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NATIONAL MINORITY AS A POLITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CATEGORY

In the course of democratisation processes in Poland, the issue of national and ethnic minorities was debated and decisions on legal / constitutional solutions were taken. In result, minorities have become politically “visible” after having being “dismissed” in times of communism. The recognition of minorities has gradually changed the general public awareness of their place in the society and has had an impact on politicians’ agenda. Both, the minorities’ political “visibility” and the increased awareness of their presence have attracted attention of various academics. This article aims to demonstrate the political character of the *national minority* category and its possible impact on sociological perspectives. Its objective, however, is not to once again review definitions used in law, political science and sociology and to indicate their common or related contents, or to offer a new definition of the phenomenon in question.¹ The objective is to identify potential and real difficulties and dilemmas sociologists have and will have in their research while facing a specific political practice of institutionalising² the status of national minorities. The impact

¹ That does not mean that I consider the issue of defining the phenomenon in question irrelevant. It is relevant because it facilitates better understanding of the phenomenon. However, definitions and their critical reviews are available in academic literature while today, as Krzysztof Kwaśniewski rightly wrote, “The issue of national minorities, despite (or perhaps as a result of) researchers’ growing interest, has recently (after decades of being ignored) been made more complex and approaches to it change. Lengthy and complex deliberations on the correct definition of the phenomenon have been abandoned. It has transpired that the classic definition formula cannot be filled in any other manner than by tautology and that intentional definitions, which specify properties required while, actually, the relevance of those properties depends on a given context (and which by no means are completely ‘objective’), have identified the phenomenon but have not facilitated uniform, simple, and effective solutions”. K. Kwaśniewski (2007), *O logice badań problemów narodowościowych*, “Przeгляд Zachodni” No. 3, p. 7. The said inability to formulate an adequate definition is often the reason of sociologists’ dilemmas in research methodology, which will be discussed later.

² Elinor Ostrom’s definition of institutions will be very useful here. Institutions are a set of operating rules used to determine who is authorised to take decisions in a certain field, what activities are permitted or restricted, what aggregation principles will be applied, what procedures must be followed, what information must and must not be supplied, as well as what benefits will be assigned to individuals depending on their actions”. After J. Mucha *Mniejszości kulturowe w procesie demokratyzacji*

of political practice on academic deliberations is noticeable in sociological works but seldom realised and explicated directly. The forecasted increase in migration to Poland may make the issue of the presence of “the others” even more political and lead to many new dilemmas of sociologists, not only of the theoretical but also methodological nature. This paper is not a comprehensive review of examples of the political status of minorities. It does not offer the identification of all problems which might be encountered by researchers. Its objective is to increase general awareness of the issue to make tackling it more informed.

The political nature, or shall we say *politicality*, as a key variable on which this paper on national minorities focuses is “a feature of relations between individuals and groups of individuals, which is part of distribution of all types of rare goods valued by a society”³. A justification for the adoption of such a perspective while analysing the situation of minorities and in academic deliberations can be found in works of Anthony Giddens who views deliberative democracy as a characteristic feature of contemporary Late Modern societies. Deliberative democracy differs from older democracy models because, *inter alia*, new actors have entered the area of policy making and thus the actors include not only political parties and state authorities. Other actors involved in the process of continuous transformation of the contents and essence of *politicality* include e.g. scholars and minorities. Another innovation in deliberative democracy is a change in the political agenda which now includes issues absent earlier such as ethnic minorities’ rights.⁴ Thus methodological solutions adopted in sociological research are relevant. What sociologists (understood here as active actors who impact a democratic system to an extent) write and conclude, shapes democracy and perception of the minority issue: they show, describe, and perhaps even legitimise or expose the “reality” imposed by other political actors (institutions traditionally involved in policy making). Hence the frame of my deliberations will be the legislative and institutional approach versus a scientific (sociological) approach to the issue of national minorities.

