

The Impact of Globalization on the Traditional Value System

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Abstract

The article addresses the problem of changes in values in the traditional Silesian communities under the influence of openness and globalization. First, the author points out the theoretical context of her analysis relying on the theory of K. Krzysztofek. Then, in turn, she examines the three most important Silesian values e.g. work, family and religion. The historical basis of the evolution of these values and then the changes that occurred under the influence of globalization will be presented briefly. Research findings of Silesian sociologists and of the author are presented in the article. The scenarios of changes in values are shown in the conclusion.

Keywords: globalization, tradition, values.

Introduction

Globalization affects all areas of life. In the period of systemic transformation, Poland opened itself to the world. The accelerated pace began to reach not only the technical innovations and economic solutions, but new ideas, values and behavior patterns. Under the influence of globalization, openness, information coming from the media, and contact with other cultures, traditional values are changing. The globalization processes also affect local communities with their traditional values. Such communities can also be found in Silesia where traditionally, attention was paid to the importance of values such as work, family and religion. The article aims to evaluate the extent of the changes in these values on the basis of my own research as well as the research of selected Silesian sociologists.

Theoretical context of the analysis

The concept of globalization is one of the most popular concepts. Globalization takes place on many levels. The most important of them can be distinguished as economic, social and cultural levels. Among these, the most important considerations for this article are the social and cultural aspects. Globalization in fact contributes to the expansion of the Western European and North American culture. This leads to a marked weakening of the national and cultural identity of many ethnic communities. There has been a significant change in the sphere of traditional forms of consciousness, and the axiological orientation, including religious, psychological and mental characteristics developed earlier. Globalization cannot be reduced to global systems of social and economic linkages. This phenomenon also has a local dimension (Giddens 2006: 73). Krzysztofek provides five scenarios for the reaction of local cultures to the impact of globalization (2002: 27-129). The first is the full acceptance of global culture i.e. Simple Acceptance. However, this applies mostly to young people. The second possibility is a total rejection i.e. Lack of Acceptance. The generational factor is important because the elderly are more resistant. The third is a form of selective adaptation i.e. Partial Acceptance and Partial Rejection. The fourth possibility is hybridization i.e. Co-

adaptation of Cultures. It is a compromise between nationality, ethnicity, locality and universality of the consumer culture. The last option is the cultural duality i.e. two levels of culture. This is the most desirable effect of the influence of global culture, which does not lead to the destruction of cultural identity. People can also participate in national and ethnic cultures while remaining within the global culture.

This model can be applied to the analysis of the system of the group of values, which is one of the elements of identity. This analysis will be presented on the basis of the Silesian community. In traditional communities in Silesia there were three essential values of work, family and religion. This is shown in ethnological and sociological research (Swadźba 2008: 10-26). These three values are subject to a process of change under the influence of globalization.

Work ethos or ethos of consumption?

In the traditional Silesian community, work played a very important role. The Silesian communities have been working communities since the nineteenth century. Work was the basis of existence for the workers and their families. A person as an employee along with his qualifications and earnings was subject to assessment. The educational actions of German employers (getting used to the discipline, while developing social advantages of work) and the teaching of the Catholic Church led to the formation of a peculiar ethos of work (Swadźba 2001). In the period of real socialism, work was the main theme of the system. In order to implement the ideological objectives, the traditional "Silesian ethos of work," was embraced but with the rejection of its cultural context. The period of systemic transformation after 1989 particularly influenced the change in the perception of work. Employment in the industry, especially in mining, decreased. Professions and their related qualifications were reassessed. In the 1990s, the aspirations of obtaining higher education increased rapidly (Swadźba 2005). Work began to be a valued asset once again. This resulted from three factors: first, the privatization of many industries and services, where one was either self-employed or worked for a private investor, who demanded hard work; secondly, high unemployment, as well as difficulties in obtaining a good job; thirdly, attachment to jobs in the public sector even those that were poorly-paid, because of its certainty and the remains of social guarantees. The conditions of the market economy called for the restoration of the value of work (Swadźba 2001, Swadźba 2008).

The ethos of work went through a similar process of change. The author believes that globalization factors affect three aspects of the work ethos.

First, due to the change in the professional structure, the young generation, already much better educated, joined the service. Undertaking such work requires different operating characteristics than working in industry. Mainly initiative and entrepreneurship are valuable. Work should also give the possibility of satisfaction and self-fulfillment, as indicated in sociological studies conducted in the traditional communities of Silesia (Swadźba, 2008). The highest values were obtained by those features of work which are related to existential values: "certainty of work" and "good wages", as indicated by more than 80% of respondents. But no less important are the values of self-fulfillment (50 - 64% response rate). Respondents indicate here the important aspects of "working with friendly people" and "lack of tension at work." Therefore, the atmosphere at work and relationships with people are important for them. Also quite important for the respondents is "work being interesting," and "having equivalent skills". The absence of such features leads to dissatisfaction in work. The third level of importance concerns the validity of responses of social spheres and self-realization, the most important being "respect for work," "job responsibility", work in which "you can achieve something," and "giving great opportunities for advancement"(20 - 36% of

respondents). These characteristics are associated with the achievement of higher positions and promotions at work.

