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To trust the Other. Anthropology of education in the context of Polish debates on multiculturalism

Abstract

The article presents selected critical trajectories in the specific Polish debate on multiculturalism within the context of a much wider issue of otherness. This is considered as a major issue in current social and political debates because of the fact, that Polish society in its most general terms is still widely associated as a culturally homogenous community, where every single evidence of cultural otherness is being treated more or less as a threat to national identity. Therefore we are forced to ask if in contemporary conditions the vision of a homogenous Polish national community can be still held as dominant? Multiculturalism can in this light be an ideology, as well a social praxis. This problem is being put in the paper in the wide spectrum of a specific discipline which deals with cultural otherness, i.e. cultural anthropology, or to be more specific anthropology of education. Anthropological encounters with the cultural Other build up a central figure in the discipline's dictionary. The category of cultural difference itself had made a long lasting career in this field of knowledge, since the beginnings of the anthropological reflection on man as a culturally defined being. This paper takes the anthropological perspective and puts it into the field of current shifts visible in the contemporary Polish society. The main question here is therefore tackling the sensible issue of trust expressed in cultural terms, not just through declarative politics of multiculturalism.

Keywords: multiculturalism, modern Polish society, multicultural discourse, cultural Other, otherness, anthropology of education, social and cultural transgressions, European multiculturalism

Polish society in its most general terms is still widely associated as a culturally homogenous community, where every single evidence of cultural otherness is being treated more or less as a threat to national identity. Certainly this notion is related to just a part of Polish cultural discourse. On the other hand, this very stereotypical vision of Polish homogenous and monolithic culture, as well cultural heritage is however

to this day occupying minds of people in Poland, as well outside the country. Recent transgressions in the political discourse and the raising of the question of various understandings of national identity is shifting the spectrum of the discourse into the field of deconstruction of specific Polish myths and visions about its culture, past and future. This is mostly considered in the context of a unspecific historical continuity of Polish society being reframed in today's politics and media debates on far right and other extremist groups challenging the democratic system in Poland. This debates, regardless their doubtful weight and value, are highlighting however an important question, which should be put in the center of the discussion about Polish cultural self-identification and the place of otherness in this vision.

Therefore we are forced to ask if in contemporary conditions the vision of a homogenous Polish national community can be still held as dominant? The answer to this important issue relocates the balancing point of the modern Polish cultural discourse towards the question whether Polish society is ready to accept various forms of otherness in its core structures, or to be more specific, can we retrace the paths otherness is already entering the social and cultural praxis? Even further, can Poland become in some sense a multicultural society, or could the politics and actions undertaken in the field of multiculturalism be deconstructed and reshaped to make them closer to the changing reality? To deliver at least a partially satisfying answer to these questions we have to consider the complex historical background which is following the concept of multiculturalism in Poland.

To say that the mentioned homogenous character of Polish society is a constant phenomenon and Poland was never facing multiculturalism as a cultural fact is certainly false. What I'm interested in this context and what I want to shade a light onto is the transgression of the cultural ideology around multicultural reality. So, what happened that affected the Polish vision of intercultural relations shifting the whole discourse from "Them among Us" to "Them (out there) and Us"? Is there a explainable basis for this conservative transformation, or is this just a phenomenon appearing on the surface and beyond it we might find an other Poland – opened to otherness and more liberal in accepting what is culturally different? In the context of those questions we have to reach beyond the re-

cent decades and look at the history of multiculturalism in Poland from the view of intercultural relations.