POLITICAL NATURE OF THE NATIONAL MINORITY CATEGORY

A brief introduction of the categories of national and ethnic minorities in Polish law is in place here. The differentiation between national and ethnic minorities⁵ introduced in the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language

w *Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, in: M. Szejma (ed.) (2008), *Etniczność – o przemianach społeczeństw narodowych*, Kraków.

³ Ł. Błaszczkiewicz, *Polityczność w teoriach socjologicznych Parsonsa, Giddensa i Bourdieu*, in: A. Czajowski, L. Sobkowiak (eds) (2012), *Polityka i polityczność. Problemy teoretyczne i metodologiczne*, Wrocław, p. 162.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 169-172

⁵ In a draft act of 2001 presented in the course of a parliamentary subcommittee work, reference was made to national minorities. They were listed in a uniform way and there was no division into national and ethnic minorities.

consists, virtually, in one *not*. National and ethnic minorities share common characteristics but the national minority “identifies itself” and the ethnic minority “does *not* identify itself with another nation organised in [having] its own state”. Despite invoking an objective characteristic, i.e. having or not having a foreign motherland, the decision of the legislator raises some doubts. One may ask why or for what purpose that distinction was made as thus distinguished national minorities appear to be “stronger” and ethnic minorities “weaker” (Krzysztof Kwaśniewski argues that ethnic minorities are “most defenceless because they are stateless”⁶) if that differentiation has no impact on rights granted to both of them. In the case of the aforementioned Act, “The genesis of such a differentiation resulted, to a large extent, from the position of the Ukrainian minority strongly protesting against recognising Lemkos⁷, who do not consider themselves part of the Ukrainian nation, as a national minority. This points to the political justification for the differentiation in question. Furthermore, the Act, itself, makes one doubt the differentiation justifiability. In that Act, the term “minorities” without attributes has been consistently used throughout except for the initial differentiation of the two kinds of minorities and a chapter on competences of relevant public administration.”⁸

Grzegorz Janusz, in his 2011 publication⁹, reviewed differences in the legislation on national minorities in particular European countries. In his thorough analysis of specific solutions, the author identified four types of practice: the term “minorities” is used without defining it, a minority is indirectly identified in the context of minority language protection, minorities are listed without any definition, denotation of the term “minority” is defined by some criteria. He also discusses terminological solutions (application of categories such as: language minority, national minority,

⁶ K. Kwaśniewski (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 8

⁷ G. Janusz (2011), *Ochrona praw mniejszości narodowych w Europie*, Lublin, p. 43.

⁸ For the record, prior to the Act, a fundamental provision was written into the Polish Constitution of 1997. Its Article 35.1 reads: “The Republic of Poland shall ensure Polish citizens belonging to national or ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, to maintain customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture.”. More information on the lengthy legislative process of incorporating those issues into normative acts can be found in numerous publications of its participant S. Łodziński e.g. *Przekroczyć własny cień. Prawne, instytucjonalne oraz społeczne aspekty polityki państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych w latach 1989-1997*, in: B. Berdychowska (ed.) (1998), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Praktyka po 1989 r.*, Warszawa; *Być mniejszością w większości. Dyskusja o prawach mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach dziewięćdziesiątych*, in: P. Chmielewski, T. Krauze, W. Wesołowski (ed.) (2002), *Kultura. Osobowość. Polityka*, Warszawa; *Trauma i władza liczb. Wybrane problemy społecznego odbioru pytania o „Narodowość” w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym z 2002 r.*, in: L. Adamczuk, S. Łodziński (2006), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego z 2002 r.*, Warszawa; *Spory wokół ustawy o ochronie mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce okresu transformacji*, in: E. Michalik, H. Chałupczak (2006), *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w procesach transformacji oraz integracji*, Lublin; *Polityka wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce w latach 1945-2008*, in: S. Dudra, B. Nitschke (2010), *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Wybrane elementy polityki państwa*, Kraków.

