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National diversity versus citizenship as social capital exemplified by Polish families living in the Vilnius Region¹

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National diversity within one statehood generates number of problems that determine not only the quality of social relations but also the cultural self-identification of the members of culturally diverse communities, affecting the sense and range of their civic commitments. As a consequence, it concerns social capital of a multinational state. Therefore, exploring the quality of social relations of national provenance, specificity of the national dualism along with their cultural and socialisational consequences shall all be recognized necessary for conceptualisation of social capital in a multinational society. The presented research results allowed to outline the specificity of the cultural diversification in Lithuania, distance and recognition of national provenance, significant for the researched areas of their everyday functioning accompanied by cultural interspersions and family socialisation. The proposed conclusions provide foundation for description of the specificity of social capital of nationally diverse local communities.

Key words: *national diversity; social distance; culture interspersions; areas of national self-identification; socialisation in a family; social capital*

Introduction

Postmodern realities of a contemporary man, co-determined by phenomena and processes usually of global provenance are uniquely

¹ The article includes results of the research conducted by the author among Polish families in the Vilnius Region, published in: Szerłaĝ, A. (2013). Narodowy dualizm w codzienności polskich rodzin na Wileńszczyźnie In *Patriotyzm i nacjonalizm. Ku jakiej tożsamości kulturowej?* Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, pp. 190–212.

conceptualised by, among others, cultural differences, historical heritage of the cultural borderland, dual spheres of cultural self-identification, processes of introducing individuals or communities to the cultural sphere of entire society, or socially generated axiology of a cultural borderland, consequently altogether shaping the quality of social capital in a multicultural society. The social capital determines not only the cultural coexistence of the individuals or community in a culturally diverse society, but also a successful development of such society in a situation of change influenced on one hand by political, economic, cultural and social processes and mechanisms guaranteeing and protecting the sovereignty of given countries, and on the other – ensuring successful growth of the European community. Hence, it is worth to explore the situation of a national minority functioning within multinational state, indicating spheres of nationally dual experiences, perceived from the perspective of social capital foundation. From such viewpoint, Polish community living in the Vilnius Region, functioning in remarkably complex political, social and culturally situation appears as particularly interesting. On one hand it is specified by strong sense of being culturally ingrained (crucially oriented towards Polish cultural and historical heritage established within Vilnius Region) and on the other – as naturally diverse community subject to exclusion within Lithuanian public and political sphere more than other nationally diverse communities. As a result, the sense of *the Own* competes with *the Other*, or even *the Strangeness*, often of hostile connotation. Concurrently, all the self-identification discourses (particularly family, local, regional, national or state one) occur within nationally dual spheres within Lithuanian statehood. Hence, it is justified to pose a question how the national diversity of Polish families living in the Vilnius Region, culturally ingrained in Polish national heritage, define themselves within Lithuanian area of citizenship and social interactions conceptualising social capital of a multinational society of Lithuania.

Poles within the area of national diversity in Lithuania

In order to depict the situation of Poles as a national minority in Lithuania it is necessary to refer to the national structure of Lithuanian society. Namely, on the basis of census conducted in Lithuania in 2001, majority of Lithuanian inhabitants are Lithuanians (83,5%), with Poles (6,7%) and Russians (6,3%) making up the largest minority groups, whereas Belarusians (1,2%) and Ukrainians (0,7%) constitute smaller

percentage within national structure of the country. The size of other minority groups accounted for less than 1% of the total number of inhabitants. The main Polish centres in Lithuania include Vilnius and the Vilnius Region – 16,5%; Klaipėda and Klaipėda Region– 0,9%; Kaunas and Kaunas Region – 0,4%; Šiaulai and Šiaulai Region– 0,2% as well as Panevėžys – 0,2%. It is also worth to notice that in the years 2008–2011 the national structure of Lithuania bore resemblance.² Nonetheless, during this period, significant decrease in the number of inhabitants due to decrease in the birth rate³ and rising migration⁴ were reported. However, it is rather difficult to assess explicitly the causes conditioning alternation in the number of national communities in Lithuania. It can be assumed that such changes can be influenced by the above-mentioned period of population decline and migration, however factors related to cultural self-identification may also constitute a premise for the transformation of the national status among representatives of national minorities. This phenomenon can grow in significance as national diversity is palpably becoming a factor hindering or even disabling educational, professional, social or cultural activity. As the research results from 2012 prove,⁵ taking into account 1009 permanent residents of Lithuania of national diverse composure (Lithuanians 90,3%, Russian 5,3%, Poles 3,1%, others 1,2% all aged 15 to 74) discrimination of Polish community takes place mainly on the ground of mother's tongue (Bill on Education), spelling of Polish names and surnames, Polish spelling of places in Lithuania, land return, and financing the conducted activity. Discrimination of Poles is confirmed in research results carried out in 2001 by the Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung Custom Research Baltic⁶ (embracing 1 714 inhabitants of Lithuania), that unambiguously prove 24% of the respondents would not like to maintain neighbourly contacts with Poles at all, 27% would not rather want it, 42% of respondents remain indifferent to this issue whereas merely 6% allows such possibility and 2% prefer neighbourly contacts with Poles. Nonetheless, the research conducted in 2008 by the Institute of Labour and Social Research with Centre for Ethnic Research of the Institute of Social Research provide with contrary outcomes, as according to their survey at that time only 9,5% of