Many historians agree, that the emergence of the multicultural discourse in Poland might be traced back to the Middle Ages and the Jewish immigration from Western Europe. At that time Poland was widely respected as one of the most liberal among European countries and therefore was also an attractive destination for migrants fleeing religious persecution elsewhere. Jewish immigration then, and in the years after had shaped the framework of Polish multicultural discourse in its infancy, but also the presence of Jewish culture had influenced Polish culture in a significant way – a state of troubled but also friendly co-existence which lasted until the Holocaust. Beside the Jewish population many other groups came to Poland and had settled there contributing to the cultural diversity of the country. These groups, like for example Lithuanians, Germans, Czechs, Dutch, Scottish, Karaim etc., were important in making the foundations of Polish society, understood at that time more as an union of nations, than a homogenous whole. The national identity on Poland during the monarchy and the First Republic was therefore perceive as heterogeneous. Poland was in the period between 15th and 18th century, as Waław Nałkowski puts it "somehow an opened door from Western to Eastern Europe"¹, that is a terrain characterized by the existence of constantly merging elements taken from different cultures and building a differentiated and very dynamic system; each of them being a part of a whole, and each of them playing a significant role in constructing the identity of people in the Commonwealth of Both Nations. In this case multiculturalism wasn't a part of some ideology or politics, but a fact and a reality *in statu nascendi*. This vision of a multicultural state is certainly to some extent an idealized picture of peaceful co-existence, but nevertheless it was at that time an unique example of bringing together various cultural groups under one roof without any reservations about their participation in the process of self-determination. This historical point of reference, that is the situation in Poland in the mentioned period, is usually taken for granted in the debate on modern multiculturalism, but we have to admit, that if Poland is turning

¹ W. Nałkowski, *Terytorium Polski historycznej jako indywidualność geograficzna*, Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze, Warszawa 1912, pp. 9.

towards multiculturalism and the multicultural state this is becoming more a some kind of foundation myth.

As every myth, the historical context of Polish multiculturalism cannot be taken literary if we speak of contemporary reality. Of course we are able to recall the past to make the point in the debate on the right of minorities or the situation of refugees in Poland today, but it has little effect in changing the low level of acceptance for otherness in the contemporary Polish society. The concept of otherness is here widened and fluctuates accordingly to the current situation, thus cultural otherness in Poland is taking also different shapes than the cultural one. Otherness as a sociological phenomenon is also referred to characteristics of non-cultural (ethnic) nature, like for example sexuality, social class, or political views. Its a mechanism of marginalization of groups and individuals based on specific views of being accordingly "not me" or "not us". In consequence otherness becomes a part of self-identification. It is a specific act of cognition (or recognition denial). We need and strive for the Other as much we despise him because of his otherness. The Other is needed to reflect our own view and to make us feel unique. The recognition of otherness becomes thus the cognition of ourselves. The process that gives shape to our self-identification does not necessarily has to be cultural, and in its most basic form isn't. It's just a basis for further construction of cultural forms of expressing what is significant for us. The field of cultural and social constructivism is therefore an object of study in relation to topics like nationalism for example What is important here, are the critical trajectories of drawing a distinction between us and them. The important obstacle to overcome becomes to develop a sufficient level of trust towards the Other, which would allow to create a sphere of pluralistic co-existence of various cultural groups within democratic systems.

Multiculturalism can in this light be an ideology, as well a social praxis. When we speak of ideology behind the existing definitions of multiculturalism, we have to recall the fact that most of those definitions emerged in the context of dynamics of change of societies in Western Europe or United States in the 20th century. The American concept of multiculturalism is related to massive migration processes, that took place starting from the end of 19th century and is highly conditioned by

the context of 20th century American history. The idea of a "melting pot" was accompanying the debate on multiculturalism in the beginning of the American multicultural discourse and favored actions undertaken in order to advance cultural assimilation of those, who differed from the Anglo-Saxon core group of the American society. Later on, the American debate on multiculturalism transformed into a more pluralistic ideology of celebrating cultural differences along the ongoing political, social and cultural emancipation of ethnic minorities. In Western Europe the multicultural debate is related on the other hand to a more or less obvious post-colonial context of what was happening in the Old Continent after 1945. Former colonial powers like Britain or France and Western states of economic and political importance like Western Germany, had to face a growing number of former colonial subjects and economic migrants setting foot on their soil, starting families and jobs, becoming our neighbors and colleagues at the working place. In both cases, Western Europe and United States, multiculturalism had become something which officially was welcomed as an enrichment of national cultures. However, as recent events had shown, the people, which were the object of multicultural politics had a quite different view on the issue.

Of course we cannot deny the fact, that Western societies had built during the ages a certain (and a long lasting) tradition in the cultural discourse. This tradition consists mostly of a centralized core of cultural ideas, all associated with the historical process which had produced them during the time in the Western context of Christianity. The emergence of social sciences in the 19th century did not change much in this matter. The evolutionist and positivist view of culture had dominated the European thought during the whole 19th century and still is very much alive today. In this kind of cultural model our own culture had to be considered as the most efficient, most developed and most modern variant of all existing civilizations around the world. A classic evolutionist, sir James George Frazer suggested that, the key factor of cultural development is the worldview, shared by groups of people who are driven by it in their actions². This very shift - from idea to agency - is the most important in understanding how Western societies conceptualized what

² See: J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press 1998.

is culturally different. The cultural Other had to be conquered in order to put it into rational frames of Western positivistic philosophy. Culture was supposed to be implemented into those societies, who did not share the same view as the Europeans and who thus couldn't be trusted. Just as Frazer stated in his book "The Golden Bough" – being a savage meant to differ in our thoughts and actions from the scientific and rational point of view. The non-European Other had yet to learn how to think and behave in this manner.

However, there was a significant problem in teaching those abilities to the "primitive" indigenous people in various parts of the world. The main obstacle was made here by the difference in the worldviews shared by Europeans and non-Europeans. To overcome this ideological gap there was something needed, that could explain to Westerners how the cultural Other thinks, therefore we will be able to predict his behavior in a rational manner and control him in a political sense. As many times in history, also in this case a direct force had been applied to do so. The colonial involvement of Europeans in the second half of the 19th century shows how this policy of direct compulsion towards those who differ from us did function, also in an educational sense. The establishment of the colonial rule and colonial schooling system affected in this sphere also the scientific paradigm. Social sciences had been applied to provide us with theories on the construction of primitive societies, their religion and beliefs, political and economic life and many other fields of human existence. Thus culture was defined mostly in terms of Western civilization. Religion, law, political power, art and other phenomena was taken into account as long they required the standards set by the colonizers. Their interest lied upon a deep cultural change of those, who looked and acted differently. The acculturation process was meant to be a necessity, a civilizatory mission that has to be fulfilled in a way, which without any doubt led to becoming a member of a modern society. Many shared the belief, that the savage might be converted into a being that we might recognize as one of us.

The cultural inclusion was in all of these cases the main argument in the construction of current schooling policies. Educational institutions, such as public schools, universities and private institutions, were designed to maintain the cultural integrity of the national community.

A good example of this kind of early nationalistic discourse in the context of education of natives are the boarding schools in North America set up in the second half of the 19th century to educate the Indians in the United States and Canada. Boarding schools were perceived by their creators as one of the most significant tools in the acculturation process of Native Americans³. They were a model solution for the growing problem of cultural diversification of the American society at the end of the century. The consequence was that the issue of multiculturalism was raised in the United States first in the 1920's and 1930's as the American society changed in its ethnic structure. The processes which took place back then in America might serve as an example how educational institutions function in a specific cultural environment. The category of difference is taken here into account as an integral part of the reality surrounding us all.

A similar shift in cultural identity is being experienced today by Europeans, including the Polish society. The opening of borders due to the Schengen Agreement and increased mobility of people across the continent has lifted traditional view of nations and states as closed and isolated units. The presence of migrants in European societies, as well processes of social change which occurred in Europe after 1945 contributed to a more liberal perception of otherness and cultural diversity in general. On the other hand, many inhabitants of the Old Continent refuse to accept the fact of this transgression, still expressing the idea of a monolithic European civilization, which is very much the case of Poland. It might be considered by many as granted, but the phenomena occurring in the European and Polish context nowadays provide us with some striking examples of a specific cultural discourse, which affects how we define culture today and is very similar to the mentioned above American discussions on national identity. The mentioned before colonial past of the European continent, massive migration into Europe from other parts of the world and globalization processes are only few of the problems constructing the mentioned discourse. These examples show a clear disruption in this traditional and homogenous view of what belongs to culture, and what doesn't. This symbolic crack in the European identity

³ See: D.W. Adams, *Education for Extinction. American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875–1928*, Kansas: University Press of Kansas 1997.

is being seen as a sort of a crisis situation. As in many other cases, also this time the emergence of a polarized worldview shared by many Europeans (where the old cultural order is being put against non-European extremism) was only a matter of time.

The controversy raised in 2001 by Oriana Fallaci's article and later by the book "The Rage and the Pride" illustrates such a worldview⁴. This Italian author and journalist attempts to show that the world today is falling into pieces. These fragments of reality affect all of us in the sense that we participate in this process of decay. Fallaci's book points out the main reasons for this situation which are associated with the erosion of our European cultural pride. According to Fallaci, the lack of cultural values, absence of tradition or liberal approach toward assimilation of migrants are just some of them. Her standpoint and the reaction of the readers (who enthusiastically welcomed the book) show that contemporary European societies tend to accept a radical turn in cultural and political ideology more readily than they did in the past. Certainly, this is just an exaggeration of some voices heard today in the European cultural discussion. On the other hand, these voices are rather loud and determined.

Thus the case of the latest events in Norway had a deep impact on the way we view the cultural landscape in the old continent. Religious and cultural fundamentalism since Breivik's actions are no longer the attribute of the Other, but they arose within the European landscape and is deeply grounded on what is seen as a set of so called true European values. Further more it was considered by the perpetrator as an extreme, but necessary act of self-defense against the growing stream of cultural and ideological otherness flowing into the "truly" European field of Christian tradition. Breivik's testimony had raised an important question. Are we, as modern European societies, still ready to accept the Other among us? Is it possible to get along with people, whose way of living we do not accept, or even furthermore - we reject their culture? Were the ideas achieved by the changes of the 1960's just a daydream dreamt by few liberals? These, and other questions are the key issues Europe has to deal with nowadays when speaking of the category of cul-

⁴ See: O. Fallaci, *The Rage and the Pride*, New York 2002.

tural otherness. It might be obvious that we tend to face these problems through ideological glasses of politics. It is also important to look closely at the role social sciences play in providing the answers to them.

The scientific discipline which deals with culture and cultural otherness is being mostly associated with various forms of anthropological thought. Anthropological encounters with the cultural Other build up a central figure in the discipline's dictionary. The category of cultural difference itself had made a long lasting career in this field of knowledge, since the beginnings of the anthropological reflection on man as a culturally defined being. Cultural particularism is therefore taken in anthropology from its beginnings for granted as the natural source of ethnographic data. The Other was always someone, who's ways of living are far from what we are used to perceive as our own lifestyle. No matter if we are speaking of a geographical distance, like in the case of exotic tribes living on the peripheries of our know world, or a social difference, if we are speaking of European folklore in the 19th century. In both cases anthropology provided us with a fascinating picture of Otherness and managed somehow to convince us, that it is worth having a closer look at people and their cultures.

Cultural distance is also on the other hand, a kind of a troublemaking factor, to paraphrase the book title by James Clifford⁵. History of anthropology provides us with examples how anthropologists in the field deal with the problem of culture, and their own lack of cognitive resources to "think like the Other". The description of cultural otherness differs in many ways from understanding it and acting (as a group or an individual) in the situation, where the Other is not just simply present, but furthermore he interacts with us on a daily basis. Experiencing otherness is here an act of self-identification through emphasizing differences. The main issue here is the following question – how can we construct our own identity in a culturally diverse world without producing the mechanisms of marginalization of the Other? Are we able to provide a sufficient level of trust in relation to the Other living side by side with ourselves? Is a culturally neutral education possible at all, or do educational systems always tend to unify the students in a cultural sense?

⁵ See: J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard: Harvard University Press 2002.

Without any doubt the concept of "otherness" is also an important point in the modern Polish educational debates, where it is being put into the issue of multiculturalism and multicultural education, just like in other European countries. This specific educational and political strategy is implemented in a context of a dramatically changing level of diversity among student groups in those European countries, where the system itself allows them to express their cultural identity in a pluralistic manner. Therefore the multicultural society is a model of a simultaneously pluralistic and a liberal system, in which every single cultural group is being gained access to the cultural mainstream in terms of democracy. In Europe multicultural education is based upon the fact, or more an assumption, that European societies are pluralistic in their core ideas, whereas the set of those ideas might be as diverse as the multicultural classroom in contemporary schools in Germany, Sweden or Great Britain. However Poland's cultural diversity in a large extent does not share the same level as the phenomenon in British or German context. We may agree that in a common view of majority of its inhabitants Poland sees themselves and is being perceived by others as a relatively homogenous. This view might not be relevant to the existing level of diversity, but still has to be taken into account as an important ideological factor influencing the specific Polish variation of the multicultural discourse.

The idea of multiculturalism and multicultural education was for a long period of time the dominant element of the discussion around the concept of otherness but not the only one. Cultural otherness was slowly gaining recognition also in relation to more subtle criteria of difference. As I had mentioned these criteria could be made by the category of sex, age, social class, political affiliation etc. These fields were the factor for further diversification and social stratification. Just as Bourdieu had put it, social distinction is related to cultural capital and the habitus we are given by the society. Our own creation of the social and cultural field of agency is in that case conditioned by the cultural values and ideas we share with other people. No matter if these values and ideas are an object of conflict, or an element stabilizing the social structure – they are being expressed through means given us by culture itself.

In modern Europe debates surrounding the issue of cultural otherness constitute the most important obstacle in implementing the ideas of the educational anthropology, which could be considered as a sub-discipline of both anthropology and pedagogy. Frequently, educational institutions and current ideologies of teaching consider the cultural difference as a necessary part of the social reality. At the same time in the old-fashioned way they tend to set a strategy of cultural inclusion of the other. Anthropology of education conducted by modern researchers in Europe aims both to point out this paradox and deconstruct the way otherness is treated within specific cultural discourses. The way we conceptualize the category of cultural difference today is still affected by our view of culture as a whole – a system among other systems. This idea is also to be found in contemporary social, cultural and political discourses in European societies, which until now considered themselves as liberal and open toward otherness.

Nowadays a popular view of otherness as a threat to our own culture gains an increasing support in countries like Sweden and Netherlands where national sentiments have become an important part of the public discourse. In these countries educational systems undergo a deep change related to their ideological foundations. Facing the failure of the assimilation policy of the Dutch or Swedish schooling systems and yet remaining one of the most liberal in Europe, they have reversed the policy of a soft cultural change to introduce a "harder" education of immigrants, especially when it comes to the language competence. Illustrated by the recent debates in Germany over the rejection of the idea of the so-called "Multikulti Gessellschaft" (multicultural society), this tendency makes a growing phenomenon in Europe.

In the light of these remarks multicultural education seems to be more a question of a processual approach. Cultural change is here a part of a particular system, as well an element of contact between various cultural systems and the phenomena of diffusion of selected elements of those systems. The ambiguous character of this phenomena is paradoxically not always a source of destabilization. It shakes the foundations of the cultural system only if we take for granted the system's integration as the main goal set by people who live within the system. Social praxis shows us clearly that not all participants in social life are interested in

maintaining this very narrow understood integration. People tend often more to play their own interests within the given cultural field and social roles, which is also conditioned by the historical process it produced. In this sense, the flow of cultural content within the system and between different systems contributes to the dynamics of diversification in a very structural way. The structure of norms, values, esthetics, and beliefs is being enriched by new elements, sometimes treated as alien and hostile towards the old system. The discussion on tradition and history emerges as a almost natural cause of this process. This phenomenon we may witness nowadays in Poland in reference to the idea of Polish national community and traditional values, where it is strongly political and polarized. This situation triggers a wide discussion on the transmission of traditional ideas and in that field education comes to play almost instantly.

The Other and the concept of otherness in the educational sphere is therefore playing an important part in constructing educational programs, like various student exchange projects, inclusive education, or educational reforms being postulated not just in Poland, but all over Europe. These projects are trying to include those, who were once excluded from the system, like the diverse ethnic minorities. The educational concept of otherness is considered here as a key factor in changing the way we are teaching our children towards a better, more diverse system. No matter if we are speaking of otherness related to migration processes, or otherness related to regional differences within Europe, this category is a constant companion of the cultural shift we are experiencing at the moment. However, this idealistic approach seems to undergo nowadays a clear downfall due to certain events, which did put a significant question mark over the view of our own societies as pluralistic, modern and democratic units of a global community.

Anthropology of education as a relatively new discipline tries to capture the particular cultural processes of change, such as assimilation, acculturation or socialization in the context of a culture itself. Therefore it brings into the discussion an attempt to understand the character of cultural shifts put against the social praxis. The structural character of the mentioned leap from idea into praxis helps us to grasp the particular problem in its essential form. In the European context anthropology of

education is applied towards schooling of students who do not fulfill specific requirements. If we are speaking of a migrant background, physical handicap, or a social exclusion we try to overcome these obstacles in the integration process. Anthropology of education shows us how we are able to apply this idea without implementing our own worldview into the minds of people who might not be willing to share the same ideas like we do. That's why anthropology of education might serve here as an example of a discipline which sets as its own goal to achieve both – to contribute to a practical change in cultural reality within it functions and at the same time not to fall into the trap of ideologization of the educational sphere.

Anthropological thought is tackling the process of schooling in various contexts. The common idea in the different theoretical and methodological approaches towards educational institutions and the phenomenon of learning is that culture is a dynamic reality basically transmitted through diverse paths and institutions, whereas under the term institutions anthropologists understand not just schools or universities, but also less empirical phenomena. Thus culture is being perceived by the discipline as a wide area of human desires, interests, needs and motivations driving their actions in what Bourdieu called the field of social agency. This is the area anthropologists conduct their fieldwork today, also in relation to educational aspects of human existence. The vanishing of the traditional object of study in cultural anthropology (the exotic Other) had forced the discipline to rethink and reframe its research objectives and to look at culture also from the perspective of a cultural process, which is no longer attached to local communities in the way it was placed before. The process of transmission of culture is nowadays regarded in anthropology as a reality itself, revealing at every of its stages cultural particularity in a new sense. The child and its upbringing within family, youth subcultures and peer groups, or social environment in general are affected by cultural factors and cultural systems. Recalling the idea of cultural particularism of the German-American classic anthropologists Franz Boas, we could take the process of learning in terms of enculturation, that is the process of "growing into (a particular) culture". However, this traditional concept of enculturation does not include the dynamics of modern reality and the global network of rela-

tions, which we cannot simply reject when speaking of contemporary enculturation patterns. This brings us to the point, where learning becomes a world wide activity regardless its local attachment. Educational sphere is being stretched beyond its traditional limits of schooling and becomes an art of dealing with what is surrounding us all.

