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Everyday Life — Social Time and the Functioning of the Social Norms in Old Workers Quarters of Upper Silesia

Introductory remarks

Social time is a determiner of the rhythm of social life and usually is reflected in the organization of life of human communities.[1] Without defining here thus the notion of social time, one can assume that the organization of social life reflects certain ways of seeing and functioning of social time. This general assumption must be completed by several reservations coming from the works of G. Gurvitch. Firstly, one should assume that social time always refers to the specific human communities and that for these communities it has the meaning of a general phenomenon *(le fait social total)*. Secondly, one must admit that social time which is a total characteristics of the definite human communities (and thus is of the ontological importance for their existence) influences a number of other features of these communities, such as the setting of social roles, symbols, values, etc.[2] It results from these statements that also social norms have specific frames of existence measured in social time. If one, however, says that social time is of a general character for the specific human community then also its meaning for the existence of social norms has the meaning only in reference to the specific human communities. Hence the assumption that examining the problem of

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[1] This text is a revised version of the non-published paper presented by Jacek Wódz at the conference: "Social Time," Zakopane Sept. 1986.

[2] G. Gurwitch, "La multiplicité des temps sociaux," in *La vocation actuelle de la sociologie. Antecedens et perspectives*, vol. 2, deuxième édition (Paris 1963), p. 331.

the functioning of social norm in social time should refer to such communities which we can describe in their scope of everyday life, when the functioning of different social norms appears not only those who refer to the socially most important behaviour, or (as it happens in reference to many legal norms) socially most dangerous ones. Assuming this, it has been decided to examine the functioning of social norms of the specific local communities in the social time. The concept of examining the local communities in their everyday life has been used.[3] In this way one wanted to define the functioning of social norms in different scopes of social structure and in reference to different behaviour of the members of the examined local communities. It has been acknowledged, however, that some social norms are not verbalized easily by the members of the examined local communities but since they together make one of the elements of the local social order, the analysis should begin by examining the functioning of the general social order of these local communities.

Examining the dynamics of the social order we shall try to show certain phenomena connected with the functionning of social order in local communities and on this basis we shall try to show the role of social norms and their changes in social time. We suppose that the changes of social norms may be considered as an indicator of the changes of social time.

Functioning of social norms as an element of social order

The notion of "social order" appears in sociology in different meanings hence one should at the beginning give our understanding of social order, the one which was used in the empirical research which will be related later. Quite a big influence on our concept of social order had a general definition given by C. Javeau, according to whom social order as well as well as the other features of the organization of social life can be characterized in three dimensions: social time, social space and **script of interaction**,[4] by which one should most generally understand certain courses of social activities fixed in the social consciousness and causing in their addresses the expected by the social actor social consequences. How close it is then to the formation of patterns of

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[3] J. Wódz, "Społeczności lokalne w świetle niektórych koncepcji tak zwanej socjologii życia codziennego" ["The Local Communities in the Light of the So-called Sociology of Everyday Life"], in *Społeczności lokalne* [*Local Communities*], ed. J. Wódz (Katowice 1986), p. 28.

[4] C. Javeau, "La sociologie du quotidien, pratique et enjeux," *Revue Suisse de Sociologie*, No. 1 (1984).

behaviour and later social norms. In case of our research speaking about the social order, we mean the socio-normative order, thus certain actually existing and possible to describe empirically state of the organization of society. One can even make this definition more specific saying that while examining the local communities we have to do with the socio-normative order referring to the specific social space which is not meaningless for the functioning of the order itself (different force of validity depending on the kind of space in which the event evaluated in reference to the rule of this order takes place).

The social order defined in such a way consists of two groups of elements. Firstly, these are axiological and normative bases of the order, secondly, this is dynamically functioning social control. The first group, i.e. the one which refers to the axiological and normative bases creates certain scheme of social patterns but it turned out in the research later that the status of particular patterns is dynamic, some of them are behavioural ones, others, moving to the world of symbols, become the kind of models not necessarily acting in real behaviour. Here also, as it have been found in the research, an important role is played by social time which governs these changes but reciprocally these changes mark certain limits of the social time as well.