Second, work plays a very important role in the lives of women. Cited sociological studies have indicated that work is a great value for women. First of all, almost all the features of work in the responses of women reach higher values. With the exception of "good wages". Women prefer to work because of its social features and creative development. The material dimension of work and the possibility of promotion are of less importance to women than to men. This means that women's professional work is a more important value in life than for men. This is a generational change that occurs in old traditional communities, where the woman's place was at home with the children. Professional work and its execution is for Silesian women of very high value and is already inscribed on a permanent basis in their way of life. They cannot imagine their lives and social relationships without work. This change is also becoming more widely accepted by men (Swadźba 2009). This shows the changes in the traditional system of values.

Third, the value system of young people changed. Research shows that young people appreciate work (Swadźba 2008). Important aspects of work are existential, creativeness and self-realization. The social aspect is of less importance. But for the young generation besides work, leisure is also very important. Analysis of the following statement: "work should be put in the first place, even if this means devoting more time to it" showed that young people are reluctant to agree with this statement (Swadźba 2008: 70-71). Only 4.1% of young respondents agreed strongly, compared to 25.6% of people aged 60 - 69. 40.5% of young respondents disagreed, while only 13.5% of older respondents disagreed. The young generation spent their free time realizing their self-fulfillment by for example devoting time to hobbies. Leisure time is also needed for consumption. Young people often take loans to buy all kinds of goods. More and more purchases are made once a week (often on Sundays) in malls. Sociological studies have shown that shopping is often done on Sundays by 37% of those surveyed, 1 / 3 (34%) occasionally, and 29% never go to stores on Sunday (Zak and Zielonka 2007). Sunday shopping is relatively done more often by younger people with a higher financial status. Consumption is an increasingly important aspect of the life of the young generation of Silesia.

Traditional family or Civil union?

Family was another important value in traditional communities of Silesia. Regional endogamy linked the local communities by bonds of kinship (Mrozek 1965). The family, community of the workplace, and residence were the reference systems of the Silesians. The family provided a sense of security and the need for affiliation (Świątkiewicz 2001). The period of real socialism strengthened the role of families. The Silesian family became a refuge of existence for the traditional values of work and religion (Świątkiewicz 2001).

The period of systemic transformation was a difficult time for the realization of the basic functions for many Silesian families. Due to the opening to the world and globalization, the family became subject to new designs and trends. First of all, the family was transformed, as shown by statistics, by a notable decline in the number of marriages. In the 1990s the descendants of the previous demographic slump entered the age of marriage, but there was also a shift in the average age of marriage (for men and women). These processes affected the number of children in families. In this period there was a decrease in the fertility of women in Silesia which further declined from 1.22 in 2000 to 1.17 in 2009. Most babies are born in families, although in recent years an increasing number of births took place outside marriage (in 2002 – 14.5% of the total, in 2009 - 16.8% of the total).

In sociological research, family still proved to be a great value (Zygmunt 2008). Neither sex nor age nor education affects the significant exceptions to this trend. A typical person who

did not recognize the family as an important cause is a person aged 20 - 29, having a basic vocational or secondary education (Zygmunt 2008). Respondents did not only ranked family as the most important value, but there is also a large distance between it and the other axiological values (e.g. work, religion). Studies carried out in Rybnik showed that for the majority of respondents the family was the center of focus and integration of values, and the place of creation and transmission of culture. It is the family supporting traditional values, storing them in the open and referring them to future generations (Świątkiewicz 2009). Tradition fosters family celebrations, which are an opportunity to strengthen family ties in a circle of the extended family. The specific feature of such meetings is the exclusion of people not belonging to the extended family.

Sociological studies carried out in the areas of Silesia show a continuous implementation of the traditional family model. Świątkiewicz and his colleagues found a predominance of complete families - 86.6%. Most of the maidens, divorcees and widows live alone. Alternative forms of family life based on co-habitation and civil unions are marginal and represent 1.8% of the total (Świątkiewicz 2009). Other studies carried out on the younger generation show that the majority intends to get married (72.6%) (Zygmunt 2008). As for the rest, 13.6% were in favor of permanent relationships (but not marriage), and 9% would prefer to meet multiple partners. Only 3.5% intends not to marry. Formalized families are often more valued by girls than by boys. Religious attitudes also influenced this phenomenon, the more religious being more in favor of the traditional family model. There is some evidence for a beginning erosion of family values, especially among the youngest generation. However, overall, in traditional Silesian families modernization changes, involving the greater availability and acceptance of alternative forms of family life and marriage, did not cause significant transformations.

