

Joanna Kurczewska
*Conclusion: Conclusion or old and new arguments against
“milking the Brussels sprout”*

This article has two parts. In the first part, the author concisely draws attention to the most important research conclusions of the articles grouped in the book's three thematic blocks. In the second and much larger part, she picks out the most interesting (in her opinion) research problems which arise from the theoretical analyses and empirical researches: the sociological and anthropological processes and phenomena termed “Europeanization of local communities” and taking place at Poland's eastern and southern borderlands. In part two she also pays a lot of attention to the most inspiring theoretical questions which, she thinks, are worth asking in future research on the Europeanization of Local Poland.

In the first part of the Conclusion the author not only underscores the contributors' ability to diagnose the definitional problems of Europeanization issues and phenomena but also their attempts (usually successful) to bring some order to the Europeanization vocabulary. She

appreciates many authors' efforts to make a distinction between Europeanization of local communities in the broader sense (Europeanization applies to the whole of Europe, its institutional order and its value system) and Europeanization in the narrower sense (Europeanization applies only to the European Union, its institutions and the ideological projects it communicates to its members; the author suggests that we call this latter type of Europeanization "Unionization"). Like many other writers, the present author points out the multiple approaches to "Europeanization" and "European integration" and the need to make clear distinctions between the two. She also points out the need to reconstruct the wider conceptual contexts of these approaches and the importance of the social and political contexts in which these key concepts have been elaborated.

In the first part of the Conclusion the author appreciates the soundness of the decision of the book's researchers and co-authors not to treat the local community as a monolith but to deconstruct it by, for example, identifying various collective actors within it according to a variety of criteria. She particularly accentuates the positive effects of deconstruction of the local community on the basis of the criterion of the nature and degree of involvement of the community's actors in the processes and phenomena of Europeanization. She points out that focus on these different types of collective actors helps us to recognize that the process of Europeanization of local communities is also a process of empowerment and emancipation of the actors who participate in the process most completely and intensively.

By presenting the Europeanization of local communities from the perspective of the various types of collective actors who – thanks to their normative orientations – are most fully involved, she sheds light on the process's diverse and complex logic. The author argues that, depending on the type of local community and its relations with the proximal and distal environment, these actors can play many different roles in the process of Europeanization: from the role of interpreter of European and EU projects for a specific local community to the role of legislator who is able to construct his/her own vision of Europeanism and European integration and offer it to other members of the local community.

The author also draws attention to the fact that the analyses published in the book testify to the need to continue the in-depth comparative study of the process of Europeanization in different regions of Local Poland, not only the borderlands.

In the second part of the Conclusion the author highlights several theoretical perspectives which are particularly inspiring for researchers of Europeanization and locality. She postulates continuation

and strengthening of meta-theoretical reflection on the complex relations between such concepts as: Europeanization, Europeanism, Unionization, Europe and European Union. She also pays particular attention to the need to identify more precisely the social and cultural connections between the Europeanization project and its realization in the European Union and Europeanization and Europeanism within the European continent viewed from the perspective of its civilizational, cultural and political resources.

The author stresses the need for empirical research and theoretical studies situating the problem of Europeanization in the context of three interpretative perspectives which are important not only for sociology but also for the humanities in general: first, those which typify studies of social representation, its potential and limitations in the study of social order; second, those which are specific for the sociology and anthropology of everyday life; and third, those which accompany reflections in social philosophy and theoretical sociology on the intellectual and emotional expectations of individuals and groups vis-à-vis the local, state-national and European future, utopias and developmental scenarios.

In the second part the author also presents, in considerable detail, the characteristics of the different interpretative perspectives from the point of view of their theoretical contribution to the enrichment and extension of the area of interest in Europeanization processes at different levels of social aggregation, particularly the “mezzo” level. Above all, she tries to demonstrate the most important and most interesting advantages of these perspectives and does not forget to mention their broader theoretical-comparative contexts.

She points out that, of all the identified interpretative perspectives, the one she feels will offer the most interesting inspiration is the anthropology of everyday life and the sociology of everyday life. This perspective “captures” social and cultural reality in its most minute details and offers an answer to the following important questions: how deeply has the Europeanization process “penetrated” the day-to-day experience of individual and group actors, how obvious has it become for these actors and to what extent do they take it for granted? Last but not least, she feels that, rather than being a theoretical antidote, placement of the problem of Europeanization of local communities in the context of the anthropology and sociology of everyday life is a valuable theoretical addition to the approaches to Europeanization which are so popular today, that is, interpretation in terms of Europeanization of various institutional theories or macro-social and macro-political theories of social change.