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OF THE RESEARCH INTO THE VALUES HELD BY THE INHABITANTS OF THE POLISH-CZECH BORDERLAND

Research project allows us to better get to know the inhabitants of the Polish-Czech borderland and to bring out similarities and differences between the Polish and the Czech with reference to the basic values that are vital to each human individual.

Keywords: *basic human values, borderland, similarities, differences.*

The changes that have followed in Poland and in the Czech Republic after the states' access to the European Union concern also – or maybe even in particular – the area of the borderland, within which there had occurred – already much earlier – integration processes of the local communities living on the either side of the borderline, even if only due to the limited free movement of local residents across the border. Thanks to the law on the limited free movement across the border, which was in force, the citizens of the Czech Republic and Poland residing in the area, were able to use the possibility of making contacts with their neighbours. That was realized through various social activities ranging from contacts made while doing shopping, excursions and holiday stays to common cultural events and scientific projects and other enterprises. It is worth underlining that the intensive contacts of the earlier days did not concern exclusively inhabitants of the borderland region that would be precisely determined by regulations, an expression of which was – among others – tighter cooperation between many Polish and Czech institutions, like the universities of Opole and Opava, in the effect of which many monographs devoted to problems of the Polish-Czech borderland were prepared jointly by Polish and Czech authors. Thus, it can be concluded that the present study is a continuation of the earlier research initiatives proposed by the Polish-Czech scientific forum.

The present study concerning the social reality of the Polish-Czech borderland following the accession to the EU is an expression of researchers' interest in the changes that are occurring in both communities that 'found themselves caught up' in a new social situation – in the situation of open borders, much broader possibilities, yet also numerous dangers, like – for instance – those resulting from differences in values adhered to and dominating attitudes towards different elements of social reality. It is obvious that contacts with carriers of other cultures require greater openness to others, perceived very often as 'alien', greater understanding and not questioning the fact that they are different. This, in turn, causes us to be more and more interested in what differs us from the others, and – consequently – to ask ourselves the questions who we are and with what and with whom we identify ourselves, since it is not until then that we will be able to recognize the differences separating us from them, to assume attitudes towards them, and also to evaluate them. It is these problems that the present work is devoted to, based on Polish-Czech research on the inhabitants of the broadly-understood Polish-Czech borderland.

The present work makes a summary of that by Polish and Czech researchers representing the University of Opole and the Institute of Public Administration and Regional Policy of the Silesian University of Opava, who – within a joint project – took up the problem of the new advancing reality of the Polish-Czech borderland, following the countries' accession to the EU. The empirical research was carried out among the inhabitants of the borderland on the either side of the Polish-Czech border from May to July 2010. It used the quota-based selection of the sample, taking into account such independent variables as; age, gender, education, current status and area of living (urban or rural). On the whole, there were 660 people selected for the research – residents of the Polish and Czech borderland. While examining the two populations it turned out that it was not possible to fully realize the assumed samples, which means that the obtained results should be treated with due caution.

The authors of the monograph, which crowns the efforts aimed at realizing the research project, concentrated their attention on several important issues. First of all, they were interested in the following: how representatives of both borderland communities cope with the new conditions of membership in the EU, how they perceive this membership – as a chance or a threat, especially being confronted with the overlapping global crisis and its effects.

This, by assumption, quantitative study was conducted by means of the survey method, with the use of specially prepared questionnaire which – in many places – made reference to research tools applied in studies

into values already conducted in the world and in Europe [1, p. 498]. This intended move was dictated by the wish to collect empirical material that would allow – at least in part – making a comparison of the results obtained in our research with those reported by earlier and much broader European and worldwide studies.

The conducted studies – out of necessity – had to take into account the broad socio-political background as a reality in which respondents function and therefore – in the first place – the living conditions in the new social reality made the focal point, as they were determined by the membership in the EU and the perceptible consequences of the global financial crisis. The issues were analyzed by Anna Václavíková, and it follows from her establishments that – contrary to expectations – the respondents on either side of the border did not point, in any significant manner, to a dramatically unfavourable influence of the world's crisis on their personal lives. Irrespective of the analyzed independent variables, the respondents expressed their conviction that the crisis had not affected them personally. A consequence of such a positive feeling is the general satisfaction with the life to date expressed by the respondents (78.0 % of the Czech respondents and 71.5 % of the Polish ones, when asked to evaluate their own lives after the accession to the EU, chose the answers “Fairly good” and “Good”) [2, p. 107-127].