Religiosity – traditional or selective?

The third important value in life was the Catholic religion. Religion was one of the most important factors in the crystallization of social consciousness. It created a community of beliefs and facilitated a subjective and conscious understanding of the world. It introduced an order which concerned the spheres of work and family. It stabilized the local community life and contributed to its social integration (Świątkiewicz 1997). These functions have been weakened in the period of real socialism, but the period of the 1980s definitely strengthened religiosity.

Studies conducted by other authors at the beginning of this century still show that for the vast majority of the inhabitants of Silesia, religion is important (Górny 2008). More than half of women surveyed (55.1%) considered religion as a very important matter, and 32.6% as rather important, and a total of 77% of men admitted that for them religion is a rather important matter. People for whom religion is not important in life are mainly young men, mostly students (Górny 2008). The importance of religion in the lives of Silesians can also be inferred from their self-declaration of belonging to the Catholic Church. In studies conducted in 2009 by Świątkiewicz, for women the percentage was nearly 97%, and for men - 86%. Families which were studied were also religiously homogeneous (79.6% of marriages declared homogeneity). It can be concluded that religion, despite the processes of modernization is an important part of life for Silesians.

The confirmation of the role of religion in life is participation in religious practices. The comparative national studies show that the Diocese of Katowice has average rates of dominantes in Poland (51.2% in 1992, 50.9% in 1999). It should be pointed out that it is an urbanized metropolitan area. In such communities, rates of participation in the masses are always lower (e.g. in the Diocese of Warsaw - 37.1%). Conducted sociological studies seem to confirm these calculations. Świątkiewicz indicates that over 50% of inhabitants of Katowice attended religious services every Sunday (Świątkiewicz 1997: 2009). In

sociological studies conducted in the Katowice archdiocese, the percentage of "Sunday Catholics", that is, people participating regularly and irregularly in the Sunday services is 81%, the percentage of people participating in the weekly Sunday mass is above 55% (Świątkiewicz 1997). Also, later studies of the author and other sociologists indicate the continuing high rates of religious practice in Silesia. The place of particularly intense religious practices in Silesia is the region of Rybnik as shown by a study by Górny and Świątkiewicz. The first of the authors indicates that 69.9% of respondents participate in practices on Sundays and religious holidays (in studies of Świątkiewicz 69.8%) (Górny 2008: 115, Świątkiewicz 2009: 177).

Factors that affect participation in religious practices are the cultural transformations that are associated with globalization. They relate to the individualization and subjectivization of criteria for living in their faith and the weakening of the importance of religious institutions and the institutionalized model of religiosity. As indicated in research conducted among the youth of Katowice, young people practicing on each Sunday and public holidays accounted for only 27.8% of the total (Górny 2008). The approach to standards of sexual morality is also selective. Religiosity is therefore regionally diverse, even in native Silesian areas. It is stronger in areas with predominantly indigenous populations, and weaker in areas of high migration.

Summarizing this period, it must be stated that globalization factors seem to have somewhat affected the value of religion. There has been an abandonment of institutional religiosity by the young generation, especially men. However, the core of religiosity remained intact and even expanded in family celebrations. Strong ties with the Church endured and the dominant model of religiosity is that of the Church and Catholicism. This demonstrates the influence of cultural traditions in Upper Silesia. Cultivating these traditions, however, is diversified by regional and structural factors.

Conclusion

Globalization spread all over the world and reached local communities, where traditional values used to prevail. These values (work, family and religion) are changing under its influence. However, they do not change simultaneously on the same level with equal intensity. Using a theoretical model of Kazimierz Krzysztofek giving five possible scenarios for the reaction of local cultures to the impact of globalization it is not possible to distinguish only one model for the studied local communities. However there are three scenarios of reaction depending on the generational factor, education and social position.

The highest percentage of residents of the old traditional communities implement the third scenario involving the adoption of the external forms of global culture (clothing, lifestyles, consumption), but at the same time preserving and continuing their traditional values. This applies to both older and younger generations.

Among some young people the first scenario dominates, which is characterized by a full acceptance of global culture. This means the rejection of traditional culture and a fascination with consumption.

A small part of well-educated residents of traditional communities realize the last scenario. It involves participation in the local culture and preserving traditional values, especially family and religion, while, at the same time, assimilating the universal cultural code and participating in global culture.

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