The social control in local communities has a double dimension, it is both a formal control carried out on the basis of the formally valid norms as well as the norms which have no formal status but the control itself is carried out by a formal institution (of such character are some formal control activities carried out by the parish as a social institution) as well as informal control. The latter one is always carried out by the persons or the groups of persons acting not on the basis of some formal identity card but on the basis of the commonly accepted, vesting in them social authority. Thus their control activity is not of a formal character, and it would be even difficult to give it such a formal character because the authority which the acting of the formal control is based on is not the source of legitimizing any pattern or norm but rather results from practising these norms and values. The dynamic of this control results from the rules of its effectiveness, the ineffective forms disappear and the new ones appear in their place having the feature of social effectiveness. And here, as it was proved in the reasearch, the factor enabling to explain the acting of social control is the notion of social time.

Some results of empirical research

Our further analysis will be based on numerous empirical research carried out in different local communities of Upper Silesia, more precisely in old

workers quarters of Upper Silesian cities. The Upper Silesian region is an agglomeration of many cities of an industrial character. The industrialisation of this region took place in the latter part of the 19th century in connection with the exploitation of coal. As a result of the development of the energetic basis a couple of years later steel-works started to appear here and metal industry started to develop. Around bigger works, especially mines and steel-works the worker's colonies were built, these colonies, which is important, were built in a planned way, according to the same design which caused the present fact of great similarity of the old workers quarters in particular cities of this agglomeration. Since these quarters were built as a closed entities, very homogenous in the social and ethnic composition, the phenomena of strengthening the social solidarity appeared in these communities, connected with the threat of life and health (work in the mines and heavy industry) and with the fact that these were communities of Polish descent functionning in the predominantly German surrounding (managing staff, the owners and higher technical staff coming to this land with the industrialization and staying there until 1922). In this way in the course of years these old workers quarters were formed in the real local communities living their own rules and social norms.

Our research carried out in decade 1981—1991 confirmed with evidence the persistence of these communities.[5] Here are the basic results of the research referring to the notion of the social order.

The analysis of social norms and, still earlier, social values on the basis of which these norms are created leads to the conclusion that we have to do with a certain axio-normative system of both a formal and informal character, fixed in the course of life of several preceding generations (most often three) and closely connected with the three elements. Firstly, it is the socio-cultural characteristics of the population, specifity of work organization and a social space of one's own district treated as a specific value. These three elements make the basis for the system of values and norms functioning in the examined local communities. In the course of research we settled a certain rule of functioning the social norms observed there. Norms, as well as their power of influence depend upon: the way of internalizing, functionality in reference to the values accepted in a given community and their specificity in reference to the norms of the global society.

These three elements mentioned above require a short discussion. Internalization is connected with the process of socialization, supported by the

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similarity of patterns of behaviour which result (in this case) from the homogeneity of the local communities. As far as functionality of norms in reference to the values is concerned, it is most clearly observable in the example of all these norms which are functional in reference to the value of good work, highly appreciated in the examined communities. One can point to many norms and patterns resulting from this value (e.g. the way of organizing the family life, the division of family roles, the high position of the husband, etc.). One can say that the functionality of social norms in reference to the value of good work is treated by the inhabitants of the examined communities themselves as their specific feature. In this way it gains extra strenghtening force because specific norms (these which highten the feeling of affiliation, distinguish the inhabitants of these districts from other communities) are of particular importance for the functioning of the inner social order.