The above-mentioned author was also interested in the evaluation of readiness to offer help to others in crisis situations. The readiness to support compatriots is an important value in a democratic society, therefore it is hardly surprising that the questionnaire of the survey contained a question relating to this problem. The obtained results do not point to a very ‘elevating’ state of things as regards this sphere. It is hard to pinpoint the causes of this phenomenon, but – as the author indicates – over 25.0% of the Polish and 16.0% of the Czech respondents decisively did not display interest in their co-citizens’ problems. The choice of the answers: “I am not willing to help” and “Everybody must care for themselves”, testifies to the sad truth only too well. On the other hand, the questioned with more altruistic and emphatic attitudes were the most willing to help (as indicated by their successive choices) the following categories of people: victims of natural calamities, the disabled (as regards the Czech sample) and maltreated mothers (in the Polish sample). The author also draws attention to the faint readiness to offer help to the elderly in both groups of respondents, which – in the situation of progressing aging of both societies – should be considered a most worrying signal. As it seems, this unfavourable phenomenon is one of the effects of the ‘socialist experiment’, which – as regards the social sphere – made the citizens of the socialist state that functioned earlier accustomed to the idea that it is the state that is responsible for the old, who – after finishing their working lives – should remain securely protected by the system of pensions provided by the state.

A most vital problem, which Anna Václavíková drew attention to, were the attitudes of the respondents towards different significant social phenomena. There were eleven statements included in the survey questionnaire and the task of the questioned was to indicate to what extent they agreed with them. Their choices – located on the *positive v. negative* continuum – seem to confirm the influence of the former system on the examined, which was already signalled earlier. The clearly emerging conviction dominant in the both samples of respondents testifies to the problem only too evidently: “people’s poverty is a result of the changes in the socioeconomic system”, “care for the elderly is mainly the matter of the state”, to quote the most frequently indicated ones. On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice an influence of the new social reality on the respondents’ attitudes. The percentage of those who were convinced that “they should take care of their own fate themselves and should not expect the state to do it for them” was also considerable.

Beside the above-described social aspect, there were additional statements relating to economic matters and consequences of the membership in the EU, which were included in the questionnaire. On the plane of the former, the differences between the Polish and Czech respondents are much clearer. The first can be included in the group of enthusiasts of egalitarianism: despite the radical change in the economic sphere (the transition from the centrally-controlled state economy to market economy) the inhabitants of the Polish borderland, in a slightly clearer way, advocate far-fetched egalitarianism within the sphere of payments to employees, maintenance of state control over enterprises and oppose competitiveness between companies. Thus, it may be concluded that the Czech are adapting to the new situation of market economy in a better and quicker manner than their neighbours on the other side of the border. In the case of the other plane (chances and threats connected with the membership in the EU) one can notice an evident ambivalence of the questioned, which is manifested by their choices concentrating in the middle positions on the scale. It is worth stressing, though, that it is also in this case that the Polish turned out stronger malcontents than their counterparts, more often perceiving the membership in the EU as a source of threats rather than that of chances.

The author of the section of the monograph devoted to values is Věra Juříčková [3, p. 63-77]. In this part of the research the question concerning values was taken over from questionnaires of surveys used in studies conducted earlier worldwide and in Europe, in which it was attempted to examine how important to the respondents the following were: family, friends and acquaintances, work, spare time, religion and politics. As the author points out, “the presented set lacks hedonistic values”. Still, in this case it was important to make use of the pattern adopted from other research in order to obtain material for comparison.

The analysis of the collected material points to differences in choices made by the Polish and Czech respondents, not so significant, though, as it might be expected, as regards their scale. Decisive and identical attitudes were recorded in the case of those towards the family: both the Polish and the Czech, when asked to order the above-mentioned values on a ranking list, listed *family* on the first place. Another instance of agreement (the fourth place on the scale) concerned the respondents' attitude towards the importance they put on the possibility of enjoying *free time*. The other values were ranked differently on the levels of the scale. Poles indicated *work* on the second and *friends and acquaintances* on the third place, while to their Czech counterparts the latter is more important than the former. As it seems, at the foundation of such a choice by the Polish there is – as a rule – the higher unemployment rate in Poland than in the Czech Republic, which strengthens the tendency towards putting a greater emphasis on work as a value.

What can surprise is the small – in sum – difference between Poles and Czechs with reference to *religiousness*. As it is well-known, differences in this sphere between the two communities are of basic nature: on the one hand, we come to deal with Polish society famous for its many-century attachment to religion, on the other one – nearly completely lay society of the Czech. It appears therefore, that the difference of one rank only is problematic, indicating some kind of divergence between the respondents' declaration and the popular conviction of Poles' religiousness. It is worth mentioning in this place that it is solely in the Polish sample that there were recorded a few scores of cases in which the respondents – despite the clearly formulated request to order the listed values beginning with the most and ending with the least significant – ranked two values, i.e. *family* and *religiousness*, the first place each, and several of the questioned acknowledged that making a choice between the two was an insoluble dilemma: as they wrote in the questionnaires they were not able to choose between religion and family since both of the values are equally important to them. In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that in the both examined samples politics made a value of little importance. As the author writes in the conclusion to her analysis of attitudes towards values, "... similarly as in other studies, ours also prove that there are no significant differences relating to the values chosen by respondents living on the either side of the border. As well as the first, the other group ranked family on the highest place of the scale and that irrespective of their belonging to the different categories of the gender, age, education, status or the place of abode" [3, p. 75].