⁹ G. Janusz (2011), *op. cit.*, pp. 59-76.

nationality group, national community) as well as the criteria for granting a protected status to specific communities, i.e. inclusion and exclusion.

In the Polish law, the issue of a protected minority status also points to the political nature of the national minority category. Protection of rights of minorities presupposes formal recognition of a given minority. The Polish Act on national minorities not only defines but also lists them as if doubting the *definiens* precision. In result, an ethnic group which is not mentioned in the Act, does not enjoy the minority status even if it meets the criteria. On the other hand, there is no solution in case a listed group would not like to be recognised as a minority. Its status cannot be changed at the group request. It might seem that the second possibility is an abstract construct only, but the opinion of no ethnic community should be ignored. “Deep identification of the fate of Polish Armenians with the fate of Poles may explain a clear aversion of the first to attempts at qualifying them as a national minority. In their opinion, “the achievements of their many generations have proved their loyalty to their adopted Motherland – Poland, and they are not torn by dilemmas typical of national minorities in contemporary Poland”. Dariusz Szamel, the author of this observation underlines that considerable Polonisation did not erase the Armenians’ awareness of their origin; that awareness “may be sometimes understated but is never concealed”¹⁰. Situations where minorities are not officially recognised despite their postulates are more frequent. When the Sejm [Parliament] worked on the Act on minorities, the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association filed a motion to be recognised as an ethnic minority and thus included under the Act.¹¹ The legislator has met their expectations in part recognising Kashubians as a “language minority” only. The minorities enumerated in the Act do not include also Greeks over a dozen thousands of whom came to Poland in the end of the 1950s as political refugees. While designing the Act, it was initially proposed that minorities should meet the condition of “traditionally inhabiting” the present territory of the country, which was further specified as “for at least three generations”. Eventually, the 100-year criterion was adopted. Thus immigrants from Greece and their third or even fourth generation descendants have not obtained the status of a minority. What has aroused most controversy, however, is that Silesians are not mentioned in the Act. They wish their distinctness from Poles and Germans was recognised. It is mainly because of Silesians that the discourse on minorities in general has been present in the public space.

It is not only the Polish legislation the rationale and justification of which are difficult to understand. In Germany, four minorities have been recognised, i.e. Danes, Lusatian Sorbs, Sinti Roma, and Frisians.¹² East Frisians¹² and people of Turkish descent are not recognised as national minorities. However, the example of Austria

¹⁰ D. Szamel (1998), *Małe społeczności narodowościowe, w: Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Praktyka po 1989 r.*, p. 272.

¹¹ S. Łodziński (2006), *Spory wokół ustawy...*, p. 296.

¹² G. Janusz (2011), *op. cit.*, p. 28.

shows that a change is possible and depends on political will. The Austrian Ethnic Group Act [Volksgruppengesetz] covers six minorities, including Roma people who were granted the ethnic group status only in 1993.¹³

The role of the state is visible also in the implementation of institutional solutions which apply to minorities. An example are procedures adopted in individual European countries for the census purpose. A census is a form of validating and determining the scale of various phenomena. The collected data on minorities, in a sense, objectivises and formally legitimises and verifies (hard data) not only their existence but also their population numbers. The diversity of solutions can be illustrated with the following examples. In Austria, the question asked in the national census is about the language used in a given family and not about nationality or ethnicity.¹⁴ In the Czech Republic, it is possible to declare double nationality in the census. Censuses carried out in that country provide interesting data on the population of the Romani people who in the 2001 census declared a nationality other than Czech three times less than in 1991. Grzegorz Janusz explains it with the fact that “After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, there were about 200 thousand Romani people having Czechoslovakian citizenship in the Czech Republic and they were treated by the Czech authorities as stateless persons”¹⁵. In Estonia, both nationality and native language are recorded in the census. More people declare Estonian nationality than speak the Estonian language while less people declare Russian nationality than speak Russian. Changes in census criteria are clearly related to a political change visible e.g. in the south of Central Europe. “In Hungary, the catalogue of registered minorities was gradually enlarged from seven minorities in 1990 to fourteen in 2001. In Bulgaria, the Pomak minority was not distinguished in the census. In Croatia, the Yugoslavian nationality was not distinguished in the 2001 census but it was recognised in Montenegro in the 2003 census. In Serbia and in Montenegro, some people who previously declared to be Muslims now consider themselves to be Bosniaks, while in Macedonia the Bosnian minority was recognised only in the 2002 census”¹⁶. The above examples only signal that the solutions used vary and have various consequences for specific national categories, political consequences included.