Multicultural education becomes a necessity in contemporary conditions. On one hand, Polish approach towards this educational model is being translated through historical reference to the distant Polish tradition of multiculturalism, on the other it is being put within current debates on national identity which are being referred to a traditional vision of nation as a monolithic cultural whole occupying a specific terrain (nation state). In the second example, broad acceptance for cultural pluralism needed to apply multiculturalism as a social praxis is far from sufficient. Recent sociological research on the issue of Polish national identity show, that the Polish society is still reluctant to develop a high level of trust towards ethnic and national minorities. The research conducted by major Polish research institutions (CBOS and OBOP) in the perspective of last 20 years reveal a significant gap between what is being said today in politics and what is the social reality declared by Poles themselves. A clear regularity can be traced in the questions on cultural distance towards non-Polish groups. Poles are less willing to accept as their neighbors Roma, Jews, Vietnamese or Ukrainians and are tending more to develop mechanisms of exclusion of those groups from the national community or public life⁶. As one of the researchers interested in this phenomenon, Marek Tabin puts it, we may speak here even of specific "culture of exclusion"⁷. Ethnic and national minorities are just slightly more acceptable than sexual minorities, what doesn't change the fact that both types of groups are being rejected as close partners in the national and systematic social discourse. This discrepancy in declared pluralism

⁶ A. Jasińska-Kania, *Wykluczanie z narodu: dystanse społeczne wobec mniejszości narodowych i migrantów*, [in:] *Obszary i formy wykluczenia etnicznego w Polsce. Mniejszości narodowe, imigranci, uchodźcy*, A. Jasińska-Kania, S. Łodziński (eds.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009.

⁷ M. Tabin, *Wykluczanie jako postawa*, [in:] *Obszary i formy wykluczenia etnicznego w Polsce. Mniejszości narodowe, imigranci, uchodźcy*, A. Jasińska-Kania, S. Łodziński (eds.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009, pp. 68.

and the social praxis seems to be a constant element in the debate on present and future shape of Polish society.

Modern Polish multiculturalism discourse is playing the card of otherness on many levels, including the media and politics. Being an "Other" alone does not implicate however any specific associations in the worldview of many Poles, but being a particular "Other" does. As the research shows Poles are drawing the line of otherness through the field of language differences, ethnic origin or religion. What is characteristic in this situation is the low level or absence of race criteria, at least in the Western European or American understanding of the term. This might be caused by the lack of visible presence of groups, who show their differences in racial categories in Poland. An exception of it are the Roma, who are perceived in this category as the most distant. It brings us to the conclusion that the processes which had shaped the multicultural discourse in the West have little significance in the Polish context at the moment, but I have mentioned before the global character of modern reality might change it in predictable future. Migration from regions outside Europe will certainly be as well apart of the ethnic differentiation in Poland. An example of such immigrant groups are the Vietnamese – one of the most numerous groups of such character in Poland today.

We may ask how does anthropology of education responds to these transgressions. The answer to this question lies in the discipline's theoretical goals. Anthropology of education is focused on understanding how does culture influence the process of learning in the sense of shaping cultural and intercultural competences, as well it is interested in taking direct actions in the educational system to avoid discrimination or marginalization of cultural minorities. Polish multicultural discourse is certainly still in its infancy, when we take it in relation to the actual diversity of Polish society. The declarative or political level of the discussion on this issue is in many cases a reflection of the former and current ideologies of multiculturalism present in the West, which have little in common with reality. Even countries like Great Britain and Germany are admitting that those policies caused to be wrong in their current form. The contemporary events in Poland (like the riots on the Independence Day in Warsaw in 2011) show, that the debate is largely polarized between the various political parties and organizations. Anthropological

perspective of building a more pluralistic society might be regarded as a helpful tool for future actions and reforms, but without massive educational initiatives this will stay ineffective. A careful reconstruction of multicultural education in Poland is closely linked with the deep and wide change in worldviews of Poles and this could be achieved by tackling the core of the otherness concept. Therefore anthropology of education has also the task to reconfigure in this context its own research objectives, just like today cultural anthropology does, to produce pragmatic solutions for a more pluralistic and opened debate in societies similar to the Polish one.

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