The expected and confirmed, in the research, significance that was attributed by the respondents to family provided the basis to make further analysis of the collected empirical material which contained also interesting information about various aspects of the structure and functioning of family. The survey questionnaire included a set of several statements concerning family relations, and the respondents' task was to indicate the degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the statements, using a four-degree scale (*decidedly yes, rather yes, rather not, decidedly not*). In the set, the following statements subjected to the respondents' evaluation were included many various factors.

The analysis of the collected empirical material, after aggregation of the data and leaving two categories (agreement v. disagreement) allows making a few interesting conclusions. The Polish and the Czech represent very similar attitudes towards many aspects of the structure and functioning of family and therefore we will limit ourselves to highlighting the most vital differences as regards the indicated importance of judgments, that is those that were confirmed in the strongest way by the most numerous group of respondents in both samples. Among the Czech respondents the first three places were taken by the following of the above-mentioned statements: 1. *A fulfilled human being is somebody who has children*; 2. *Fathers are prepared to care for children equally well as women*; 3. *A working mother can create equally good conditions as a not working mother*. Comparing the research results obtained in the Polish sample, it should be noted that the agreement with the Czech respondents concerns the third judgment, while for the first two places, the Polish chose other statements, that is: 1. *The condition behind happiness of two people is a formal marriage* and 2. *Men should, on a par with women, be responsible for the household and caring for children*.

Closer similarities appeared in the case of rejected statements. The one that met the strongest opposition on the part of respondents (nearly 95 % of the choices in both samples) was that reading: *Homosexual couples should have the right to adopt children*. Also that saying: *Children at the preschool age suffer when their mother works professionally*. was among the most readily rejected ones. The successive places (as regards the strength of disagreement) were taken by the following: *Having children is a duty towards society* and *One can live a fulfilling life, to an equal degree, as a housewife or in paid employment*, respectively. In those cases, however, an unexpected alliance was noticed: Polish men and Czech women most frequently expressed their disapproval of statement No. 4, whereas the men of the Czech borderland and the women from the Polish one objected to the truthfulness of statement, although the Czech male respondents expressed their disapproval in a decidedly stronger manner (the first place on the scale of rejection) than the Polish females (the third place on the scale).

Contemporary world is one in which work is an important value for human being. This has found the confirmation also in the conducted research. What can, then, be said about various aspects of work and their perception by the examined subjects? For obvious reasons the research covered three most significant dimensions of work: economic, social and psychological. In order to examine the respondents' attitude towards

them the research tool contained a set of 17 factors making the above-mentioned aspects of work: fair pay, nice co-workers/colleagues, work without stress and pressures, security of having a job, convenient time of work, employees' benefits, possibility of showing initiatives, social usability of work, long holiday, possibility of meeting people, possibility of making a career, responsible work, interesting work, self-realization, acquiring new skills, family-friendly job, just treatment.

It follows from the analysis carried out that the respondents evidently pointed to the purely economic dimension of work as the most important to them. Irrespective of the nationality, gender and education, the first place was taken by the factor included in the economic dimension (*Fair pay*), although it is worth stressing that *security of having a job* proved to be an equally important factor. The two factors, interchangeably, found themselves in different categories of the respondents either on the first or the second place. Still, the other one proved more important to the Czech males, while the first one enjoyed more popularity with the Polish and Czech women. It can be thus said that in the opinions of the respondents from the Polish-Czech borderland the value of work is, primarily, made of factors of the social nature. They perceive work as an activity that is extremely important due to its role in securing basic material needs of the individual and their family. The significance of the social aspect is furthermore confirmed by high positions of such factors as: *employees' benefits* which workers can obtain from the company, and *convenient conditions of work*, whose significance was stressed because of the possibility of reconciling professional work with functions that are vital for a successful family life.

Among the values of key importance there are also relations at work, which points to the significance of social conditions of work together with selected emotional aspects. People value especially the communication space, emotional impulses, meeting other people, which – in their opinion – should be included in the process of working. It can be thus said that the workplace provides the majority of people with the possibility of being a member of a group. Social environment is ranked a vital feature of workplace both in terms of the employees' satisfaction and an indispensable factor in work efficiency, as well as from the point of view of workplace organization. It is interesting to note that the Czech women placed the requirement of *making a career*, which is a vital element of their life route, among the key indicators. The requirement of *just treatment void of discrimination* also occupies an important place in the choices of different groups of respondents as an unacceptable and unjustified distinguishing of either individual employees or whole groups in the place of work. Discrimination is regarded as particularly socially unacceptable as it concerns human dignity.

