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Articles

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Houses of culture in Poland.
A contribution to societal security studies.

Abstract

The work presents the functioning of "houses of culture" in Poland. The author analyses his own research carried out by way of a diagnostic (questionnaire) survey. The work is located in research in the area of security studies through focusing on societal and cultural security.

Key words: Houses of culture in Poland, societal security, cultural security, national security, local community security

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present houses of culture in Poland as an institution potentially capable of contributing to the creation of societal security. The implementation of this undertaking assumes a diagnosis of those institutions carried into effect at the turn of the second and third decade of the 21ˢᵗ century. Such specification seems important from the viewpoint of the changes taking place in recent years as regards the understanding of the role of culture in Polish politics. The work is divided into three distinct parts. The first part represents an introduction to the author's own research. The second one consists in a study of literature in the area of the growing importance of societal security in shaping collective life. The third part presents the role of houses of culture in shaping this security in light of the questionnaire surveys that have been carried out. The work also comprises a recapitulation outlining conclusions and research prospects.

The issues of and introduction to own research

At the beginning, let us specify the distinction between 'societal security' and 'social security'. The former is associated with the culture of a nation, the security of its identity, frequently refers to the process of its construction in social groups studies both in the past and nowadays. It is associated with protection against the undesirable influence of foreign cultures. On the other hand, 'social security' remains in reference to the satisfaction of crucial social needs and the ability of a society to survive.[1]

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[1]   Cf. O. Wæver, B. Buzan, M. Kelstrup, P. Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, Pinter Publishers Ltd., London 1993.

In this paper - after Janusz Gierszewski – we assume that the term 'societal security' is used in the socio-cultural meaning, which is characterised by a high degree of connection with an individual and the society.[2]

Societal security does not constitute a uniform concept, all the more so that such a concept could have appeared if there had been rich traditions connected with this type of security.[3] Nevertheless, it is possible to delimit the areas this security deals with, first of all cultural development,[4] prosperity – cultural as well as economic and material, shaping the quality of life not only not only basing on financial aspects but in a large measure actually on cultural aspects associated e.g. with leisure or lifestyle. This security exhibits not only the expectations of the community but also of individuals.[5] It accepts the growing privileges and civil liberties. It focuses on making the inhabitants function in such a way so that a common category is satisfaction with access

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[2]   Cf. J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Historia i Polityka" No. 23(30) /2018, p. 26.

[3]   Cf. A. Skrabacz, *Uwarunkowania tworzenia bezpieczeństwa społecznego w XXI wieku*, in: *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Pojęcia, uwarunkowania, wyzwania*, A. Skrabacz, S. Sulowski (ed.), Dom Wydawniczy "Elipsa", Warszawa 2021, p. 53; K. Olak, A. Olak, *Współczesne rozumienie bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Acta Scientifica Academiae Ostroviensis. Nauki Humanistyczne, Społeczne i Techniczne" 7(1) /2016, pp. 468–469.

[4]   Cf. A. Skrabacz, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Podstawy teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Dom Wydawniczy "Elipsa", Warszawa 2012, p. 81.

[5]   Cf. J. Gierszewski, *Model bezpieczeństwa społecznego na tle teorii systemów*, "Colloquium" No. 2/2013, 65–80; L. Hyb, Ł. Pietras, *Aktywność społeczna w obszarze bezpieczeństwa społecznego*, in: *Współczesne wyzwania bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, P. Ramiączek, M. Gajdowska red.), Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Współpracy Polska-Wschód, Kielce-Tarnobrzeg 2019, pp. 25–40.

to public services owing to their high quality and the development of the private sector guaranteeing respect for crucial rights.[6]

The symphonic reflection on the issue of houses of culture and the processes of creating societal security in Poland assumes that there is a set that is common for those notions. For the sake of formality, let us specify that the issue of houses of culture remains in a direct reference to the notion of cultural security and national heritage. This clarification seems to contribute to the confirmation of the abovementioned common set. Its existence is confirmed, among others, by one of the leading researchers of societal security in Poland – Janusz Gierszewski. The scholar notes that "Societal security is associated with the probability of the occurrence of undesirable social phenomena (problems) and limitation of risks connected with survival and quality of life in the economic and cultural sphere."[7] In the same work, the researcher rightly notes that "Societal security is also associated with the protection of national identity defined as the ability to uphold culture, customs or language."[8] Janusz Gierszewski is also of the opinion that cultural problems are among those which underlie social problem,

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[6]   Cf. M. Cieślarczyk, A. Filipek, A. Świderski, J. Ważniewska, *Istota kultury bezpieczeństwa i jej znaczenie dla człowieka i grup społecznych*, "Kultura Bezpieczeństwa" No. 1–2 (2014), p. 40.