² Data updated annually by the Service of Residential Register at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

³ *Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania 2012* (2012). Vilnius: Statistics Lithuania, p. 71.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 62–63.

⁵ *The opinion poll considering the image of Poles and Poland in Lithuania and Lithuanian society* (2012). Vilnius: Lithuanian Social Research Centre, p. 23.

⁶ Janeliūnas, T. (2012). *Tolerancijos grimasos*, IQ, metai, sauis 01 (22), p. 41.

Lithuanians would not like to live in a direct neighborhood of Poles.⁷ Therefore, it may be stated that disinclination towards Poles over the course of the last five years has significantly risen, whereas with reference to other national minorities Lithuanians manifest neutral (46% – 64%) or positive attitude (18% – 23%). Overall explicit unwillingness towards national minorities is located within 5% to 7%. It should be also stressed that the greatest distance towards Poles was expressed by inhabitants of Šiaulai and Klaipėda with insignificant inhabitation of Polish residents (Šiaulai – 0,2%, Klaipėda – 0,9%). Therefore, it may be concluded that Polish national minority members (more than any other national minorities) function in a situation of social exposure of nationalistic connotation. It may be also assumed, particularly on the basis of the author's own research, that it is an effect brought about by Lithuanian government's orientation towards assimilation as the main strategy of dealing with national diversity within the state, especially in the context of guaranteeing and accomplishing the rights the national minorities are entitled to. For the researched Poles, the consequence of acknowledgement of such strategies is an obvious differentiation of commitments resulting for the status of a Lithuanian citizen and sense of belonging to Polish community with strong attachment involved. Their cultural self-identification therefore takes place in a nationally dual spheres, whereas nationally diverse places of residence become a transmitter of the cultural contents, i.e. *accustomed* local community.

Interspersion of cultures (of national provenance) in the local environment

On the basis of own research it may be concluded that high percentage of national diversity in the place of residence is advantageous for conservation and exposure of own national belonging with concurrent openness towards cultural diversity of the neighbours accompanied by recognition and legitimisation of multicultural practices in everyday life. This, in turn, can significantly restrain influences of various forms and manifestations of nationalism, simultaneously favouring preservation of own cultural community, consideration and recognition for the cultural heritage of nationally diverse neighbours, facilitating transculturalism as a result.⁸ Nonetheless, as the research proved, generational national diversity of the

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Wróblewska – Pawlak, K. (1995). Dwujęzyczność a dwukulturowość. In *Komunikacja międzykulturowa – zblżenia i impresje*. Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, p. 72.

researched families is crucial. Among most of the researched, the family members (both the respondents and the spouses) are of Polish origin. However, in some of the researched families the national diversity of the spouses was reported, concerning the respondents' co-spouses (19,5%), their own parents (20,8%), their co-spouses' parents (37,7%), and their co-spouses' grandparents (35,1%). The majority of relationships (particularly on the research women's husbands side) regard Russians, then Lithuanians and Belarusians with less percentage of Ukrainians. Hence, some regularities can be noticed, i.e. if in the generation of parents and grandparents the spouse is nationally diverse, the subsequent generations are also subject to such diversification. National diversity of a co-spouse or any other members of the family, as the research results prove, is not perceived as a cause of conflicts. Therefore it may be concluded that national diversity of the family members was generationally founded in the sphere of family life of the researched, hence it became *accustomed*. Thus, areas of understanding that – in actual fact are located within commonly recognized cultural contents – are also co-created within the everyday prose of life.