The needs of self-realization, acceptance and positive results of work linked to them as, for example, *an interesting job* treated as a hobby or social bonds in the workplace, were evaluated by the respondents to occupy the medium level. Identifying with work shows that man has accepted employment as an integral part of his life and such evaluations bring to the individual, to a moderate extent, a specific feedback on the part of organization, which – undoubtedly – is of great importance to each working person. Its significance manifests itself in the form of respect shown to the employee as a human being, as a recognition and a way of acknowledging the good quality of work, etc.

In the end, it needs adding that such factors as: *possibility of showing one's own initiative*, *work socially usable* and *responsible work* were left completely on the margin of the choice-list. This testifies to a weakening of social bonds, competitiveness, acceptance of impulses, needs of social belonging and a weak condition of civic society. It also shows that in the borderland, in particular, the very finding employment and maintaining it (almost irrespective of its character) themselves are felt to be the key needs. The indispensability of meeting individual's own and their families' needs is stressed in the first place. Being employed and the ability to work are the most vital source of the sense of personal dignity, which is based on the capacity to economically participate in creating the family's income. It is an example and a model to the decisive majority of members of each society. On the basis of the obtained results it is possible to conclude that the process of forming a real civic society in the examined regions has not progressed in any considerable way.

One more problem is still worth indicating as it found its place in the realized research project, that is a most important question of adaptation of the inhabitants of the borderland to the fast-changing world, where modern technologies play a more and more significant. Therefore, gathering knowledge about the extent to which the respondents appreciate the usability of the new possibilities seems really of paramount importance. It is hard to imagine that an individual who is excluded from the market of information and who can not move around in the world founded on knowledge which is provided through the channel of modern technology could successfully cope with their professional career and in many dimensions of their personal lives. The analyses of the collected empirical material that were carried out by the authors in this part of the project [4, p. 127-141] unfortunately do not show this sphere to an optimistic light. There emerges from them an image of the community in which the youngest generation of respondents are the only members who appreciate the importance of being included in the world of new technologies.

To analyze this problem area the authors focused on the following three dimensions:

the dimension of the access to and the place where the Internet is used; the dimension of the selection of services linked to the Internet and their significance; the dimension of concrete activities done with the use of the

Internet. It can be concluded that as regards the dimension of making use of the Internet the situation encountered within the Polish research sample looks far better. Here, only 3.0% of the respondents do not use the Internet at all, while among the Czech respondents the percentage of those who never use this means is visibly higher (23.0%); those who do use the Internet most frequently point to their homes and then their workplaces as the places where they access the medium. As far the range of services realized via the Internet is concerned the respondents most frequently chose *looking for information* and *entertainment*, while only a few indicated the educational and self-teaching function of the Internet. The respondents who would make use of the Internet to do e-shopping (as it could be expected to be gaining more and more popularity nowadays) were in a decisive minority.

The realization of the assumed research project allows us to better get to know the inhabitants of the Polish-Czech borderland and to bring out similarities and differences between the Polish and the Czech with reference to the basic values that are vital to each human individual. The picture that emerged from the research is one of people who through their declarations indicate the significance of such traditionally fundamental values as family, work or social bonds with friends. What can be slightly worrying is the fact that the highly valued work is perceived merely through its instrumental dimension, that for the respondents work makes merely a source of maintenance, a state of economic wellbeing (*fair pay*), and – to an extent – of the psychical one (*security of having employment*). Much less frequently they pointed to work as an area in which one can self-realize oneself, undertake to meet new challenges, or make contacts and cooperate with others. The picture of the Polish-Czech borderland revealing in the research clearly shows that among the respondents there dominates the individualistic strategy and instrumental treatment of both the basic values and other people with whom they do not have much relationship. They perceive the latter not as those who they can cooperate with to attain common goals but rather as rivals.

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Гермаковська Регіна, Колибова Олена. Дослідження цінностей у мешканців польсько-чеського прикордоння

Представлено дослідження цінностей у мешканців польсько-чеського прикордоння, що дозволяє краще виявити подібності та відмінності між представниками обох сторін щодо основних цінностей, що є життєво важливими для кожної людини.

Ключові слова: Польща, Чехія, основні людські цінності, прикордоння.

Гермаковска Регина, Колибова Елена. Исследование ценностей у жителей польско-чешского пограничья

Представлено исследование ценностей у жителей польско-чешского пограничья, что позволяет лучше выявить сходства и различия между представителями обеих сторон относительно основных ценностей, являющихся жизненно важными для каждого человека.

Ключевые слова: Польша, Чехия, основные человеческие ценности, пограничье.