[7]   J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, op. cit., p. 22.

[8]   Ibidem, p. 25. On cultural identity from the viewpoint of societal security and national security cf. C. Smuniewski, *Tożsamość – horyzont zagadnień*, in: *Społeczne uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa. Wybrane zagadnienia psychologii i socjologii*, Part 1, L. Kanarski, M. Koter, K. Loranty, I. Urych (ed.), Wydawnictwo AON, Warszawa 2015, pp. 106–113.

which in turn affect the functioning of the state and processes in the area of security.[9]

The combined reflection on the issue of houses of culture and the processes of creating societal security leads to the consideration of the development and security of local communities. When we speak in this place about the security of local communities we are primarily concerned with the protection of vital interest of a local community and local institutions against external and internal threats, as well as ensuring conditions for the realisation of those interest that contribute to the creation of common good. Local communities (cities, boroughs, counties, municipalities, villages) are threatened not only such phenomena as e.g. unemployment, lack of necessary social and everyday life infrastructure, inactivity of NGOs, relative unavailability of medical care, shortage of facilities for the handicapped, insufficient public transport, but also – which we would like to put a particular stress on in this place – a distance or lack of real access to culture in its institutions. So conceived societal security at the local level is close to universal, public,[10] personal and cultural security.

When thinking about local development it is worth noticing houses of culture. Those entities, also called "centres of culture" or "cultural centres" are institutions involved

9   Cf. J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Studium z zakresu teorii bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Difin, Warszawa 2013, p. 181.
10   Cf. M. Etel, Miejsce popełnienia przestępstwa w ujęciu statystycznym, in: *Współczesne oblicza bezpieczeństwa*, E. Guzik-Makaruk, E. Pływaczewski (ed.), Temida 2, Białystok 2015, p. 135; M. Adamczyk, *Teoretyczne wprowadzenie do badań nad bezpieczeństwem*, in: *Polska-Europa-Świat. Wczoraj i dziś*, M. Debita, M. Adamczyk (ed.), Media-Expo, Poznań 2017, p. 60.

in planning and organizing undertaking in the area of socio-cultural activity. Houses of culture comprise various entities supporting the mission of cultural centres, e.g. reading rooms of theatre halls. They can be combined with sports and recreation centres, thanks to which their activities are also developed in the sport and recreational areas. "Houses of culture are entities the fundamental statutory goals of which include cultural education and fromation through art, creating conditions for the development of amateur artistic movement and interest in knowledge and arts, recognising, stimulating and satisfying cultural needs and interests."[11] It is houses of culture that carry out multidirectional socio-cultural activities.[12] The research focused on houses of culture includes, among others, such issues as: political transformations seen as a background of culture,[13] cultural needs of society,[14] building civil society,[15] activeness of local communities.[16]

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[11]   G. Bucior, E. Jaworska, R. Kotapski, W. Turowska, *Raportowanie finansowe, pozafinansowe i kosztowe w polskich instytucjach kultury*, Wydawnictwo Ius Publicum, Katowice 2021, p. 30.

[12]   Cf. Ibidem.

[13]   Cf. J. Gralczyk, *Kultura lokalna po 1989 roku*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 23–27.

[14]   Cf. M. Matyjewicz, *Potrzeby kulturalne współczesnego społeczeństwa*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 28–34.

[15]   Cf. E. Bobrowska, *Dom kultury jako instytucja społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 35–44.