The experience of two last censuses carried out in Poland demonstrates the modification and manipulation potential of solutions which institutionalise the functioning of minorities within the state where those minorities happen to live. Polish national censuses of 2002 and 2011 differed in terms of methods used to collect the data on national minorities. In the first one, the question about nation-

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

¹⁶ K. Dolińska, J. Makaro (2012), *Wielokulturowość Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Kilka metodologicznych uwag o definiowaniu i badaniu zjawiska*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa” No. 40, p. 98.

ality (understood as subjective identification) was asked for the first time after 1989, while in the second one, two questions were asked: one about nationality and another one about the sense of belonging to another nation/ethnic group different from the nationality indicated in response to the first question. Both censuses differed also by different sampling methods what appears to be of paramount importance if a census is to provide information on the ethnic structure of Poland. In 2011, non-Polish nationality could have been declared by persons who decided to self-register or were selected to be interviewed at home or by phone by special appointed agents. A complete census of the population was carried out in 86 municipalities only, where, according to the 2002 census, national and ethnic minorities constituted 10% of the population.

While studying social reality, sociologists are not obliged to define its components in accordance with the description and classification established by legal acts. A sociologist may but does not have to define an adult as an 18-year-old person, an unemployed person may but does not have to be registered with a job centre, and immigrants qualified in accordance with the terminology of the Border Guard as illegal, should be described by a sociologist in a non-evaluative way e.g. as persons crossing the border illegally. Thus, a minority group may be distinguished in a way different from official criteria used by administration authorities. It is social theory and not administrative categorisation which determines the subject and approach to social reality research. Hence the potential and actual discrepancies between sociological definitions and other ones. Hence also the usage of various terms (notions) to denote the same or overlapping objects.

Half a century ago, Stanisław Ossowski wrote:

The opinion that sociology is scientifically underdeveloped results from a number of factors. Yet, not all complaints address the same works. There is a belief that in sociology there are a lack of verifiable general theses which would go beyond the wisdom of 'common sense' and complaints about the ambiguity of terms and limited applicability of theorems and definitions [...]. Some argue that there are no clear boundaries between sociology and journalism, between field study and reportage [...]. A stronger impact of ideologies on research results and their wording due to sociologists' awareness that social theory may shape the motivation behind actions and social trends, follows also from attitudes shaped by relic models and relations among scholars.¹⁷

It appears that issues raised in the above quotation are, to an extent, still valid. The lack of an autonomous conceptual apparatus (and thus needed borrowings from institutional or colloquial languages) as well as both, the research and the researcher of social reality being its parts and attempts at making the researcher an independent and external observer, are issues that still call for reflection on methodology but are sometimes forgotten or abandoned.

¹⁷ S. Ossowski (2001), *O osobliwościach nauk społecznych*, Warszawa, p. 132

SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLITICAL NATURE
OF THE NATIONAL MINORITY CATEGORY

As described above, in practice, the approach to national minorities is political and affects the sub-discipline of sociology focused on minority issues. Consequences of this situation can be grouped into: 1) problems in and consequences of applying various terms in reference to the same object or of one term in reference to various objects, 2) problems with and consequences of censuses as tools used to legitimise national minorities and sources of data on minorities.

