

A self-orientalizing positioning towards the European 'core'. Working notes on making good and bad citizens in Poland.

Rafał Smoczyński

(the Polish Academy of Sciences)

Defining the problem

- The analysis of post 1989 orientalising ideology organized by discursive strategies of assessing Poland's actual or imaginary state of the maturity as compared with the self-reported European "values" or "standards" should take into account not only dependent position of peripheral Central and Eastern Europe towards the core Western European countries (Zarycki 2014), but also the dislocation of the old interpretative frameworks of civic responsibility which have lost efficiency in interpellating political subjectivities.
- As in other dislocation situations when old normative codes are disappearing (Laclau 1990) the post-communist anomic conditions featuring the rise of deviancy, normative disorientation and weakened legitimacy of social control agents called for the constitution of new civic responsibility frameworks.
- This was the very moment when the rivalling fractions of the Polish intelligentsia took up the leadership role in defining the moral space of citizenship obligations and distinguishing between figures of good and bad citizens.

The hegemonic position of the intelligentsia

- Following the literature on the evolution of Polish elites in 19th and 20th centuries it is assumed that due to the hegemonic position of the intelligentsia strata in the Polish public life its cultural capital oriented habitus identifies and classifies (mainly unconsciously) rules of the public sphere and socialization practices (Jedlicki 2008, 2008a; Czepulis-Rastenis 1985; Stefanowska 1976).
- Historically, the elite of cultural capital – the intelligentsia achieved an informal position of national leadership in the Polish society through converting their cultural capital resources (e.g. education, social altruism, ethos of freedom and social justice fighters) into the status of hegemonic symbolic capital which exceeded their strata boundaries (Janowski 2008; Kennedy 1992).
- In other words, its particular values, interests, political strategies and aims had been universalized and were broadly perceived as representing a desirable citizenship model which should be emulated by others regardless of their class position.

The lord/boor binary

- Polish citizenship politics, either in the interbellum (1918–1939) period, or during the post-communist era, have exhibited moralization mechanisms, encouraging the public to participate in the civic sphere and comply with the ideals of the Republic, embodied by the figure of the intelligentsia member: educated, politically responsible individual (see Zarycki, Smoczynski, Warczok, 2017).
- This culturalist approach serves to establish a hegemonic code of legitimate moral citizenship and the excluded are subjects who supposedly fail to comply with the normative ideals – those who do not fulfil the culturally defined boundaries of the nation.

Cultural reductionism

- It is important to note prevalent cultural reductionism strategies of the intelligentsia elite regardless it was left or right oriented, typically encountered in the underdeveloped economically CEE peripheries where the Bourgeoisie class historically has been poorly established (Szelenyi 2006; Jedlicki 1999), instead the post gentry intelligentsia stratum (the elite of cultural capital) has enjoyed a leading role in defining interpretative frameworks of civic responsibility (Gella 1976; Jedlicki 1999a; Jasiewicz 2009).
- It was particularly visible since the founding moment of the Second Republic of Poland (1918) when political interests elaborated in terms of class and material capital had been marginalized and instead the political tensions were played out between different fraction of the intelligentsia (Smoczyński, Zarycki 2016).
- The explanation of the dominance of the elite of cultural capital from the late 19th century onwards needs to be located in the context of 20th centuries damages and dispossessions brought by world wars. Not to mention about the agrarian character of the peripheral Poland which among other countries located eastward of Elbe river did not participate in the major socio-economic development of the post- 16th century Rim Land Europe what petrified its feudal social structure (Wallerstein 1974).

Culturalized elite structure

- Interestingly, the post-communist Poland does not seem to re-shuffle its culturalized elite structure. Under the conditions of the dependent peripheral economy in the global supply chain system where the major financial assets in Poland belong to the foreign ownership (Hardy 2007; Nölke, Vliegenthart 2009) there has not been a proper environment for the development of the comprehensive local bourgeoisie elite, and its impact on the field of power remains limited (Drahokoupil 2009).
- Since the early 20th century the “lord” figure lost its unequivocal association with the nobility and gradually started to be associated with the educated intelligentsia member motivated by the sense of responsibility for the national sake, while the “boor” functioned a symbol of dysfunctional citizen, or non-citizen, historically identified with the landless peasant who has not participated in the public sphere and has not taken responsibility for the Respublika (Zarycki 2014).