In this context it is worth to refer to the relations of the researched families with Lithuania, its statehood and attitude to civic commitments. As the research results proved, such relation is undoubtedly of civic and cultural provenance. The researched emphasised to be citizens of Lithuania (41,6%), claiming to have civic commitments towards it (29,8%) and through their own works contributing to its development (15,6%). For the rest, it is their place of birth (23,4%) and life (32,5%). Their cultural relations with Lithuania are of dual character, i.e. on one hand they refer to Lithuania as their homeland (32,5%), common culture (11,7%), common history (10,4%), Lithuanian language (7,8%) and education (3,9%), and on the other, such cultural relation is grounded in the cultural heritage of the ancestors (35,1%) with concurrent exposure of the Vilnius Region as a little homeland (22,1%). Only 2,6% of the researched expressed no relation whatsoever with the country of residence. When asked about the places and situations with most palpable exposure of their Polish and Lithuanian belonging, the researched indicated those that can be located within two interspersing areas, i.e. official and unofficial (private) one.

First, the official one, is identified by the researched through commitments resulting from Lithuanian citizenship and the expected civic activity (31,%), professional activity (28,6%), necessity to deal with issues at public institutions (27,3%), celebrating bank holidays (16,9%) and the obligation to use Lithuanian language (6,5%).

On the other hand, the unofficial side, i.e. a private area, is related to that what seems most familiar to the researched, i.e. family home (55,8%), church (53,2%), Polish neighborhood community (44,2%), Polish cultural events (23,4%), Polish educational institutions (22,1%) and less importantly – with the activity of Polish associations (7,8%) and celebrating Polish national holidays (5,2%).

The above confirms the self-location of the researched within the sense of Lithuanianishness (though mainly in its official attributes) and Polishness, determining the sense of being culturally ingrained and the sense of historically legitimate cultural self-identification. The official and unofficial (private) areas of everyday references contribute to the dual nature of the sense of national belonging. Therefore, considering the specificity of national diversity in Lithuania in its structural, social and family context, it may be concluded that it provides a foundation for establishment of a multidimensional cultural identity, manifesting itself, as the research proved, in the four following dimensions:

- civic: a Pole as a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania, often referred to as a Polish Lithuanian,
- social (neighbourly) – a Pole as a member of a nationally diverse local community,
- cultural: orientation towards common culture and own cultural heritage in everyday practices of a multinational society,
- family: Polish, or nationally other, cultural self-identification.

Therefore, the above should be recognized as main predicators of dealing with national dualism experienced by the researched, as it serves as a tool of stratification in the areas of cultural self-identification crucial for the researched.

Dimensions of national socialisation in Polish families

Socialization is one of the processes conceptualising the above-mentioned areas, within which a young generation experiences the sense of Polishness and Lithuanianishness at the same time. As the research results prove, the sense of Polishness is based on three substantial pillars, i.e. language – culture – religion, that altogether significantly dynamise everyday life of the researched families. All the researched (100%) emphasised that language is the mainstay of the sense of Polishness as thanks to it preservation as well as the transmission of Polish cultural heritage (36,4%) are possible, ensuring cultural self-identification at the same time. Education in Polish language is essential

according to the respondents who stressed significance of the right to Polish education (31,2%), as well as the right to provide mass service in Polish (16,7%). For 83,1% of the respondents Polish traditions, customs and holidays are the manifestations of the sense of Polishness that should be preserved and cultivated generation to generation, similarly as Polish language – 67,5%, cultural heritage of the ancestors – 46,8% as well as religion and praying in Polish 35,1%.

Deep awareness of the researched concerning the above-indicated manifestations of Polishness accompanied by the conviction of the necessity to transmit it to the younger generation provide evidence of crucial interspersions of the family socialisation with Polish cultural contents, from the perspective of which the cultural self-identification takes place. Notwithstanding, it is neither deprived of Lithuanian cultural contents and civic commitments. It is reflected in given types of families distinguished on the basis of attitude towards the tradition and transmission of cultural values in the circumstances of living in multiethnic societies.⁹ The analysis of gathered empirical data explicitly proves that the dualistically socialising family type is predominant – 83,1%, with Polish and Lithuanian cultures equally important. Hence, such families cultivate Polish culture, as according to them it refers to the national heritage of the ancestors that have lived in the Vilnius Region through generations. On the other hand, they are considerate of Lithuanian culture as it constitutes the national heritage of the country they live in, particularly in terms of the heritage of their neighbours with whom they maintain everyday, direct contacts in the place of residence. Therefore, while upbringing their children, they engage both Polish and Lithuanian discourses, hence it is not a problem for them to become a Lithuanian Pole.

Significantly lower percentage of the respondents families, i.e. 13,0%, refers to the type of families socialising ethnocentrically, i.e. such, for whom, Polish culture is a priority and the only foundation of the upbringing. Such families have strong feeling of being Poles, therefore they undertake activities for the sake of preserving Polish cultural heritage and this is the only heritage they refer to positively, similarly as far as own national community is concerned. Their contacts with nationally diverse neighbours are limited and brought down to those indispensable.

Scanty percentage of the researched families (3,0%) may be referred to as undirected families, as it is not clear within framework of which

⁹ See Nikitorowicz, J. (2001). *Pogranicze. Tożsamość. Edukacja międzykulturowa*. Białystok: Trans Humana, pp. 58–60.

culture they want to bring up their children, i.e. Polish, Lithuanian or both. Their cultural orientation of socialisation is situational or accidental. As a result no activities for the sake of preserving Polish or Lithuanian cultural heritage are undertaken. Consequently, their overall attitude to the Others does not depend on the nationality.

Among the researched there was no case reported of those who – despite Polish national identity – would solely identify themselves with Lithuanian culture and subsequently bringing up their children with priority given to becoming good Lithuanians. This proves that as far as the researched families are concerned, they strongly identify themselves with Polish cultural heritage that is rooted within the family socialisation practices and on the other hand, their awareness of being citizen of Lithuania simultaneously orientates these processes towards Lithuanian cultural heritage. Hence, within such families the following occurs:¹⁰

- providing positive examples of mutual recognition for diversity and tolerance, common compromises and respect towards culturally diverse contents;
- socialisation bringing individuals and groups closer, joining them on the ground of mutual benefits resulting from such interaction, pointing out common traits as well as positive and negative sides of both parties, leading consequently to the identification with both cultures;
- socialisation encouraging to apply values presented by various groups concurrently preserving and cultivating own cultural diversity;
- socialisation influences oriented towards preservation and cultivation of selected elements of „own” group with concurrent introduction to participation in the culture of the majority group.

The above issues facilitate understanding and co-establishing diverse community within the local surrounding. This, what is specific and most familiar for everyday practice of the respondents, consolidates the common sphere of cultural coexistence. The factors most significantly integrating the nationally diverse local communities of the respondents families include common, everyday life problems (35,1%) good neighbouring contacts (33,8%), as well as common businesses and affairs (22,1%). Therefore, the existence of everyday life is principal as it is accomplished through positive relations with the members of the nearest social surrounding, providing them with sense of security. Other factors situating such relations in non-dual area embrace common history (19,5%), mutual culture (11,7%), common homeland (5,2%), commonly shared Christian values (11,7%), place of residence (16,9%), common

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 59.

care for the future (16,9%) as well as tolerance and understanding (7,8%). All these factors are of cultural and social nature, expressed progressively in the context of a local community. Therefore, as a result of everyday interactions in a culturally diverse environment, the worked out contents and principles of a culture determine the quality of life in cultural borderlands, including ways of dealing with the sense of national dualism of the researched in the course of family socialisation. The life takes its course naturally with its specific axiology and praxeology of the every life, far from any kind of intentional and institutional interferences.

Poles as social capital in Lithuania

With reference to the understanding of social capital by F. Fukuyama implying that social capital is "(...) a set of informal values and ethical norms common for the members of given group (...) enabling them to cooperate efficiently (...)",¹¹ it may be assumed that Poles constitute essential capital for the multinational development of the Lithuanian society. The research results among Polish families living in the Vilnius Region proved that:

- the higher the percentage of national minority representatives in the local community, the less significant disinclination towards them from the dominating national community;
- functioning in a nationally diverse environment where individuals are socially identified as members of a national minority demands given type of civic, cultural and social behaviours that manifest nationally dual identities;
- experiencing generationally consolidated national diversity within own family sensitises and opens towards national diversity of the Others, particularly those who function in their direct neighborhood, i.e. the common social area. Then, such national diversity appears as *accustomed* diversity;
- national dualism experienced by the researched manifest itself in two essential areas, i.e. official and unofficial, that altogether conceptualise their multidimensional cultural identity guaranteeing sense of continuation and ordered course of the events;
- socialisation in the researched families relies on unquestionable national dualism;

¹¹ Fukuyama, F. (2000). Social Capital. In *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*. New York: Basic Books, p. 169.

- general, humanistic values (particularly tolerance, mutual respect also towards national diversity as well as good neighbourly relations) constitute the axiology of understanding and cooperation in local, neighbouring areas;
- community of life in places significant for the researched is created by natural social relations of the nationally diverse members, established on the basis of common axiology and pragmatism of everyday life.

Taking it all into consideration, sense of community and awareness of the commitments for its sake are advantageous for the coexistence of nationally diverse members of the local communities, whereas dialogue constitutes that basic instrument of dealing with national dualism. The latter, occurring within culturally diverse relations and contexts, generates the social capital that:

1. joins and structures the sense of cultural belonging that may be also of multidimensional character;
2. situates in a given – mostly understanding and open – relation to others;
3. is a source of creations of the non-dual cultural spheres within which coexistence at the meeting point of cultures takes place;
4. consolidates the efforts for the sake of common future – common welfare.

Such approach provides not only with opportunities of intergenerational transmission, constituted by civic, social and cultural orders, but favours moving beyond own limits and capabilities within personal perspective, all for the sake of becoming a valuable member of a nationally diverse community.

The above may be acknowledged as a crucial premise for establishing social capital of a modern, multinational country. Hence, as far as B. Bartz's reflections are concerned, it concerns integration as well as equality of the members of given groups and members of societies whose different experiences consolidate the community.¹² As F. Fonseci and D. Malheiros notice, integration understood in such way „(...) takes into account the process of mutual learning resulting from cooperation, conflict, dialogue, transfer of knowledge, experiences and cultural practices between individuals, groups and ethnic communities that share one geographical area”.¹³ Hence, it is worth to ponder over the questions

¹² See Bartz, B. (1997). *Idea wielokulturowego wychowania w nowoczesnych społeczeństwach*. Duisburg – Radom: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Technologii i Eksploatacji, p. 47.

¹³ Kapciak, A. (1995). Komunikacja międzykulturowa jako fenomen kultury współczesnej. In: *Komunikacja międzykulturowa – zblżenia i impresje*. Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, p. 183.

whether Poles and Lithuanians differ so much – according to opinion poll concerning the image of Poles in Lithuania and Poland in Lithuanian society,¹⁴ 11% claimed Lithuanians and Poles are very similar, 41% that the representatives of both nations share more similarities than differences, 22% claim Poles are more different than similar to Lithuanians, and only 6% claim they are different. On the basis of the presented data it may be concluded that more than a half of the respondents confirm they are more common than differentiating traits between Polish and Lithuanian national communities. In the context of social capital it is equally important to expose such common features as religiousness, resourcefulness, modernity, activity, hard work, kindness, tolerance and hospitality, as they explicitly orientate towards over-national values that should constitute the key premises for establishment of the sense of understanding and common commitment to constitute social capital of a multinational state.

Conclusion

The national diversity accompanied by civic commitments should not be perceived as contradictory area of experiencing, as the research proved. Quite the contrary, they are complimentary to each other, manifesting itself in commonly recognized values and principles, social trust and network of interpersonal relations, generating, in turn, social capital.¹⁵ Therefore, from such perspective they come across as the result of recognition, understanding, acknowledgment and acceptance of the national diversity on the level of naturally created orders in everyday interactions taking place in nationally diverse local communities. Nonetheless, it is important to perceive and recognize them in creation of the strategy of a multinational state. Hence the essential awareness of commonly shared values (trust, solidarity, reciprocity), culturally open behaviours and attitudes, local practices of formal and non-formal institutions, and their consequent acknowledgment as predicators of a social capital favouring development of such local communities,¹⁶ as well as the entire society.

¹⁴ *The opinion poll considering the image of Poles and Poland in Lithuania and Lithuanian society* (2012). Vilnius: Lithuanian Social Research Centre, pp. 42–45.

¹⁵ Zagąła, Z. (2008). Kapitał społeczny: jedna kategoria pojęciowa – wiele kontrowersji. In *Kapitały ludzkie i społeczne a konkurencyjność regionów*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, p. 31.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.