Referring back to issues raised in the first part of this paper, firstly, the identification of national, ethnic, and language minorities should be discussed. As that has been extensively covered in sociological literature, I underline key issues only. There is a wide consensus that the basis for identifying (distinguishing) minority groups includes people's descent, culture, language, religion, and awareness of their distinct identity. It is common practice to treat national and ethnic minorities as synonymous notions. Nevertheless, if researchers decide to differentiate between them, they use the "state" criterion. Thus, in Polish law, an ethnic group has neither its own national state nor aspires to have one, which, sometimes, may suggest that its internal organisation is weaker. Some researchers highlight what we are dealing with is a process and, at present, political self-awareness of ethnic groups is high. A manifestation of that are efforts of those groups to be recognised as national groups as it guarantees their higher "visibility" in public discourse.¹⁸

Naturally, the independence of social theory allows for an autonomous identification of areas of interest. However, there are situations where a sociologist wants to/must use the findings/data collected in accordance with administrative criteria. In the late 1990s, Dariusz Szamel wrote about the Old Believers in Poland, noting that "it is probably the least known national group among national minorities living in Poland"¹⁹. If one would like to use national censuses data on that community, he or she would should look for information on the Russian minority in Poland. However, there is a problem which scholars should recognise and try to overcome. The Russian minority consists of two religious communities (Orthodox Christians and Old Believers) and in Polish censuses the question about religion was either absent or optional. In the latter case, none of those confessions were listed and the options were to choose "other" or write down one's confession. Thus the usefulness (completeness) of the census data has been substantially limited.

The lack of a wide agreement on using uniform terminology while describing analogous phenomena of sociologists' interest is probably an immanent distinctive feature of social sciences. It causes chaos and limits intersubjective communicability and verifiability of sociological conclusions. Such challenges are also faced by

¹⁸ E. Nowicka (2006), *Etniczność na sprzedaż i/lub etniczność domowa*, in: *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle...*, pp. 292-294.

¹⁹ D. Szamel (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 284.

researchers studying ethnic issues. To illustrate the above, let us start with Silesians, i.e. a category best described in sociological literature and the popularity of which largely results from its political character. A differentiation of Silesians based on sociological categories raises no doubts. What terms and classifications should be used, however, to describe them? The fact that Silesians are not mentioned in the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities leads to some confusion of (not only) linguistic nature. Has a scholar the right to use the term *national* or *ethnic minority* in that case and, if yes, why there are examples of “avoidance” of such a classification in the literature? Even a brief review of relevant publications reveals various semantic solutions e.g. “regional community”, “Silesian nation”, “postulated Silesian nation”, or “Silesian national minority”. Moreover, titles of many publications on Silesians are actually questions and end in a question mark. We encounter a similar problem when we try to compare results of censuses in different countries as sometimes official classifications of the same national group differ. For instance, Lemkos are recognised as an ethnic minority in Poland and as a national minority in the Czech Republic (“It [the list of minorities] was criticised by Ukrainian minority organisations for including ‘Rusyn’ Lemkos and thereby artificially dividing the entire Ukrainian community”²⁰). In Poland, Jews are a national minority, while in the census carried out the Republic of Slovakia “they were not included in the ethnic structure [...] because they were identified as a religious and not ethnic community”²¹. If sociologists wanted to use the official terminology to refer to specific groups, it would not only limit comparative analyses but also invalidate or weaken the importance of social theory to the advantage of political solutions.

The case of Greeks, who arrived in Poland shortly after World War II, is different. They do not meet the statutory criterion of living in Poland long enough and that is the reason why they are not recognised as a national minority. Sociological characteristics of their community, however, allow for classifying it a minority. In practice, scholars refer to them plainly as Greeks in Poland (although the ones who have lived here for more than half a century should be distinguished somehow from those who arrived in Poland in recent years) or write about Greek refugees (which is inappropriate as it excludes their descendants).