Shaming claims-making

- A post 1989 “return of Poland to Europe” is illustrative here as it has involved the hierarchization of the social field while the liberal intelligentsia elites have been employing symbolic violence-oriented claims making in combating various manifestations of backwardness that allegedly hindered the European integration (Sztompka 1993).
- This process informed by the „lord” vs “boor” binary involved the proclamation of moral superiority of self-appointed representatives of European values over inferior morally lower classes while certain categories of citizens have been publicly shamed and lectured about being out joint with the “modern world” (Horowitz 2006; Koczanowicz 2011).

Entrepreneurial individual

- As with other citizenship models which use informal categories of exclusion and inclusion the “lord” vs “boor” difference is relational, in Polish case the intelligentsia fractions either liberal or conservative nominate contested categories of “boorish” non-citizens and “lordish” citizens. Setting symbolic hierarchies in the post-communist civil sphere involves antagonistic tensions among proponents of different normative codes, however this is not to deny, that a figure of an entrepreneurial secular individual capable of managing various risk-oriented problems.
- To be sure, Western European countries are far from being shaped by homogenous citizenship ideals what is well-known at least since Marshall’s (1964) seminal work, there have been also various political responses to the interplay between economic and social systems or the role of welfare-state assistance as for instance the varieties of capitalism approach illustrates, similarly there is no one unified model of the role of religious organizations in the public sphere etc. (Alexander 2004), however, in the CEE peripheries particularly in early 1990s, a stereotypical neo-liberal compromise model has been perceived as an undisputable ideal for civic sphere which acted as point of reference for convergence strategies.

Moral regulation

- Importantly, the analysis of orientalizing processes may benefit from employing the moral regulation approach (Corrigan, Sayer 1985; Hunt 1997, 1999; Valverde 1994, 1995) in explaining how the institutional and discursive processes of moralization understood as a governance strategy interpellating “prudent individuals” who can manage risks and avoid harm functioned in the CEE peripheries.
- As Hunt (2003) and others (O’Malley 1996) demonstrated the strategy of identifying prudent citizens has been growing in the West for decades and achieved a dominant regulatory position in everyday life through transmitting claims-making about risk, harm and personal responsibility; once implemented in the post-1989 CEE region the moral regulation discursive machinery generates its interpellating efficiency usually within the orientalising perspective.
- In Poland we see how in contrast to different categories of irresponsible citizens who fail avoiding risks associated with practising ideological bias typical for the “savage East” (e.g. nationalism, authoritarianism, religious bigotry) “prudent” citizens self-interpellate themselves as responsible individuals acting as liberal entrepreneurial subjects who do not get tempted by nationalist and bigotry delusions and adapt to the new rational capitalist arrangements.

Conclusion

- Interestingly, similarly, as in the West, analysed discursive strategies should be perceived as normatively ambiguous (Valverde 2008), in the sense, that they have no one-sided ideological affiliation and cover various ideological fields, the interpellation of Polish prudent citizens responsibly adapting to the “West values” against the “East savageness” can be noted either in neo-liberal strategies of euro-enthusiasts or in “national security” discourses of the conservative camp.
- Overall, the CEE peripheral location brings certain portion of conceptual inadequacy with the core European countries where the power relations are to a greater extent legitimized by material and political resources (Zarycki 2014). It is thus not a major surprise, as Zarycki (2014) noted that in Poland where culture has functioned over generations as a compensatory resource the criticism of various e.g. nationalist policies has been perceived by “conservatives as an attack on peripheral “sacred” resources” whereas for Euro-enthusiastic camp the same criticism has been perceived as a “modernization”.

Bibliography (selected)

- Bakić-Hayden, M. (1995) Nesting orientalism: the case of former Yugoslavia. *Slavic Review*, 54(4): 917–931.
- Buchowski, M. (2006) The spectre of Orientalism in Europe: From exotic other to stigmatized brother. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 79(3): 463–482.
- Glynos, J. and A. Mondon (2016) The political logic of populist hype: The case of right-wing populism's 'meteoric rise' and its relation to the status quo. *POPULISMUS Working Papers*, No. 4. Thessaloniki: Populismus. 1–20.
- Horolets, A. (2006) Discursive means of pulling Europe closer in Polish press. In Kutter, A. and V. Trappmann (eds.) *The Legacy of Accession: Europeization in Central and Eastern Europe*. Baden-Baden: Nomos. 65–78.
- Sztompka, P. (1993) Civilizational incompetence: The trap of postcommunist societies. *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie*, 22(2): 85–95.
- Zarycki, T., R. Smoczynski and T. Warczok (2017) The roots of Polish culture-centred politics: Toward a non-purely cultural model of cultural domination in Central and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 31(2): 360–381.
- Zarycki, T. (2014) *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge.

THE END

. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION