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Research on the Attitudes of the Inhabitants of Wrocław to Lithuania and Lithuanians

Abstract: The main aim of the article refers to an attempt of outlining the image that the contemporary inhabitants of Wrocław have towards Lithuania and Lithuanians. In order to deal with it, we are going to present some data from relevant surveys as well as a fragment of the results coming from our own sociological research, and what comes out of it shall be applied to a broader theoretical context. The step that should make it easier to fully understand the problem is a short note on the relations between these two countries and nations in the past as well as present.

Keywords: Poland, Lithuania, image, liking/disliking, attitudes.

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to point at the usefulness of the category of attitudes for conceptualizing and operationalizing the national neighbourhoods as well as at the empirical content—given the limited scope of the article—that this category conveys. By making use of the concept of attitudes we refer to its traditional understanding, with the three dimensions—cognition, affect and behaviour—being our point of reference in which more detailed phenomena are embedded. The paper is based on the results of the nationwide measure of the Poles' attitudes to Lithuanians and on the results of our research conducted in Wrocław, which means that the conclusions are constituted by a mixture of local and 'universal' factors.

Review of the sociological literature makes one think that there is not much interest in the research concerning the Polish-Lithuanian relations. Empirical studies focus on contributory measures (concerning, for example, stereotypes), based on quantitative methods. These, however, have limited explanatory worth: in relation to a narrow-scope problem they let claim how things are, but do not say why it is so. Thus, despite its limitations as for statistical typologies, our qualitative research (being a part of the whole article) on the inhabitants of Wrocław is (probably) the first attempt at learning and understanding not only how Lithuania and Lithuanians are perceived, but also how this picture is being constructed and what it is composed of. This type of inquiry does not aim at making a diagnosis concerning the frequency of

given attitudes being shared but seeks to explain where they come from. For the reality under question this seems even more important since our respondents' opinions are built and verbalized by themselves, and not imposed on them by means of a network of notions and categories (which might lead the respondents to reproduce the scholars' vision of the problem). That we appear to have achieved this goal may be proven by the fact that the question of the Polish minority in Lithuania, being fundamental one in scholarly discourse, received little attention in the respondents' narratives.

The article begins with a short note on the position the question of neighbourhoods occupies in the Polish literature. It is followed by an outline of the most important facts from the coexistence of Poland and Lithuania in the past that can be viewed as a background for the phenomena we observe nowadays. Then we go on to the methodology part serving as a context for the main part of the paper: presentation of the empirical (quantitative and qualitative data). The considerations close with an attempt at a broader look at the question, enhanced by references to certain sociological conceptions.

On Polish Neighbourhoods from a Social Perspective

As for the Polish national neighbourhoods, and the Polish-Lithuanian neighbourhood in particular, the sociological output concerning the contemporary reality, i.e. over two decades, is rather poor and at the same time it is internally complex. This holds true mostly for the subjects touched upon, the value of theoretical and empirical background of particular pieces of work as well as the direct interest that the statements included there have evoked among scientists. One should remember about the exceptions, such as the Polish borderlands (and broadly understood activities taken there) and the images (or stereotypes) of Poles and their neighbours as they perceive each other, yet these cases do not account for the general picture of the issue.

Undoubtedly, the configuration of the Polish national neighbourhoods that came up in the early 1990s is the issue that has received some feedback from the local sociologists. The first elaboration that needs to be recollected is a 1991 issue of "Kultura i Społeczeństwo." The question of relations between nations was a stimulus also for holding a conference at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw in 1995. It was about the problems of national identity and conflicts, especially between the neighbouring nationality groups (Jasińska-Kania 2001: 7). A part of the conference's content was published in a book edited by Jasińska-Kania (2001), nowadays deemed fundamental for this set of problems. They have been subject to thought by some other authors as well (cf. Gołębiowski, 2001; Pawluczuk, 2006). We mention monographs only, since it is them—contrary to single articles scattered around a variety of volumes—that reflect the power of academics' interest and not mere fortuitousness.

The content of the books recalled lets one isolate the detailed areas related by their authors to the category of national neighbourhoods. The review of these fields should start from a theoretical consideration on the nature of neighbourhoods, the way they tend to be constructed in the course of demarking the boundaries between 'us' and

‘them’, the neighbour’s visibility and invisibility, and nationalisms. The existence of national neighbourhoods is based also on the questions of national identity, direct relations between nations in the borderlands, and nations’ mutual images. It needs to be underlined that the thought on Poland and Poles’ relations with their ‘new’ and ‘old’ neighbours had for a long time been described according to the conflict paradigm, yet in the latest elaborations this perspective happens to be ignored—possibly due to the phenomenon’s reshaping.

However, the sociological output that has been recollected lacks a synthesizing approach. It is so probably not only owing to too short a period of time needed for discovering and working out a more general tendencies, but first of all due to the very phenomenon’s changeability. The perspective of two decades seems to offer a base for something more solid and stable. The need for such a diagnosis has been responded to by means of a project to describe Poland’s all seven neighbourhoods after the transformation that affected almost all the countries in the region. Such an attempt has so far been made with regards to two neighbours: Lithuania and the Czech Republic (Dębicki, Makaro 2012b; Dębicki, Makaro 2013).

Shortage of the output by the sociology oriented towards national neighbourhoods is twofold. Firstly, it is about unclear confines of the field of interest itself: What are the national neighbourhoods like, what are they constituted by, what needs to be the subject of the research in order to contribute to the description of the nature of what might be called the Polish-German, Polish-Czech, etc. neighbourhood? Secondly, it is rather economic or political dimension and not the social one, that seems to be more promising or simply easier for a scientific recognition. Thirdly, one should bear in mind the limited character of the knowledge gathered by sociologists concerning the mutual relations (incl. perception) between Poles and their neighbours. It is not only a lack of synthesizing knowledge, but also, consequently, inability to ‘manage’ the neighbourhoods. One finds it difficult to declare what Poles know about their neighbours, how they perceive them and whether they like them or not and *vice versa*.

The relevant literature on the Polish-Lithuanian relations is stigmatized by the same shortcoming as the literature concerning neighbourhoods in general: A scarcity of sociological writings, their rather contributory than synthesizing character and a lack of theoretical axis that would set in order the process of recognition of the social dimension of this neighbourhood and would make the comparison of empirical data possible. As we have already put it, the analysis of the works of the past twenty years that would, at least in a small degree, take up the question of the Polish-Lithuanian relations (yet with no clear articulation of this category), lets one point at just few publications, mostly collective. These writings touch upon the subject of mutual relations between Poland and Lithuania taking on the perspectives of a range of disciplines, with the historical one being on top as well as political scientists and literature specialists (Dębicki, Makaro 2012: 9). It is noteworthy that after the present article had been written the Institute of Public Affairs [Instytut Spraw Publicznych] published the comparative analyses of the Poles and Lithuanians’ mutual perception, however based mostly on the quantitative measure.

On the History of the Polish-Lithuanian Relations

It is clear that in order to go deeper into the context in which the relations between two states and nations have developed one needs to refer to the history. It is the more so as far as the Polish-Lithuanian case is concerned: Even a rough glimpse at the countries' common past confirms how much is to be found there.

While talking about the beginnings of the Polish-Lithuanian relations, one usually looks back to the 13th and 14th centuries, when both sides more than once used to fight battles. A new leaf was turned over in 1385, when the Union of Krewo was signed by virtue of which the Great Duke of Lithuania, Jagiełło [Jogaila in Lithuanian] was baptized, granted the Polish crown and married Jadwiga—the future queen of the common Polish-Lithuanian state. Although the bilateral relations in the next decades were not free from quarrels, what got handed down through time as the gist of the union was the glorious battle of Grunwald [Žalgiris in Lithuanian] in 1410: The forces of the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights—the both allies' major enemy—were then defeated by the joined Polish-Lithuanian troops. Although this victory was not politically consumed in an efficient way, it significantly weakened the Order's military potential. It needs to be noted that the success achieved in 1410 tends to be interpreted differently by Poles and Lithuanians (e.g. as for the role played by both sides' troops and their commanders).

More serious discrepancy arises from the Union of Lublin, signed in 1569—the most important one, although for different reasons for both sides. According to Lithuanians, they were forced to conclude it, which was accompanied by the Kingdom of Poland's seizure of the vast territory that had by that time belonged to the Great Duchy of Lithuania. However, even more important for Lithuanians is the fact that from that time on the process of Polonization of their elites intensified within the frames of the dualistic state called the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów]. Traditionally this issue is approached to in a different way by the Polish historians who readily point out the advantages that Lithuania gained from the union with Poland. Yet it needs to be underlined that in recent years both Polish and Lithuanian historians are somehow inclined to (at least partially) include the other party's standpoint as well (Chwalba 2009: 272).

The 18th century was the time when it continued to be more and more visible that the dualistic state was coming to a close, which was finally sealed in 1795. Although a few military attempts were taken up in order to invert the situation, freedom came only in 1918. It did not, however, mean the return to previous coexistence, since both entities were at that time torn between the conflict over Vilnius and the region of relatively considerable size adjacent to the city (the south east part of this territory constitutes the Polish-Lithuanian borderland today). Eventually, this area was taken by Poland, yet the success itself and the methods by which it was achieved resulted in Lithuania's refusal to establish diplomatic relations with its south west neighbour.

The change of that state of affairs—univocally demanded by Warsaw—came to realize only on the eve of World War II. Soon after that, due to the Soviet Union's activity, Lithuania regained Vilnius, but since 1940 (with a short break for the years

1941–1944, when Lithuania was under German domination) the whole country was dependent on the USSR.

At the beginning of the 1990s, when Poland and Lithuania once again became fully sovereign states, a totally new chapter in bilateral relations was started. Among the most outstanding events should be included transformation that was accomplished relatively fast and its fruits that opened the gates to political cooperation between the two countries: Accession to the NATO, EU and Treaty of Schengen by means of which border control was done away with. The peculiarity of the contemporary situation, though, consists in the fact that after a couple of centuries of the Polish-Lithuanian coexistence on a multitude of platforms, both states are now fully independent of each other, yet in some aspects interconnected.

Despite the political achievements mentioned above, since more or less mid 2010 the relations between Warsaw and Vilnius have been passing through a serious crisis. Without going too deep into that matter it is possible to observe that one of the most important circumstances here has been the position of the Polish minority living in Lithuania and the attention that the history has received as a means of explaining this problem. It should be stressed that according to the 2011 census, these autochthonous Lithuanian Poles constitute 16.5 percent of the population of Vilnius [Lithuanian...] and in certain surrounding villages as much as 80–85 percent or even more.

Methodological Context of the Research

The issue of discrepancies as for interpretation of the common past outlined above is outstandingly momentous in the context of the present article whose aim is defined by the question regarding the image of Lithuania and Lithuanians that contemporary Poles share. In particular, we would like to bring up two problems here. Firstly, what is the level of attraction felt by Poles to Lithuanians at present and in the recent past? Secondly, what is the level of the knowledge Poles have about their north east neighbours and what are its sources?

Since it is an individual's direct experience that is, to some extent, responsible for the type of its emotions and knowledge, in our research we made use of the concept of an attitude. Most often it tends to be described as a relatively permanent structure (or a disposition for the appearance of such a structure) of cognitive and emotional processes as well as tendencies for behaviour by means of which a certain approach to an object can be expressed (Mika 1981: 116). At the same time, however, it is very hard to maintain the sharpness of this theoretical distinction in the course of the empirical study. As it was pointed out by Stefan Nowak (1973: 25), 'most people simply "have an attitude" towards a given object, i.e. a certain system of predispositions to different reactions to it—quite often both cognitive, emotionally-evaluative and behavioural—with all these elements being experienced together in a sense of the community of their objective reference.' Sharing this position, we nevertheless endeavour to decompose this whole into its analytical bits in order to point at the peculiarity of the procedures we have applied—not only the research but also analytical ones. By showing the shape

this attitude may assume in its all dimensions, we not only are more precise, but also implicitly indicate that it is difficult to synthesize it.

Although in their studies on the attitudes towards a given grouping the researchers have traditionally focused first of all on the object of evaluation and its description to emerge in this way, by doing this it is worth paying attention to a specific added value—the elements of the characteristics of the very group expressing opinions. For all the stands concerning a given state and its inhabitants seem to result from comparisons between what is familiar and thus ‘natural’ in the object’s evaluation, and what—due to its dissimilarity—draws an observer’s particular attention or—categorised as familiar and ‘normal’—renders the impression of similarity. Consequently, one can follow Zbigniew Bokszański’s opinion that “Attitudes towards foreign nations and ethnic groups are treated, too, as kinds of gauges of the state of the group consciousness,” i.e. different aspects of its “collective mentality.” In this context there appear, for instance, references to the level of tolerance, to cultural values or national identity (Bokszański 2002: 255–256). That is why a grouping that evokes a type of attitudes may be treated as a specific reference group whose characteristics is in a way helpful in locating the in-group within international community.

It needs to be noted that an attempt at answering the main question of the article shall be based on the data differing both on its origin and the methodological approach applied. In particular, it is about the results of the surveys on the Poles’ attitudes to other nations that for two decades have been carried out annually by one of the leading research centres in Poland—Public Opinion Research Centre [Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, CBOS]. These results have then been enriched with two other measures accomplished in Wrocław as a part of separate research. Qualitative interviews (with 157 persons) were realized in March–May 2010. Questionnaire interviews—based on quota-sampling reflecting the population with relation to sex and age (276 persons)—were carried out in July 2010, and their aim was mostly to verify and quantify the phenomena mentioned by the respondents in qualitative interviews. The moment at which the investigation was realized accounts for the fact that the respondents’ comments did not reflect the increase of the political tension between Warsaw and Vilnius—which we have been observing approximately since the second half of 2010 (see more: Dębicki, Makaro 2012: 14–30)—but they rather referred to a less confrontational mood of politics conducted towards Lithuania by Lech Kaczyński—the then president of Poland.

The procedure of juxtaposing the results obtained in the course of a nationwide survey done on a representative sample (the CBOS) with the material gathered from the inhabitants of Wrocław bears its analytical limitations. Thus, it must be pointed out which factors will speak in advocacy of the potential peculiarity of the outlooks presented by the citizens of a big city in south west Poland, and which elements will support their universal meaning.