Another example of problems resulting from a clash of political and sociological approaches is the concept of *Polonia*. *Polonia* appears to be different from national minority and the usual justification of that is the allochthonous vs autochthonous nature of a Polish community in another country (which, in essence, is a sociological criterion). At the same time, in the subject literature, Polish diaspora communities are considered national minorities if they have the status of a national minority in a given foreign country (the status assigned by the dominant group), and *Polonia* if they do not have that status (and that is a political or institutional criterion). The most telling

²⁰ S. Łodziński (2006), *Trauma i władza...*, p. 200.

²¹ M. Benza (1995), *Sytuacja prawna mniejszości narodowych w Republice Słowackiej*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa” No. 2, p. 178.

example is the use of both terms in reference to Poles living in Germany who do not have the official status of national minority, a fact which is often contested.²² On the other hand, researchers writing about Poles in Kazakhstan often refer to them as a national minority despite the fact that that community is also migratory.

This short review of issues resulting from terminology and definitions, is relevant also in the case of the growing number of new “others”, that is numerous immigrants to Poland mainly from the East (which is an outcome of globalisation and regime changes). As in previous examples, their characteristics include non-Polish descent (which is key for the present considerations) and their sense of national and ethnic identity. In addition, majority of them do not have Polish citizenship (contrary to members of officially recognised national and ethnic minorities) but their children increasingly often are Polish citizens. That category has become an interesting subject of research but there is no agreement on the term which would best “embrace” their different groups distinguished by sociologists. The category of foreigners is too vague and broad, while the category of national and ethnic minorities is not appropriate in the light of its usage so far. The “new minorities” phrase is used increasingly often, sometimes in quotation marks, sometimes not.²³

As it has been already pointed out, the institution of national census and its data can well lead to problems too. On the one hand, censuses are a very attractive source of data for sociologists, offering information which frequently exceeds sociologists’ capabilities of measurement but, on the other hand, their interpretation is difficult (mainly because their objective is different from researchers’). Solutions and changes introduced in the methodology of national censuses carried out in Poland in 2002 and 2011 have had several consequences. First of all, it should be highlighted that the publishing of census results pertaining to national and ethnic minorities (to be precise their categories as determined by law) performs not only the informative function but also the creational one, i.e. it creates an impression that the results reflect the ethnic structure of the country. Secondly, the introduction of the option of declaring a double national identification widens sociological knowledge of minority identities but may well make the interpretation confusing (and in the political perspective, gives space for manipulation). How to interpret the fact that for instance the number of all nationality (single and double) declarations grew while the number of single nationality declarations decreased? What does it actually mean? Is it an increase or decrease of the population of a given national group? Thirdly, the full 2011 census was taken in administrative communes where national minorities constituted 10% of the population (according to the previous census) and complemented by a “representative sample” covering other parts of Poland. Such an approach ensures data collection in areas where the phenomenon in question is well visible but the resulting data on areas

²² Cf. J. Sandorski (2010), *Polska mniejszość narodowa w Niemczech w świetle prawa międzynarodowego*, “Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny” No. 2.

²³ A. Michalska (1997), *Pracownicy-migranci jako “nowa” mniejszość narodowa*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa” No. 1.

where minorities are sporadic are incomplete²⁴ (less numerous categories are more difficult to capture by random sampling). In the case of “new minorities”, a census such construed will hardly provide a reliable data as members of those minorities are unlikely to self-register and answer census questions online.

* * *

The aforementioned difficulties (both potential and real) that can be encountered by sociologists interested in ethnic minorities suggest that sociologists should be aware that the discourse on minorities is dominated by the political perspective. That awareness should help them adhere to their social perspective. It does not mean that all implications of institutionalisation of national and ethnic minorities should be rejected but that much scrutiny is in place if such information is used to build a social theory.