[16]   Cf. T. Ignalski, *Miejski Dom Kultury "Batory" w Chorzowie – model animacji inspirowany lokalną tradycją* in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn

In light of Polish law houses of culture are among the fundamental organisational forms of cultural activity alongside theatres, opera or operetta houses, philharmonic halls, art centres, art galleries and centres for studies and documentation in various fields of culture.[17] Therefore, they represent cultural activity which consists in creating, popularising and protecting culture sponsored by the public sector which supports and promotes artistic activities, cultural education, cultural activities and initiatives as well as protection of historical monuments and national heritage both in Poland and abroad.[18]

Barbara Jedlewska and Bohdan Skrzypczak claim that in the 21ˢᵗ century human imagination has been stirred, new dreams and anxieties have been awakened, people have been mobilised to seek the ways of the future. Researchers note that in the past century it was claimed that the events

2009, pp. 69–74. A. Fabisiak-Hill, *Model satelitarnego ośrodka kultury. Na podstawie metody Gminnego Ośrodka Kultury w Dywitach*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 75–79. K. Polewski, *Nowe metody pracy w Gminnym Ośrodku Kultury w Mykanowie*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 80–88. P. Henzler, S. Retmaniak, *Animacja środowiska – kluczem do sukcesu Gminnego Ośrodka Kultury w Somiance*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 89–93. M. Wójcik, *Ośrodek Kultury w Brzeszczach jako centrum aktywności lokalnej*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 94–97.

[17]   Cf. Act of 25 October 1991 on organising and conducting cultural activities (Journal of Laws 2020 item 194), Art. 2.

[18]   Cf. Ibidem, Art. 1. 1. and 1. 2.

after the year 2000 would become a reality different from the earlier social conditions. It was predicted that all walks of life would be modified beyond recognition. It was believed that the 21st century would be a time of culture. Popular were the view that culture would play a major role in shaping the new era, while access to culture would be an integral factor uniting people and nations, which access to culture would be one of the greatest values.[19] The author note that the forecasts from before 2000 start to come true. The role of culture "as a factor of the development of continents, nations, societies and local communities" has radically grown. "Culture has become a main instrument for the promotion of countries, regions, cities and villages, its importance in the model of education and formation has increased, a dense network of new entities operating for the development of local and national cultures as well as international cultural exchange has been formed."[20]

Thinking about culture from the viewpoint of security studies one should agree with Cezary Smuniewski. Writing about the need to build the culture of common life the scholar draws, among others, the following conclusion: "Facing the existing reality man recognises it as a task, as an obligation. Such a reality is for him common life. This task is to be fulfilled by culture. Culture is seen as man's unceasing expression towards the one who is the other one and who will come as the third one. This is how a community is formed and this is also how humanity is confirmed. Culture is not

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[19]   B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak, *Z tradycją w przyszłość – droga polskich domów kultury w XXI wiek*, in: *Domy kultury w XXI wieku. Wizje, niepokoje, rozwiązania*, B. Jedlewska, B. Skrzypczak (ed.), Centrum Edukacji i Inicjatyw Kulturalnych, Olsztyn 2009, p. 9.

[20]   Ibidem.

created singlehandedly; in this deed man reveals himself as a social creature – he builds culture in community with others. It is also how he creates himself and the society. This means that the culture of common life does not occur without cooperation, co-thinking and – what is crucial – without communication based on mutual sharing. Culture assumes the rank of a basic good of human communities if it is constantly ready to serve the common good."[21] It is hard not to notice the personalist attitude characterising Cezary Smuniewski's thinking about society and the relations between an individual and a social group. This is undoubtedly why he formulates another conclusion, in which he sees culture as a space for the formation of individual and social identities, and thus building responsibility for the communities in which man lives. He supplements this statement: "To create the culture of common life involves living together and foe one another. To live together means also to life for oneself to live even more for others. Since culture exists for man, common life serve man insofar as it itself affirms him."[22] The above statement of Cezary Smuniewski may be referred to the mission of houses of culture in society. After all, it is in those institutions that the culture of common life should be created.

The importance of culture is undoubtedly growing, while the predictions concerning its role in shaping common life in most cases prove to be true. Nevertheless,

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[21]   C. Smuniewski, *Tworząc bezpieczeństwo. O potrzebie budowania kultury życia wspólnego w cywilizacji zachodniej*, in: *Edukacja dla bezpieczeństwa. O kształtowaniu kultury bezpieczeństwa*, A. Skrabacz, L. Kanarski, K. Loranty (ed.), wyd. Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, Warszawa 2015, pp. 33–34.