As for the former, one is tempted to bring up the question of Wrocław’s post-war settlement structure which featured people transferred here from the eastern parts of interwar Poland (i.e. fragments of the present Ukraine, Belarus and, to a much lesser degree, Lithuania which after 1945 became parts of the Soviet Union). Although

not too many of them are still alive, up to now Wrocław has been mythologized as ‘a city of borderland’.¹ Additionally, it is located approx. 700 kilometres from the Polish-Lithuanian border, which, itself, is rather short (approx. 100 kilometres) and constitutes the country’s urban and economic periphery. Additionally, our respondents were relatively homogenous—they constituted groups differentiated only by means of sex and age. In particular, the composition of the interviewees does not reflect the diversity of the Polish population with respect to the size of the place of abode or the region, which is crucial for the research supposed to tackle international issues as viewed from the social perspective. Thus our investigation misfits what was claimed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss: “The scope of the theory is further increased by comparing different types of groups within different larger groups” (Glaser, Strauss 1967: 52).

What is then the scope of relevance of the material gathered? Since the interviews were carried out in one city only, the research itself moves somewhat closer to the case study method. Wrocław is then the case that—to refer to Robert K. Yin—“allows investigators to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events,” such as, for example, international relations (Yin 2009: 4). Additionally, this method offers important evidence to complement experiments (p. 16) and other types of quantitative data.

We are thus inclined to follow the argumentation developed by this author that case studies are “generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” In this sense, our goal is “not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” but “to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization)” by displaying a context for the phenomenon under scrutiny to be understood in depth (p. 15, 18). Then, as a matter of fact, if only the sample guarantees theoretical saturation (Glaser, Strauss 1967: 61–62)—and this is the case in our project—the results of the investigation may be treated as an illustration of the whole spectrum of attitudes taken by the city’s inhabitants (and hence regarded as typologically representative for them). By grasping this aforementioned context or—as David Silverman has put it—“a broader range of activities (...) we move from substantive theories to formal theories and, thereby, open up the possibility of broader comparisons” (Silverman 2005: 13; cf. also Glaser, Strauss 1967: 33–35).

As far as comparisons are concerned, it should be underlined that—apart from the aforementioned Wrocław’s location in relation to Lithuania, yet this being quite relevant an issue—there seems to be nothing peculiar about the city’s inhabitants’ attitudes to Lithuanians. Hence, having at one’s disposal the findings of such a case study, one may hypothesize that the mechanisms accounting for the creation, content and durability of the attitudes to Lithuania and Lithuanians shared by the inhabitants of Wrocław might not differ much from the ones in present Poland’s other localities. One can argue that probably quite considerable a part of the Polish society has at its disposal the kind of experience that is typical of the inhabitants of Wrocław, because

¹ The word ‘borderland’ used in this phrase bears a broader meaning than just ‘a territory adjacent to the border’; it actually denotes the whole of the territory of interwar Poland that was lost to the USSR in 1945.

nationwide mass media, being at present presumably the most important source of knowledge on Polish-Lithuanian issues, are for the majority of Poles accessible in a similar range (the inhabitants of a relatively narrow belt of north east Poland who make use of the regional media, too, and have deeper and direct contact are the obvious exception here). The same is the case with the system of education—the other underlying bearer of information on international matters—which is much the same for the whole of Poland.

Finally, as it is argued by Silverman, “case studies, limited to a particular set of interactions, still allow one to examine how particular sayings and doings are embedded in particular patterns of social organization” (Silverman 2005: 103). In doing so, even if it turned out that when it comes to the city’s inhabitants’ attitudes to Lithuania and Lithuanians Wrocław is indeed an outstanding city, the findings of our research still appear to have put forward a set of attitudes potentially shared by a broader population and so to be treated at least as an exploratory phase for future projects concerning Poles’ attitudes to Lithuania and its population.

To sum it up, the investigation carried out in Wrocław is not statistically representative (which features the CBOS measure), but it is grounded to ascribe to it an advantage of being typologically representative. This means that the types embodied by respondents—referring to argumentation, interest in the neighbour, perception of Lithuania and Lithuanians, a set of associations and knowledge about this country—may have more universal than only local significance. All being said and done, if one wished to write the results of the nationwide surveys into a broader context of the Polish-Lithuanian relations, on the one hand it would be difficult to remove the above mentioned limitations, yet on the other hand, no nationwide sociological qualitative research has been carried out so far.

Poles’ Liking of Lithuanians

While attempting at outlining the image Lithuania has among Poles, it is good to reach for the investigation disclosing their attitudes to other nations. Interesting data can here be found in the surveys conducted annually since 1993 by the CBOS on representative random sample of around 1000 adult inhabitants of Poland. The phenomenon under question here—liking—is measured on a seven-grade scale whose extremes are marked by the values ‘+3.00’ (the highest possible level of attraction to a given nation) and ‘−3.00’ (the highest possible antipathy to it), with ‘0’ standing for indifference. By putting in range the average notes ascribed by Poles to each nation included in a given edition of the survey, one is able to establish the place a certain nation occupies in such a hierarchy.

The first survey of that sort, accomplished in 1993, suggested that Poles’ attitudes to Lithuanians were close to the midpoint of the nations included. 24% of the respondents declared attraction to this nation, 43% expressed the opposite feeling, while one fourth pointed at indifference. The mean value put down to Lithuanians on that seven-grade scale (−0.5) let them occupy the 10th position out of 18 nations under

scrutiny (CBOS, 1993: 2).² In the light of the 2001 survey this nation's position went up a little. The largest percentage of respondents (36%) expressed an attraction here, a bit smaller (32%) was in favour of indifference, while 24% manifested disliking. A generalized level of liking (+0.28), although higher than eight years earlier, did not influence the absolute position (11) taken by Lithuanians in the ranking. What may draw the reader's attention is the fact that in this edition of the survey 27 nations were included, i.e. half more than previously, which stands for Lithuanians' ascend in relation to the whole of the nations evaluated (CBOS, 2001: 2).

Table 1
Poles' attitude to Lithuanians (1993–2012)

Poles towards Lithuanians: selected years and declarations	Liking	Indifference	Antipathy	Mean	Ranked out of a total number of nations evaluated
	[%]			[in points]	
1993	24	26	43	-0.50	10/18
2001	36	32	24	+0.28	11/27
2010	42	35	15	+0.57	19/38
2012	40	28	23	+0.47	22/38

Source: the authors' own elaboration based on: CBOS (1993, 2001, 2010, 2012).

As the qualitative data presented below derive from the 2010 research in Wrocław, it is worth having a look at the results of the survey from the same year. The proportion of the respondents declaring attraction to Lithuanians rose by a few points again, which was accompanied by a quite serious drop of antipathy; all this significantly contributed to an increase of the mean value. At the same time, though, the position occupied by Lithuanians against the rest of the nations evaluated dropped (CBOS, 2010: 2). As far as the most updated (2012) material is concerned, in relation to the surveys discussed previously one can observe an increase of the unfavourable moods (from 15 up to 23%) and a decrease of declarations of liking (from 42 down to 40%), and particularly of indifference (from 35 down to 28%). What follows from this is both a drop in the mean value of Lithuanians as well as in the weakening of their position in the ranking (CBOS, 2012: 2). In the next year's edition this tendency got strengthened, yet the overall picture included in the exact data is somehow blurred, since all the nations inquired received a considerable lower level of liking then (CBOS, 2013: 2). For this reason we refrain from analysing this latest piece of data.