We shall present in a couple of words the problems of the dynamic of this social order. On the basis of the research one can observe that the most important role in the dynamics of changes of the above described axio-normative order is played by the social effectiveness of particular norms. The more effective the norm is, i.e., the more its application leads to achieving social aims by these who comply with a given norm, the more it strenghtens and gains higher position on the scale of the importance of the local norms. On the contrary, the more often, despite complying with it, one does not reach the supposed social aims, thus the more ineffective it is in the eyes of the social actor, the more its position on the scale of the importance of the norms diminishes until it loses the actual features of the norms. One can say that we have to do with the lasting in the social time process of creating, gaining importance as well as losing importance and disappearance of the social norms according to the rule which has been known for a long time, i.e. *consuetudo* and *desuetudo*.[6] An important role in the dynamics of the axio-normative order is played by the activities of the social control. It has been already mentioned above that in the course of the research the analysis of the formal and informal activities has been clearly divided. It is necessary to add that an important role in the activities of the social control is played by the notion of the social space occupied by the examined local community, in this case the social space of old worker's districts. In the consciousness of the inhabitants of these districts the area of the district "belong to them," is "their social area" and the social order is obligatory in this area not compelling with which causes the starting of the acting of the social control. What is going outside this area to a lesser degree undergoes the acting of the social control. In connection with acting of the social control

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[6] See J. Wódz, "La déviance normale dans le quotidien," in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie ULB*, Brussels, Nos. 1—2 (1984), pp. 23—24.

it is necessary to mention the ascertained rule of consent which has a direct influence on the starting of the operating of the social control institutions. It has been ascertained that breaking some of the social norms does not immediately cause the operating of the social control institutions if this breaking takes place within the frames of the rule of consent. For example, the fact of breaking the norm of sobriety, if it occurs on the occasion of family ceremony or is not frequent, does not cause aggresive behaviour and, what is very important, does not influence the course of work, is treated as such breaking of the norm which takes place (always in the individually specified cases) within the framework of the rule of consent. The effect of making use of this rule of consent is exposing oneself to very strong and quick social sanctions if the rule of consent has been broken. It is, thus, some sort of game with the social norms and the limit of consent has nowhere been precisely specified.

Coming to the problem of dynamics of the changes in the axio-normative order and the influence of the social control on the changes, one should say that the fact that breaking the norm does not cause control activities is an evident proof of losing the importance of this norm and leads to the disappearance of its direct validity. One can also state, by observing these changes for a longer period of time, that if the applied social sanctions are weaker and weaker or their correction effect is unsuccessful, it also means the decrease of the importance of the norm in the system of the axio-normative order. Quite interestingly looks also the problem of the application of the forms of activities of the formal and informal control. The disappearance of any of the forms is also an indicator of the decrease of the norm's importance, but some special fact concerning the change of the norm's status has been observed here. The moment when it is based on the legitimized formal system and then gains also a control support from the side of the system of the local authorities or, on the contrary, when the norm based on the control system of the local authorities gains a control support of the legitimized formal system (e.g. the legal regulations or the accepted formal norms of the extra-legal character, e.g. the norms of coexistence in the parish).

We have mentioned the rule of consent. The restriction of the area of consent means the growth of the social importance of a given norm, on the contrary, the widening of the area of consent means the decrease of the importance of the norm. As we have already said, the limits of consent have been nowhere formally specified, it changes depending on the extent to which a given behaviour breaking the norm are threatening for a community. The changes refer here to both single norms and certain system of norms concerning, for example, the way of bringing up children or attitudes towards elderly people or people in need. In the latter case some interesting changes have been observed. They are connected with the functioning in the examined local communities the value specific for them, great esteem for the elderly

people as those who have worked hard all their life.[7] We shall now try to point to the importance of different dimensions of the social time for the dynamic of the changes of the system of the axio-normative order.

The dimensions of social time and the dynamics of the changes of the axio-normative order

We started the discussion on the dimensions of the social time by quoting the opinion of G. Gurvitch according to whom the social time is of total character, i.e. it covers the whole of a specific social community. Thanks to this statement, we could in our research analyse, besides the category of social space, use also the category of social time as a variable explaining the phenomena of the functioning of the axio-normative order, including the functioning of the social norms. As a result of synthesizing many different empirical analyses, we can point to the importance of the social time as an element of the dynamics of the axio-normative order.

One should also point out that the analysis of changes the axio-normative order undergoes allows in some cases to explain the changes of the specific social norms. It is not always possible because the changes of the axio-normative order itself may result not only from the changes of the social norms but also from the changes of the social control which is one of the elements of the order. In connection with we shall first point to the changes of the axio-normative order taking place in the social time and resulting from the settlements obtained in our research and then we shall point to some examples of the changes of the social norms in the social time, to finish up with an attempt to indicate the possiblity to define the measures of the social time by means of the **time of validity** or **form of validity** of more important social norms. The examined communities were characterised by a slow rate of social change which led to the recognition of the very fact of the duration of the rules of the axio-normative order as a specific social value. Thus, one can say that it is in the total dimension, i.e. in the one that characterizes the whole of the examined communities, that the social time is not of a determinant of changes character but rather plays a role of strenghtening the basic rules of the organization of social life. Quite important for this phenomenon is observed in the examined communities

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[7] This problem was the subject of a more detailed research presented in K. Wódz, *Pomoc społeczna w świadomości mieszkańców miast* [*Social Help in the Consciousness of the Town Inhabitants*] (Katowice 1985).

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the little importance of the division of social time into the time of work and the time of everyday life, out of work. Consequently, one can say that the norms and values being the norms and values of the time of work are also largely the norms and values of everyday life out of work time. We noticed, in turn, that the organization of work (we mean the work in the mining industry) has not undergone any revolutionary changes in its fundamental elements for many years which is a factor stabilizing the axio-normative order in the so-called generation norms, i.e. these which refer either to the generation of young people or to the generation of adult and socially active people, or, finally, to the generation of the elderly people at the post-productive age. But the fundamental content of these norms does not change too much, the flow of time causes moving the particular age group from one category to another and in connection with this leaving the space of binding other generation norms.

One can also distinguish between the norms of time of everyday life and norms of exceptional events or ceremonies (e.g. the period of mourning after a close relative's death). We noticed, however, that these norms also undergo small changes, in any case, we cannot speak about the rapid, revolutionary changes which consolidates us only in the previously stated conclusion that the duration of certain rules is a social value.

In connection with what has been said above, one can ask how thus looks the dynamics of the changes of social norms and how it can be expressed in the social time. Ascertaining that the duration of the order itself is in the examined communities a specific value, we said that there are no, as a matter of fact, quick changes of the social norms. Slow changes, however, take place, lasting sometimes several years. Firstly, one can notice that within the frames of the axio-normative order itself certain patterns of behaviour or social norms slowly lose the status of norms, move to the world of symbols and become the basis for creating the social tradition. The next stage is entering of these old social norms into the world of social values. Usually, new patterns of behaviour and social norms appear in their place, the ones which have the feature of the direct social effectiveness, whereas the norms which entered to the world of symbols and values obtain the feature of indirect effectiveness. The good example will be the norm of giving priority in taking the important family decisions to the father of the family. Our research showed that this norm being obligatory in the previous generations now is rather verbally declared but not always realized in practice. The new norm which was formed in place of the one which is already acting indirectly (by symbolic means) appeared with the new generation going into society who wants to decide itself about many of its problems (for example the choice of profession, way of life, etc.). This norm consists in the parents duty to present the young man with the general evaluation of his proposals (hence it can be

called the norm of the duty of discernement or good advice on the side of the parents) but it does not mean the children's duty to absolutely submit to this advice. Since, however, the previous norm moved to the world of symbols than the ordinary life looks so that despite the change of the norm the symbols last and the common observer may even not notice this change. This change, however, is very important and one of the elements of its justification is referring to the social time. This justification consists in argumentation that the period when the children had the duty to absolutely submit to such advice or decisions of the parents has already passed. This is not at all argumentation occurring only among young people. The above mentioned, noticed by G. Gurvitch feature of social time, its general character can be observed here as well because this argumentation is taken into account as a matter of fact by all the inhabitants of examined communities, despite their age.