[22]   Ibidem, p. 34.

the comprehensive perception of houses of culture – as an integral component of the system of security, including societal security, but also security in general – is not as popular as it would be expected. In a large measure this situation is a result of access to culture, the offer of houses of culture as well as individual expectations of members of the society. Therefore, it becomes necessary to supervise the functioning of the institutions and entities of culture in order to be able to implement new solutions, realise ideas that serve the society and listen to the expectation of local communities This situation made the author of this work carry out own research as regards the role of houses of culture in Poland in shaping societal security.

The role of houses of culture in light of own research

With a view to the fact that one of the major entities of the public sector dealing with societal security are houses of culture, own research consisted in showing the role of houses on culture in shaping this security. The research was focused on houses of culture in the system of societal security.

The research was aimed at determining the role of houses of culture in shaping societal security. It was so because most probably societal security actually most fully absorbs contemporary expectations of the society as regards culture, access to it and its offer implemented in a large measure by houses of culture which represent one of the major organisational forms of cultural activity.

Prior to starting the research, the following research problem was posed: "What is the role of houses of culture play in shaping societal security?" Referring to the so formulated research problem, a research hypothesis was identified,

which assumed that houses of culture play an important role in shaping societal security and one of its manifestations is the improvement of their offer. This hypothesis was subject to verification in the course of analysing the results of own research.

The research was carried out in the form of a diagnostic (questionnaire) survey. The survey covered the minimum number of respondents recognized as a representative group in questionnaire surveys – the surveyed sample amounted to one hundred people. However, the respondents were selected exclusively from among those who used the services of houses of culture, which decidedly improved the adequacy of the research sample with respect to the goals set by the author. Three questions were prepared, which were considered as fundamental with respect to measuring the role of house of culture in shaping societal security. Those questions were considered as such at least at the stage at which similar measurements and studies are at the moment and it should be noted that they are only starting to be popularised.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic profile

Research sample	Percentage
Gender	
Female	51%
Male	49%
Age	
Less than 29 years	27%
30–44 years	42%
45 years and more	31%

Place of residence	
City with agglomeration over 500 thou.	52%
Town over 250 thou.	15%
Town over 100 thou.	13%
Town of less 100 thou.	11%
Rural area	9%

Source: Own elaboration.

As shown in Table 1, which presents the socio-demographic profile of respondents, the survey sample was much differentiated both with respect to gender as well as age. The majority of respondents live in cities with agglomeration over 500 thou. inhabitants.

The following questions were asked:

1. What is your own subjective evaluation of the role of houses of culture in shaping societal security, i.e. security associated with culture, access to it and non-material factors of quality of life?

2. How do you evaluate the attractiveness of the offer of houses of culture as compared with individual expectations?

3. 3. What is your opinion about the improvement of the offer of houses of culture in connection with giving ever greater meaning to societal security, which emphasises the significance of a broad access to high quality culture and its diverse resources?

Table 2 presents the answers of respondents to the questions concerning the role houses of culture play in shaping societal security.

Table 2. Respondents by their evaluation of the role houses of culture play in shaping societal security

Answers	Percentage
Own subjective evaluation of the role of houses of culture in shaping societal security - associated with culture, access to it and non-material factors of quality of life? Very large Large Average Small Very small	33% 37% 19% 7% 4%
Attractiveness of the offer of houses of culture as compared with individual expectations Very high High Average Small Very small	29% 44% 17% 8% 2%
Opinion about the improvement of the offer of houses of culture in connection with giving ever greater meaning to societal security, which emphasises the significance of a broad access to high quality culture and its diverse resources Rather yes Definitely yes Rather no Definitely no	43% 28% 19% 10%

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents are convinced at least as to the significant role houses of culture play in shaping societal security – security understood through

associations with culture, access to it and non-material fac-
tors of quality of life On the other hand, almost one-fifth
of the respondents evaluate that the role houses of culture
play in shaping societal security is average.

The majority of the users of services offered by houses
of culture are satisfied with their offer as compared with
their individual expectations. Nonetheless, as many as 17%
of the users of services offered by houses of culture evaluate
the attractiveness of their offer average as compared with
their own expectations.