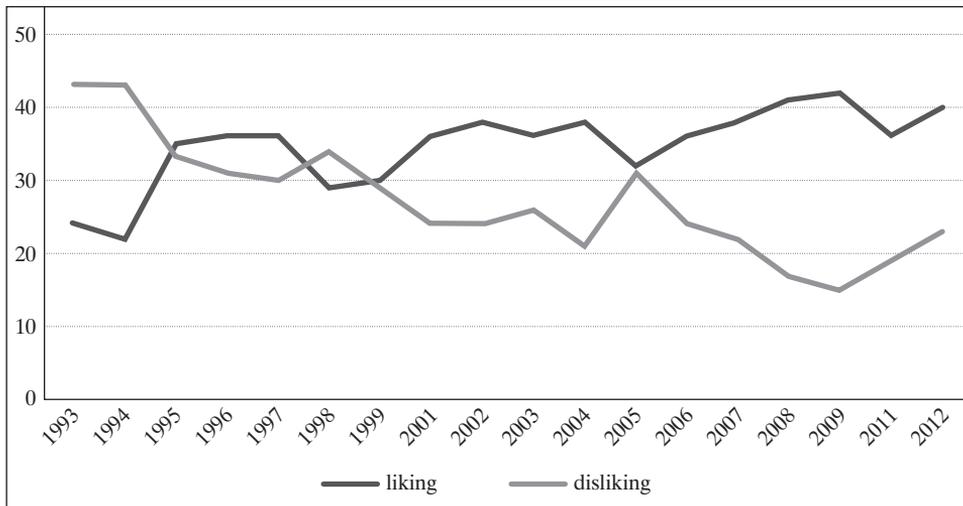
Analyzing the data coming from the surveys cited, it is worth remembering that both a total number of the nations being the subject of a given evaluation and the very set of particular nations are the variables that, to some extent, determine these nations' positions in the ranking. Admittedly, it would be illegitimate—and dishonest—to

² The data by the CBOS can be analyzed in two ways. The first one consists in focusing on the percentage of respondents who declared attraction, antipathy and indifference, regardless of the strength of these emotions. The second one triggers concentration on the mean value that results from this very factor, and not the frequencies of such declarations. It means that the final conclusions drawn from both approaches may slightly differ—as it is the case in the presented article.

suspect the authors of the CBOS reports that they have picked up such nations that would bear out the researchers' expectations, yet a dose of subjectivism—which appears unavoidable—undoubtedly proves present here. It might be a consequence of, say, an otherwise grounded assumption that the survey should include such nations that have recently had a chance to appear in the collective awareness of Poles. One can, then, ask about the circumstances in which Poles have happened to get into contact with them: were these situations positive or negative for the given nations?

Figure 1

Poles' liking and disliking to Lithuanians in the last two decades (1993–2012) [%]



Source: the authors' own elaboration based on the CBOS communiques from the relevant survey editions.

The data mentioned above does not provoke to one-sided conclusions. On the one hand, it points out that over the past two decades the percentage of Poles expressing an attraction to Lithuanians has almost doubled, the percentage of those who declare antipathy here has dropped more than half (see [Figure 1](#)), with a relatively stable part of respondents who have stayed indifferent. A clear-cut growth of the averaged level of liking (+0.47 in 2012) can be noticed, too. Yet, on the other hand, one needs to bear in mind that this change has to do with a general tendency—that in the past few years Poles' attitudes have markedly improved with regard to the majority of the nations evaluated. Moreover, out of 38 nations included in the 2012 survey, it was only five of them that were granted an averaged negative mark, which accounts for the respondents being cautious as for expressing disliking. Thus the attitude to Lithuanians declared by Poles (+0.47), analyzed against such a background, may suggest that we are in fact dealing here with indifference only slightly biased towards liking; such an interpretation may be brought forth if one remembers that in the CBOS survey the value '0.00' stood for 'pure' indifference, while liking was able to be expressed with various intensity, i.e. from +0.01 to +3.00. As a result, if one examines

the accessible data in a different manner, one can persuasively argue that the ranking position occupied by Lithuanians against the rest of the nations has actually not gone up much. In sum, it seems that in the period under scrutiny the attitude Poles have towards Lithuanians has not been subject to significant changes and can concisely be qualified as indifference.

This trend can be confirmed also in the qualitative utterances by the inhabitants of Wrocław. These opinions certify not only that we like a bit our Lithuanian neighbours but also why it is so and what is meant by this.

First of all one needs to underline the respondents' difficulty to describe and name the temperature of emotions aptly, which is conveyed perfectly by the following words: *I think yes, they [Poles] either have a neutral attitude to them [Lithuanians] or it is slightly biased in favour of them; indeed, we have not had any conflicts, such very drastic ones, with Lithuania, this approach is quite positive or even very positive* [54].³ The key subtleness is embedded in the term 'indifference', yet one needs to ask here a question: Does this feeling stand for a lack of intensity of any emotions towards either side or does it denote something more—insignificance, no interest at all? Echoes of this dilemma can be heard in other respondents' opinions: *Most Poles do not think of it, Lithuanians aren't the ones whom we wouldn't like so much, aren't the ones to be an obstacle [or] to attract our attention; it's hard to say about the whole population, but I think there is no big prejudice against them, at least not from the youth* [58]. This indecision between indifference and neutrality (with a possible slight bias in favour of Lithuanians) is the gist of the respondents' utterances: *I haven't heard Lithuanians to be particularly liked or disliked, generally Poles have a positive attitude to them* [22]; *[the mutual] relations are neutral but biased rather towards than against them* [98].

The people under examination have a problem with identifying and naming the affection Poles bestow on Lithuanians as well as giving grounds for the opinions they hold. According to a part of respondents, a sufficient reason to like Lithuanians is a lack of reasons for the opposite: *there have never been any jokes about Lithuanians in Poland, but there are some about Germans, Russians, Czechs, so I think there's no campaigning or a bias against Lithuanians* [110]. Most often the respondents make references to the history, yet these are rather general: *I think so, I don't know... we're linked by the history, now the EU membership, we're neighbours, we keep repeating: 'Lithuania! My Fatherland', so why should we be enemies to one another? We should rather keep the relations—not to say familiar—at least very friendly* [127]; *it seems to me that yes, we're friends due to this Soviet camp* [90]. As it has been shown, amicability, i.e. lack of conflicts, as a feature of this neighbourhood is sometimes recalled as an important argument here: *probably yes, we haven't ever had any military conflicts, there have been some incidents, but generally they didn't influence our relations* [33]. These amicable relations are obviously perceived by the respondents from the perspective of their own group: *I don't know, maybe they [Poles] like them [Lithuanians] more [than the other way round], or maybe they [relations] are like neutral; it's strange that we once were so close to each other and now, for example, you won't hear a thing about them; it's*

³ All interviews were conducted from March to May 2010 and they were all anonymous. The numbers in square brackets stand for a particular interview.

*historical—during each war our neighbours turned into aggressors, and here you've got a very helpful neighbour [106]; probably yes, it seems to me so, oh, come on, how come they didn't like us, Vilnius used to belong to Poland, how come they didn't like us? [38]. It is only the question whether Lithuanians like Poles that offers to some respondents the perspective of a neighbour, and then the image of the mutual relations is enriched with a thought on the issues that might justify Lithuanians' form of antipathy towards Poles. It is symptomatic that among over a hundred utterances by the inhabitants of Wrocław, literally few persons talked about aversion here: *Poles aren't particularly keen on Lithuanians—since Lithuanians don't stick to their promise, there's nothing to like them for. Poles are capable of saying that Lithuanians are scurvy by nature [153].**

Lithuania as Experienced by the Inhabitants of Wrocław

The value of the aforementioned surveys can be fully manifested in the fact that this research is reliable, which means that it reduces to a large extent the impact of the researcher's subjective preconceptions and their interpretative biases as well as it offers a possibility to keep track of the changes over time. Simultaneously—as it has already been signalled by referring to this key category of the article, i.e. attitude—it is hard to expect that one nation's attitude to another, expressed by means of such quantitative declarations as above, be a valid and multilateral reflection of the matter. Such ambitions must be accompanied by an analysis of the narratives delivered in the course of qualitative interviews with the phenomena observed being grasped quantitatively. In particular, it is about the experiences the inhabitants of Wrocław obtained during their stay in Lithuania, as well as their attitude to such an activity. This thing shall be followed by a short report concerning the type of knowledge the inhabitants of Wrocław have when it comes to this country.

As far as the mobility to Lithuania is concerned, it was 11% of the respondents that admitted to it. This number comes from the quantitative measure of ours and it corresponds to the results of the nationwide survey (9%) carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs (Fuksiewicz, Kucharczyk, Łada 2013: 24). From the comments received here one can infer that this is one of the least popular abroad destinations, as it is the Czech Republic and Germany—both geographically not too distant from Wrocław and popular with quite many Poles—as well as the countries attractive for holiday, e.g. Italy, Spain and France, that are preferred. Out of the group of people who have visited Lithuania more than a half (6.5%) have done so for tourist purposes, five people (1.8%) for business and family trips respectively, four people paid a visit to their acquaintance and two only passed through the country.

As for the character of these trips, one gets more information from the qualitative interviews (here again it turned out that very few people had been to Lithuania). Those who have visited the country may be divided into several categories of which transit was mentioned the most seldom). Most often the respondents spoke of the spa mobility and touring the country; by the way, these types of activities appear to reflect Lithuania's position in the Poles' awareness perfectly. It is worth mentioning

that both spa mobility (predominantly to Druskininkai) and tours (most of all Vilnius and its surrounding) are offered by the Polish travel offices.

As some of the respondents claim, their stay in Lithuania tends to evoke a state of astonishment resulting from the clash of the images and preconceptions previously possessed against the reality there: (...) *I fancied it; the uncommon ambience in Druskininkai, I was surprised by the alleys and streets so clean in Lithuania, it's clean everywhere there, the roads are in a good condition, loads of flowers (...) gorgeous green areas, unspoiled; please imagine that there are asphalted bike routes in the forests—kilometres of them; but, you know, this is a tourism oriented area* [57].

When it comes to Vilnius—the respondents' most popular destination in Lithuania—the people under examination most often visited it on the occasion of school trips being a part of the official educational programme: *I was there [in Lithuania] while in lyceum, we went for a school trip, spent there four days, were living in Vilnius, there was plenty of sightseeing there (a world of churches). They [Lithuanians] speak an amusing language—all the endings finish with '-us'. I have a pleasant memory of this trip, Lithuanians were very friendly to us, we very often were talked to in Polish in the shops there—you won't believe it, 'cos, you know, it seemed that Lithuanians didn't know Polish. I have a very good memory of this trip, mostly because it was a trip abroad—a way to get familiar with some other culture, and, of course, we followed Adam Mickiewicz's traces—I've been so much into him since that time* [43].

Mickiewicz is deemed one of the most important and commonly mentioned Polish poets, yet since he originated from the region that constitutes a historical part of Great Duchy of Lithuania these two nations include him in their national pantheon, too. It should be noted that the educational dimension of the stay in the region of Vilnius, devoted to following Polish bards' traces (at the same time being the historic signs of Polishness), is currently the most frequent motif for visiting Lithuania. This sphere becomes supplemented by an element of patriotism and religion, which is well reflected in one of the respondents' comments: *We went to haunt the sanctuary of Mary above the Gate of Dawn. I wanted to [go there] because Adam Mickiewicz used to come around there, too, he used to stroll along these lanes where he was studying; [we] followed great Poles' footsteps, simply. We visited, we were at the Opera House, in the cathedral where the choirs sang beautifully. I liked it so much, I made myself at home, I didn't feel as if I had been in a foreign country* [65].

It is noteworthy to deepen the question of peculiar images of Lithuania born in the respondents' minds under the influence of the Polish romantic writers' output. This country is predominantly presented there by means of strongly idyllic categories whose impact is brought out by a specific, a bit old-fashioned language: as a quite unreal land, plunged into close to mediaeval darkness, overgrown with primordial forests that are home to wild and unspoiled nature, rather uncivilised. However, these are usually the pictures that bear positive emotions: [Lithuania] *is probably overgrown with forests* [75]; *as I said, I associate Lithuania with gorgeous landscapes (...), with countryside, with such intact nature, forests, meadows, clean rivers, (...) obviously with woods, relics of paganism* [98]; *it's beautiful, green, such steppes; it seems to be rich in flora, not too much of industry* [11]. Moreover, the people being examined imagine

Lithuania offering the ambience of manor-houses: *Lithuania also means the tradition of manor-houses, I mean manor-houses probably owned by the Lithuanian noblemen, as well as the Polish ones; as a matter of fact, the parochial tradition, with columned porticos, with lounge along the main axis of the building, sometimes obviously with thatched roofs or roofs covered with reed* [9]; *maybe this manor-house in Soplicowo,⁴ it's also this area, I guess—the picture of utopia, idyll...* [98]. What is interesting, such visions—sometimes expressed in the form of as much as rapture—were more than once unfolded also by the respondents who had never been to Lithuania, which seems to certify about the unbelievable power of the images born at the time these people had been at school. After all, some respondents made direct reference here: *Lithuania is exactly how Mickiewicz used to describe it* [26]; *if you mean the nature there, as far as Mickiewicz's descriptions in 'Pan Tadeusz' are concerned, I can say that it's beautiful, marvellous. I have never been to Lithuania but, I'm saying, from what I know from the literature, other writers and this poet himself, I think it's a beautiful country* [69].

Little interest in visiting Lithuania provokes to have a look at the way it is argued for by the respondents who try to justify their lack of keenness on Poland's north east neighbour. First and foremost, we should draw the reader's attention to the results obtained in the quantitative measure. Here the respondents mostly pointed at Lithuania being an unpopular voyage destination (30.2%), its remote location from Poland (23.3%) and quite considerable a part of them admitted they had not reflected on this issue (20.8%). More rarely the people being examined disclosed that they did not know of any tourist attractions in Lithuania (13.9%), revealed a money deficit (13.5%) or declared that they did not have a company. Only 4.1% of those who had not been to Lithuania mentioned a cold climate there, whereas allegedly low temperatures there were quite often recalled in qualitative interviews.

The material we have gathered enables us to distinguish between a couple of types of motivation why it is not customary to visit Lithuania during holiday; tentatively, they can be divided into universal and specific. Respondents who can be ascribed to the first perspective point at the primary reasons: shortage of money and absence of such needs, while the specific causes relate to the following aspects: geographical, biographical, the ones connected to the cultural pattern of an attractive holiday or the negatively valued Eastness (being peripheral). The following narrative can be treated both as an announcement and synthesis of the issues mentioned in the interviews: *Well, I live in a region far away from Lithuania—one needs to cross all of Poland. Perhaps there are interesting places there, but it's simply too far. [Besides] it's not a country you would go on holiday, like Mediterranean countries—Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, France. Poland and Lithuania belong to the same climate zone, [they have] an access to the same sea, so what's the difference if we go to the Polish or Lithuanian Baltic [Sea]. If one has a sentiment and would simply like to go there, then, you know [they go]. It's like asking Poles living in, say, Białystok, if they have ever been to the Czech Republic or Germany* [37].