Another example of the changes of the social norms expressed in the categories of the social time is widening the norm of consent concerning sobriety and insobriety also onto women. We have already discussed the norm of consent itself. This norm, as one can judge from our research, has functioned for at least two previous generations, as a matter of fact in reference only to men. Of course we mean here this form of the norm of consent which referred to the norms of sobriety. The justification of this norm of consent was the fact that the man was the only support of family, when he earned a lot and the fact to get drunk from time to time did not reduced in a visible way the level of life of his family, it was so to say **his right** that he did not always keep the norm of sobriety. If at the same time having drunk alcohol he did not behave aggresively, the fact of breaking the norm of sobriety, despite being known and generally evaluated negatively, did not cause starting any institutions of social control. This norm, previously having been applied only to men, adult, professionally active, in the course of time, started also to be applied to women and very often the younger ones who thanks to obtaining education and well-paied job, reached the status of "relative independence" in th examined communities. The application of this norm of consent has in case of women a totally different dimension, and it is also secured with different conditions (e.g. the kind of behaviour under the influence of alcohol or, what is more frequently observed, the choice of the company in which a woman drinks alcohol). One cannot admit that this norm of consent always acts, it acts in a definite social time (e.g. during family ceremonies, in leisure time, etc), but the social time plays here also another role. The inhabitants of the examined local communities think that once there was a time when such acting of the norm of consent was impossible and now it is possible, nobody marks here any limits of the physical time, it is simply a general opinion dominating in these communities.

We have also mentioned the change of the social control practice. It causes also the changes in the functioning of the whole axio-normative order, and may be expressed in the categories of the social time. Let's quote an example. One of the ways of acting the social control are the control activities of the social authorities. It turns out that this rule does not change but what changes are the social authorities themselves and what follows, their way of the control activity. Once these authorities were often connected with the activities for the inner consolidation of the Polish inhabitants of these communities in their contacts with the administration which was treated as a foreign because it was connected with the Prussian state. Even after gaining independence these people kept their positions of social authorities and their control activities were often connected with referring to or basing on these values which once were guiding principle in their own activities. At present most often as informal authorities (thus, such which do not result from the formally accepted social position) are considered people "of success," i.e. people who, within the framework of a given community, managed, thanks to their work and providence, to gain social prestige. Of course the control influence of the new authorities is most often based on these values which them themselves allowed to gain this success which gave them the position of the local authority. It would be difficult to point to any limits of the physical time in which this change takes place, it is the social time which decides here, i.e. the fact that in the social feeling at certain time of acting of the old authorities they become less and less effective and the influence of the new authorities reach the control effectiveness.

So far we have pointed to the examples of the changes of particular social norms which can be explained with the help of the category of social time. We shall come back to the assumption of G. Gurwitch that the social time as an element characterizing the whole life of a given community. If one can explain the changes in the organization of social life (in our case it is the axio-normative order) by means of their analysis in the cathegories of social time, one can also attempt to divide the social time into periods according to certain changes taking place inside this axio-normative order. If we assume this hypothesis then, as a result of such division of social time, we would obtain the periods in which certain crucial elements of the axio-normative order hold in the constant form and the periods of social time in which these elements change. Such created sections of the social time which characterizes the way of organizing the social life of the specific communities could then become research units, i.e. the basic objects of sociological research and as one can think, historical ones. Then, one could without strictly sticking to the physical time, try to interpret many different types of human behaviour (especially in everyday life perspective) in the categories as if constant for a given individual social time. The same,

though the analysis would be more difficult then and would have to take into account other rules (especially these which refer to the dynamic of the changes of the axio-normative order) could be suggested for these research units created thanks to the application of the division into periods of the social time and would refer to the periods of the changes of the axio-normative order.

The above suggestions are of a hypothetical character worked out from the generalisation of the results of the empirical research. It seems, however, that they would allow to reach the new ways of examining and explaining the social behaviour of the human communities.