Generally, the respondents are convinced that the offer
of houses of culture in connection with giving ever greater
meaning to societal security, which emphasises the signifi-
cance of a broad access to high quality culture and its diverse
resources is improving. On the other hand, almost one-fifth
of the users of services offered by houses of culture are rather
not convinced about it, whereas every tenth respondent be-
lieves that the process of improvement of the offer of houses
of culture in connection with giving an ever greater meaning
to societal security decidedly does not occur.

On the basis of the survey results it should be stated
that the research hypothesis, which assumed that houses
of culture play an important role in shaping societal security,
a manifestation of which is the improvement of their offer,
has been to a large measure confirmed. However, the soci-
ety's expectation are actually higher that the quality offered
by houses of culture. This leads to a conclusion that although
houses of culture play a major role in shaping societal secu-
rity and improve their offer, they lag behind the trends and
needs of the people.

Implications and further research prospects

Both the results of own research and the situation of houses of culture in Poland at the turn of the second and third decade of the 21st century warrant the formulation of main conclusions and indication of further directions of research.

1. Houses of culture indubitably play a significant role in shaping societal security. The role of houses of culture in this respect was noticed by the users of services rendered by houses of culture. Nevertheless, about 3/10 of the users of services offered by houses of culture are of the opinion that those facilities could better perform their mission with respect to shaping societal security. A similar group claims that the offer of houses of culture needs to be more attractive. A similar group is not convinced that the offer of houses of culture in connection with giving ever greater meaning to societal security, which emphasises the significance of a broad access to high quality culture and its diverse resources will get improved.

2. Societal security, co-shaped by houses of culture, is developing and it is only starting to improve social awareness. On the other hand, the growing social expectations cause that the offer of public institutions is developing. Society expects security in the full meaning of this word, and an integral component of security in the 21st century if societal security which is associated *inter alia* with an improvement of the cultural offer. In consequence, it is necessary to continue research on the role of houses of culture in shaping social life.

3. Houses of culture are obliged to continue improving their offer and take into account even individual expectations of the users of public services. Therefore, it should be

expected that houses of culture will offer services that are more appreciated by the users. Houses of culture are also obliged to broaden their mission – they should encourage new people to avail themselves of cultural propositions.

4. Having in mind the aspirations associated with shaping societal security and the growing role of the latter in shaping the collective, social integration and quality of life, the following should be expected: a greater position of houses of culture in the process of organising cultural activity, an improvement of the offer of houses of culture, as well as the growing awareness of culture managers that their responsibility is not limited to realising tasks that are conventionally expected of them, but involves also giving a new dimension to culture - worthy of the turn of the turn of the second and third decade of the 21st century – connected with an ever greater importance of societal security, , which emphasises the significance of a broad access to high quality culture and its diverse resource.

5. Houses of culture aspire to creating a complementary offer for the users of their services. This offer is developing because the importance of social and cultural aspects of security is growing and they can and should be actively created by hoses of culture. Therefore, houses of culture play a significant role in shaping security, especially in its societal dimension. It is all the more so since the standards, norms and quality of societal security depend on the transparency, pace and quality of the implementation of tasks by institutions and bodies responsible for culture, social integration and prevention of social threats.

6. Societal security has become a new category of security and the area of its interests includes to a large measure: ensuring cultural progress, maintaining and possibly development

of wellbeing as well as development of the concept of quality of life. The concept of quality of life started to be developed with respect to security with a view to an ever broader consideration of – as regards factors which are decisive for security – culture, lifestyles, leisure activities as well as other undertaking aimed at satisfaction with life in which a source of social integration has been perceived, improvement of the norms of collective life and respect for the expanding civil rights.

7. The issue of houses of culture and various types of cultural institutions requires further in-depth and extensive research from the viewpoint of creating Poland's cultural security and societal security which is inseparably linked with it. The potential of houses of culture which may be useful in creating the security of identity of local communities requires urgent identification.

Conclusion

Houses of culture in Poland are institutions of a local character which serve the identity and development of local communities. They should be perceived as entities which not only contribute to creating cultural security in the nation, but which also directly co-create societal security. Houses of culture have a potential which predestines them to an ever broader and more effective participation in creating societal security in Poland. Those institutions should become subject to subsequent research with the use of instruments suitable for the observation of diverse processes of building cultural and societal security.

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