⁴ Soplicowo—one of the major sites where the plot of *Pan Tadeusz* (Adam Mickiewicz's most outstanding poem that probably every Pole has heard of) takes place. It was made up by the author, yet in the 19th century its prototypes could easily be found across the historical land of Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

By exposing the question of distance this respondent draws our attention to the potential attractiveness of some spots in Lithuania and its being a country of unfriendly climate. However, this person signals a sentimental motivation, too, which is connected with an idea of visiting places that are important for an individual biography. Most often the trips of that type are in search of the places connected to the history of one's family, e.g. to one's parents' or grandparents' ancestry. If it is not the point, then, according to the respondents, it is justified not to be interested in this direction. It is noteworthy that this phenomenon comes up only as far as Poland's eastern neighbours are concerned, since nobody looks for biographical stimuli to go to Bulgaria or Spain. One interviewee treats this sentimental aspect as a *conditio sine qua non* for the activity of that kind: *To go somewhere, you need to have a reason, and I don't. My parents come from Lviv and this is the city I visit. I have no personal memories of Lithuania, so I have nobody to go to there and no reason for it* [95].

As we have observed, there is one more statement characteristic of the type of motivation to visit Lithuania: *Simply, it seems to me that there are no great attractions there. Besides, I don't have my family roots there; it's rather Poles who do that go there. Nothing has really ever attracted to me in Lithuania, because I don't really have anybody to go to there, and all that's interesting [there] I can watch on TV—I can watch on TV, I don't need to go such a good bit of the way. It's colder up there, because it's northwards, our sea is cold, so I can't image stepping into the water there* [13]. The last part of the above quotation refers to the way of argumentation we have already mentioned—an ideal of holiday, particularly serving good relaxation. A lot of statements characterize it, also explicitly, as a combination of high temperatures, warm sea and a dose of exoticism. Lithuania, as a country of similar climate, of much the same natural and cultural landscape—basically does not satisfy these conditions. Presumably, it is for this reason that the respondents do not associate this country with a cultural pattern of attractive holiday.

However, the material we have obtained suggests that it is also a lack of institutional support for the promotion of the country's tourist attractiveness that may come into play here. *Maybe accommodation base and tourist knowledge about Lithuania is not common, all these neighbouring [eastern] states—basically nothing. I can't associate Lithuania with anything in particular, we're too unconscious of it, there isn't much of Lithuania in travel agencies. I can't remember anybody launching trips, like to Prague, for example. And even in this case I also thought: 'Prague—not a big deal!'. And maybe it would be the same with Lithuania, but personally, out of myself, I wouldn't think there might be something different or curious from what I have in Poland* [40]. Such commentaries may be taking aback in the epoch of surplus of marketing communication and internet where everyone is able to find an attraction suitable for themselves. However, it is possibly not in vain that advertisement experts keep repeating that, contrary to common belief, a consumer of today, also a tourist, is helpless in the face of a flood of possibilities they have at their disposal, so they expect a piece of advice. Judged from this perspective, Poles who are about to decide on the place of rest seem to follow the pattern pointed out by Anette Therkelsen and Anders Sørensen (2005: 48–49) in relation to guidebooks: “the tourist is blind to everything that is not pinpointed as sightworthy.”

Some of the interviewees are aware that Lithuania may be touristically attractive and so bring up an overall category of monuments (very often associated with churches or—more generally—old buildings). Then, the most adequate way to come to know Lithuania, though, is a short tour, an outing, connected with sightseeing and not with a long holiday mobility. However, a lot of people do not identify this country with anything special that would be a reason for visiting it. Apart from this they do not know how such an event might be realised: *Because this region or country is poorly advertised as for tourism—you won't hear of it, there are no offers in travel agencies, no school trips are organized. I take a keen interest in the history of art, but except for the Gate of Dawn I have no idea of any other monument in Lithuania. I have no doubts there are some, but somehow it's no attraction to me. The only trips you can find are for some 'borderland people'⁵ who go there out of sentiment* [135].

Lack of interest in visiting Lithuania follows from the fact that this country does not belong to the so called West which is, first and foremost, attractive for the interviewees. Thus the respondents claim that Lithuania has no such beauty spots as one can find in the countries of the southern or western Europe being destinations for them. There are also people who openly formulate a thesis that this country belongs to the Eastern circle of culture, associated with the post-Soviet sphere of influences: *ugly communist-like blocks of flats. We were in Vilnius and, apart from the Old Town which was beautiful and renovated, the rest was neglected, maybe not neglected, but, you know, it was a bit of the communist style* [138]; *Poles, or at least me, have it that going to Lithuania would be like going to Russia—although it doesn't look like that anymore, does it? It's probably deeply rooted* [105].

It is legitimate to say that the East is cold (literally) and unattractive, which is clearly outlined by the next narrative: *these countries [to the east of Poland] are not popular for us at all, totally unattractive. I have also combined the East with cold areas, and everyone prefers going to warm Italy, [to be] in the shade of the trees, or well-prosperous Great Britain. If someone inspired me, showed me at least a piece of something, some pictures or events that take place there, some stimulus to think: 'wow, it must be great there, I must go there!', then, I think, it's probably not as expensive as in Poland there, and it would be good to go there* [111].

The Knowledge the Inhabitants of Wrocław have on Lithuania

The reasons for visiting Lithuania and the very practice that have been presented above point at the respondents' minimal interest and experience in these issues. What may result from this is a shortage of the knowledge about contemporary Lithuania, which has been confirmed in other parts of our research. Two questions are worth

⁵ 'Borderland people' is a direct translation for Poles who live in Poland now but were born on the territory that then used to belong to interwar Poland, and was lost to the USSR in 1945 (now in Lithuania, Belarus or Ukraine)—the so called *Kresowiacy* in Polish. The reference to 'borderland' in the English translation, although quite common, is not perfect, since the territorial scope of the *Kresy* area as it functions nowadays goes far beyond the territory close to the border.

mentioning here: the rudimental knowledge of Lithuania and the way the interviewees evaluate this fact.

We asked our respondents about the name of the capital city of Lithuania, and the right answer—Vilnius—was pointed out by 72.1% of people under investigation. 18 wrong answers (6.6%) most often included Lviv (7 people) and Riga (6); the rest 21.4% gave here no answer at all. If we assume that the last two categories, the wrong answer and no response at all, in fact mean the same, it can be inferred that almost 28% of the respondents are ignorant about that issue. This result cannot be univocally interpreted, yet what seems important here is the fact that such answers related to one of Poland's neighbours and at the same time to the city whose position in the Polish culture is salient.

As for the currency that is at present in use in Lithuania, it was 30.4% that knew the answer, whereas 17.4% did not (most frequently the Lithuanian litas was mistaken for the Ukrainian hryvna and the euro), and almost a half (49.6%) found it hard to give any response. Here, we probably deal with a consequence of the fact that only 11% of the respondents have ever been to Lithuania.