Last but not least, the political *praxis* in respect to ethnic minorities is also shaped by sociologists. Sociologists participated in works on the Act on minorities and on the design of the census form used by the Central Statistical Office. The role of sociology keeps changing and sociology is increasingly an applied science in addition to its diagnostic and explicatory functions. In this context, it appears that sociology’s impact stems from its achievements rather than individual sociologists’ involvement. Hence, on the one hand, social studies on particular ethnic minorities become social facts building the reality and substantively justifying the distinctness, individual nature and specificity of minority communities. On the other hand, studies on political contexts in which minorities appear, fulfil another important role of sociology which is to unmask the actual social patterns or mechanisms. For that reason, the importance of all studies on the functioning of ethnic minorities under specific political conditions can hardly be underestimated e.g. studies on consequences/implications of Polish national censuses.²⁵ Most telling examples of the growing interest in those issues include the 2nd Polish Congress of Political Science in September 2012. Its programme included a five-part panel on “National and ethnic minorities in Poland and Europe. Political and social aspects” and some speakers were sociologists. Some speakers referred to the census data but none raised the issue of the impact of censuses on self-organisation and institutionalisation of minorities in Poland. In September 2013, the 15th Congress of the Polish Sociological Association was held. At the congress its working group on “National and ethnic minorities in the Third Polish Republic. Identity, theories, research” held three sessions, one of which was entirely devoted to the issue of minorities in national censuses.

²⁴ For example, the data do not include information on the population of national and ethnic minorities in Wrocław and thus it is impossible say if and how their numbers changed in comparison to the previous census. Cf. K. Dolińska, J. Makaro (2013), *O wielokulturowości monokulturowego Wrocławia*, Wrocław, pp. 39-54. It is also impossible to say how many Greeks live in Zgorzelec and Wrocław as due to the sampling method chosen, the census data are aggregated at a higher level e.g. that of a voivodship.

²⁵ One of them is the already classic L. Adamczuk, S. Łodziński (eds) (2006), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego z 2002 r.*, Warszawa.

ABSTRACT

The article aims to draw attention to the political character of the national minority category and its consequences for social studies. The political character of the national minority category consists, among others, in the method of officially distinguishing them, their institutionalisation and legitimisation. In the process of theory development and in field research, sociologists dealing with ethnic issues succumb, to a greater or lesser extent, to categories developed in the sphere of politics. Examples of that entanglement discussed in the article pertain to both the sociological distinguishing of the category of minorities and the usage of national census data with all its political implications.



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In this next volume of *The Federal Republic of Germany 20 Years after Reunification. Politics – Economy – Society* series, contributors associated with the Institute for Western Affairs attempt at analysing various aspects of Polish-German societal and cultural relations. 65 years after WW2, Germany is now Poland's ally in NATO and the European Union. In Polish-German relations, societal and cultural relations play an important role and this includes direct, face-to-face contacts and meetings between Poles and Germans. They have created a dense network which has a significant impact on the climate of official bilateral relations.

The first part of this volume includes papers that refer to some aspects of the shared and difficult history which continue to influence present relations between the two countries. Andrzej Sakson discusses the stereotypes of the Pole and Poland in modern Germany pointing to the fact that despite a major change in Polish-German relations in the last 20 years, the old negative stereotypes persist. Piotr Kubiak presents the evolution of German politics of memory (*Geschichtspolitik*) and its impact on Germany relations with Poland. The recent symbol of historical misunderstandings between the two countries and nations has been the Centre against Expulsions (*ZgV*). Difficult issues related to WW2 and its consequences have had a detrimental impact on the bilateral relations in the first decade of the 21st century.

An important "case study" of Polish-German controversies involving the legacy of the past is the paper by Maria Rutowska on restitution of heritage artefacts. Rutowska points to formal legal issues of restitution of artefacts stolen and "re-located" during WW2. She writes about the number and value of Polish losses and the complicated controversies surrounding some collections and individual objects.

Today's culture, mass media and the cooperation of local (self) governments are discussed as well. Maria Wagińska-Marzec writes about Polish-German cultural cooperation. German investments in mass media are the topic of Marcin Tujdowski's paper in which he reconstructs the expansion of German media corporations onto the Polish market and their activities. Polish-German cooperation of local governments, twin cities/communes and Euro-regions at the Polish-German border is the topic of Witold Ostant's paper.