arbeit eingebunden. Sie hat folgenden Wortlaut:*

Eidesstattliche Erklärung

“Hiermit erkläre ich an Eides Statt, dass ich die vorliegende Master Thesis selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasst und andere als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel nicht benutzt habe. Die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen (direkte oder indirekte Zitate) habe ich unter Benennung des Autors/der Autorin und der Fundstelle als solche kenntlich gemacht.

Mir ist bekannt, dass die wörtliche oder nahezu wörtliche Wiedergabe von fremden Texten oder Textpassagen aus Büchern, Zeitschriften, Zeitungen, aus dem Internet u.ä. ohne Quellenangabe als Täuschungsversuch gewertet wird und zu einer Beurteilung der Arbeit mit „nicht ausreichend“ bzw. „ohne Erfolg“ führt. Sollte ich die Arbeit anderweitig zu Prüfungszwecken eingereicht haben, sei es vollständig oder in Teilen, habe ich die Prüfer/innen und den Prüfungsausschuss hierüber informiert.

12.03.2021

Berlin, Datum



Unterschrift

- *The following statutory declaration is a part of the thesis, and should be included in the bound work.*

Sworn declaration

I hereby formally declare that I have written the submitted Master's thesis entirely by myself without anyone else's assistance. Where I have drawn on literature or other sources, either in direct quotes, or in paraphrasing such material, I have referenced the original author or authors and the source in which it appeared.

I am aware that the use of quotations, or of close paraphrasing, from books, magazines, newspapers, the internet or other sources, which are not marked as such, will be considered as an attempt at deception, and that the thesis will be graded as a fail. In the event that I have submitted the dissertation - either in whole or in part - for examination within the framework of another examination, I have informed the examiners and the board of examiners of this fact.

12.03.2021

Berlin, date



signature