The percentage of those who realize that Lithuania belongs to the European Union is quite high and equals 70.3%. The opposite view is held by 16.7% and 13% is not able to answer this question. The awareness of Poland and Lithuania's common membership in the NATO is presented by 52.9%, 23.2% is convinced that Lithuania does not belong to this Treaty and a similar group of respondents (23.9%) reveals ignorance here ('I don't know'). These declarations appear to be a partial reflection of the peripheral place Lithuania occupies in both organizations. As for the difference concerning the right answers to the questions about the EU and NATO, it can be a consequence of a bigger (and easier experienced) meaning that the Community of 28 states has for the respondents against the more abstract NATO. What may also matter here is the fact that Lithuania's accession to the NATO (which took place on 29th March 2004) might have been overshadowed by the EU enlargement (by Poland, Lithuania and eight other countries) on 1st May 2004, i.e. only one month afterwards.

Quite an interesting indicator of the Poles' knowledge on their north east neighbours are the feelings concerning the possibilities of the communication between the representatives of the two nations. The people under investigation are convinced that they would have no problem about it when: using English (37%); Polish, because Lithuanians know this language (44.6%); with everybody speaking their own languages, because they are similar (15.9%) and Russian, because both nations know it (62.3%). It is good to note the percentage of the declarations about similarity of both languages. Of course it is difficult to judge whether it is high or low, nevertheless, what draws the reader's attention here is the fact that there was not direct question about it; these answers were simply delivered by the respondents themselves, and so can be viewed as naturally occurring. It is surprising because the common history, the alleged cultural closeness as well as the respondents' conviction (revealed in qualitative interviews) that 'the inhabitants of the East speak Slavic languages' may have made one expect a higher number of such answers here.

Regardless of the way of interpretation of the above data and its determinants, the declarations delivered by the respondents contribute to the expression of the statement that, in principle, Lithuania seems to be absent in their lives. Respondents themselves admit it, as most of them (86.2%) is of the opinion that Poles, generally speaking, do not know much about this country. The reasons most often accounted for this were that Lithuania: appears in the media too rarely (43.1%), is, in itself, not too interesting (21.7%), was too seldom present in school teaching (18.8%), does not have a big political meaning (17.8%) and, finally, that the Polish-Lithuanian relations are correct (15.2%). The first of these answers—brought up most often—can easily be explained with the declarations made by the respondents themselves. More than a third of the inhabitants of Wrocław is not able to point at any problems at all in bilateral relations (35.5%) and the kinds of the problems that come into the public are a reflection of the media narratives. Those people who noticed any troublesome questions here, most often spoke of the problem with the original spelling of the Polish Lithuanians' names, which is banned in Lithuania (50%) and—more generally—with the difficulties representatives of this minority must face (38.8%) or—which was not that often—historical controversies (13.3%). Some people (9.2%) mentioned also the postcards where Piłsudski,⁶ Hitler and Stalin were set together (the incident that took place in Vilnius right before the research) and the question of the town of Mažeikiai (6.1%) and the local refinery bought by a Polish company.⁷

Poles in Relation to Lithuanians—an Attempt at a Broader Look

Trying to catch the basic traits of the matter under discussion, we have decided to go from the local level—the city of Wrocław—to the nationwide one. This step is predetermined by several circumstances brought to light above, i.a. the influence that local media have on the shape of ideas associated with Lithuania and Lithuanians by the inhabitants of Wrocław (this issue will be addressed below). We have thus resolved to identify, to some extent, their opinions with the ones shared in the whole of Poland, yet—it should be remembered—one needs to be aware of the analytical limitations to such an approach.

The analyses carried out above were meant to give the content to the phenomenon of an attitude Poles have towards Lithuanians. However, as it is the case with syndromatic notions, the problem consists here not only (as we have already signalled

⁶ Józef Piłsudski (1867—1935), one of the Polish most outstanding politicians of the interwar period. Faced with the failure of his policy to recreate the federation of Poland and Lithuania after World War I, he secretly made one of his generals seize Vilnius and its surroundings by force in 1920, ostensibly against Piłsudski's will. Although at that time Lithuanians constituted approx. 2 percent of the inhabitants of the city (which they had and still have treated as their historical capital since time immemorial), they still have not been able to come to terms with this act, and, in consequence, even nowadays Piłsudski tends to be regarded by quite a lot of Lithuanians as the embodiment of all evil. The postcards mentioned in the article appeared in Vilnius in March 2010.

⁷ There have been some frictions about this overtake connected with the conditions under which the Polish company has had to function.

after Nowak) in a difficulty as for the empirical isolation of theoretically defined elements that an attitude to something is made of, but also in the subsequent setting the components under study together into a synthesizing picture (with these components sometimes being difficult to be isolated yet measurable).

For a couple of reasons a precise description of the level of knowledge the people under investigation have on Lithuania is a hard task. Firstly, because it would be indispensable to refer the answers obtained to the context established by other countries. Secondly, one lacks decision as for the hierarchy of the indicators concerning the elements of knowledge which, if present, would certify that a given respondent is into the matter under study. Thirdly, one does not have the tools necessary to determine the minimum level of knowledge required for a single respondent to be described as informed. Fourthly, it is difficult to determine the minimum percentage of people who should have such an amount of knowledge that would enable us to state that the population under investigation reveals competence as for the given matter. Fifth, it is both indispensable and difficult to write the tendencies disclosed in the research into the context of the contemporary crisis of the humanities observed at least in Poland, bearing in mind that Lithuania is a place that does not draw too much interest.

However, seeking to reconcile these limitations with a need to answer the main question of the paper, one can formulate a couple of general statements following both from the surveys by the CBOS and the interviews accomplished among the inhabitants of Wrocław. The paragraphs below may thus be treated as an attempt at constructing a fairly consistent narrative, yet one needs to remember that the cause-and-effect dependencies that emerge from it are of a hypothetical kind, for neither the nature of dependencies nor they themselves have been subject to study.

Thus the most concise outlining of the image of Lithuania shared by contemporary Poles would then be 'indifference', revealed in the declarations concerning the level of liking and manifested in the lack of interest in this country or a shortage of knowledge relating to it.

As far as the emotions that Poles bestow on Lithuanians are concerned, their positive dimension should be indicated here. But still, it needs to be underlined that, firstly, this preference is not intensive; it is rather a slight bias off indifference. And, secondly, the reason for that affection lies in the absence of the opposite feeling; it can also be interpreted as a 'prize' for the neighbour's historically friendly attitude towards Poland. As for Poles' knowledge of Lithuania, one needs to bring up the undoubtedly strong position of the references to some outstanding icons of mutual relations, first of all to king Jagiełło and the battle of Grunwald. At the same time, quite suggestive is, contrary to reality, some respondents' belief in Lithuanians' knowledge of Polish and of the similarity between the two languages; as it was surveyed, 70% of Lithuanians do not have this competence (Fuksiewicz, Kucharczyk, Łada 2013: 30). The aforementioned circumstances, as well as a range of others, result in poverty of the behavioural dimension of Poles' attitudes to Lithuania and Lithuanians.

Rethinking the causes of the Poles' ignorance in relation to their north east neighbours it would be noteworthy to bring out the media context, more than once signalled in the course of the paper after all: The questions concerning Lithuania draw little

of the media's attention. Such an interpretation may be strengthened by one of the definitions of the conception of agenda-setting reported by Maxwell McCombs. It says that "Elements that are prominent in the media tend to become prominent among the public," with a provision for this definition's major limitation: that it is media-centric (McCombs 2010: 199). The most important fact, though, here is that the salience of issues on the public agenda-setting involves, among other things, the accessibility of those issues as a consequence of the frequency with which they have appeared in the news (p. 204). Having said so, we obviously do not exclude a possibility of a reverse dependency, with the media being here only a reflection of what is of any interest to the public in Poland.

The media factor may also come useful in the context of the Polish minority in Lithuania, yet in order to deal with this question deeper it is legitimate to recall the conception of the 'triad linking national minorities, the newly nationalizing states in which they live, and the external national "homelands" to which they belong or can be construed as belonging, by ethnocultural affinity though not by legal citizenship' (Brubaker 1996: 4). In certain circumstances a given minority can become a hostage to the politics conducted by its external national homeland against the state in which this minority lives, the results of which may be employed in the local political struggle. By the time the Wrocław research was carried out, such a situation had taken place only sporadically. Subsequently, at that time the Polish society had not predominantly been subject to political messages of that type sent by its authorities (such a situation—i.e. making the official Polish-Lithuanian relations dependent on the Polish minority's condition—came to the fore only in the forthcoming years).

In this context it is also grounded to ask about the relevance that the common Polish-Lithuanian history has for the mutual relations of today. When interpreting the respondents' comments one needs to remember that the attitudes held by both sides are to a large extent asymmetrical. "While many Lithuanians treat rejecting Polishness as a foundation of their identity, from the Polish point of view, Lithuania is just one of many neighbors—a mythical 'paradise lost' known from the writings of Adam Mickiewicz, Eliza Orzeszkowa and Henryk Sienkiewicz" (Kostro 2012: 140). While speaking of Poland's eastern neighbours, i.e. not only Lithuania but also Ukraine and Belarus, one can even dare say that what Poles are most interested in is not their fellow nationals living there, sometimes referred to with contempt as '*Ruski*'⁸ (Kurcz 2005: 208–209), but the former Polish territory that is deemed to be a certain imaginative figure or subject to nostalgia. As it was put into words by Jacek Purchla (2006: 8), "the myth of the borderland [*Kresy*; cf. footnote 5] ought to be read out as a nostalgia rather for the lost world of values than for the lost territory." What draws the readers' attention here is, present in the respondents' utterances, the image of Lithuania that is viewed as a wild and mysterious yet idyllic land, whose reality still

⁸ The attribute '*Ruski*' (a scornful derivative for a 'Russian') was in common use in the times of Poland's dependence to the Soviet Union in relation to any inhabitant of this empire, regardless of their individual national identification. However, in certain circles this invective has maintained its validity up to now relating also to the representatives of the Polish minority in the post-USSR states. Such an address is very painful for these people—the more so as it was them that more than once had to pay the highest price for upkeeping their Polishness against the Soviet culture and authorities.

seems to correspond to the pictures by Adam Mickiewicz in his *Pan Tadeusz* or other pieces of his output.

All these images bring us close to what Edward Said (1978) described, with regard to a totally different setting of time and space, as a gist of the colonial approach. That is why the language used by the people being examined may, after Jan Sowa, be characterised as the ‘*Kresy* discourse’. It is meant to shelter the national ego from the discussion maintained in the spirit of the postcolonial theory that would demand a critical look at the Polish presence in the East in the 16th–19th centuries. This perspective shall make it easier to accept the quoted author’s stand that the application of the notions of that theory to the analysis of the history of Poland clears up the nature of the presence itself (Sowa 2011: 440–443). This *mutatis mutandis* metaphor of the colonial attitude may also be advocated for by means of the specific civilisational *limes* between the West and the East established by the respondents along Poland’s present eastern borders. There, the dominant position is obviously occupied by the West whose representatives are the only ones to decide about the frequency and character of the relations in which they engage with the East.

It all leads us to the point in which Poles’ attitudes to Lithuania and Lithuanians can be embedded within an interpreting paradigm of a specifically understood centre–periphery opposition. As an analytical category, it tends to be referred to economic questions (Wallerstein 2004: 93), yet here it can, *per analogiam*, be employed, since Lithuania appears to be treated by Poles as peripheral to their country. The arguments that come into play here are both of historical type (from the period of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, the post war Lithuania’s being a part of the Soviet Union) and of the contemporary one (e.g. economical, political, civilisational issues, as well as the very peripheral location in Europe and Western organizations).

In spite of the considerable knowledge of Lithuania and Lithuanians’ presence in the same civilisational circles (such as the EU and NATO) as Poland, one is inclined to infer that the respondents are able to discern the modernising transformations that Poland and they themselves have been undergoing over the last two decades and at the same time they tend to ignore the neighbour’s analogical experience. The whole ‘centre–periphery’ metaphor may seem less appealing due to the fact that Poland itself constitutes peripheries for the West, yet here one should rather take into account a sort of ‘evolution chain’: the Western societies pay little attention to Poland and so does this country in relation to Lithuania.

While reading and entering into the spirit of the views held by the inhabitants of Wrocław that were not able to be quoted here, one can have an impression that this ignorance bears some positive consequences as well, manifested for example in a quite serious question—lack of territorial claims turned against Vilnius and its vicinity (see the point *On the history of the Polish-Lithuanian relations*). Some of our respondents used a language that might be treated as soaked with the nostalgia for the *Kresy*, yet it was totally free from any form of revisionism—even on the level of ‘innocent’ jokes or highly abstract considerations that would conceal a hope to come back to Vilnius one day. For a part of Lithuanians whose present-day attitude towards Poland tends to be conditioned, to some extent, by the history, this statement may turn out doubtful,

which, however, does not diminish its truthfulness: Poles do not show much interest either in the reality of their north east neighbour or the problems challenging their fellow nationals living there or the kind of relations that could be established between Poland and Lithuania in the future.

Generally speaking, however, the respondents' lack of interest and knowledge triggers a behavioural passivity as a feature of the interethnic relations described. Lithuanians and Lithuanianness are not present in the respondents' everyday life, and the state itself offers no stimuli to fascination. As a matter of fact Lithuania is sometimes deemed to be naturally attractive, but what matters most here is the unfriendliness of its climate for holiday so that the only reason and, at the same time, content of these rare visits to Lithuania is following the Polish prints. Once again it seems then that the category of indifference to the neighbour is the most valid explanation of the ignorance of the attractions worth experiencing during a visit to this country.

Summary

It is grounded to say that a couple of centuries of Poland and Lithuania's common history might justify the statement on a special status of the Lithuanian neighbour in the Poles' social awareness. Yet the sociological research mentioned in the article makes one question such an optimistic assumption. The quantitative measure of Poles' liking for Lithuanians reveals a change of attitudes being confirmed by an increase in the level of such feelings over the last two decades. This rise, however, is not large so this overall attitude can most aptly be described by the category of indifference yet with a pinch of positive emotions resulting from protectionism and sentimentalism. This fact may partly be accounted for by the example of the inhabitants of Wrocław for whom Lithuanianness functions neither on the level of ordinariness nor on that of knowledge resources, with an exception for some literature-based images. At the same time this feeling is burdened by a dose of sense of superiority. The people under investigation, generally speaking, do not visit Lithuania because it is remote (probably not only in a geographical sense), unattractive and associated with the negatively valorised Eastness. Their knowledge about Lithuania is far from satisfactory, some respondents tended to mistake this country for Ukraine, which bears out that there is a vague yet vivid category of the generalized East in the Polish awareness. Conscious of it all, the respondents claim that it is the absence of the Lithuanian questions in the media as well as the range of Lithuania itself (its little significance and being peripheral) that account for this state of affairs, yet one may assume that it is their own lack of interest in Lithuania that matters most here.

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