

Abstract of Keynote speech on Subarea „Societal actions and motivations”

Gergely Rosta

The subarea „Societal actions and motivations” cover a wide range of topics. In general, this is the subarea where religion appears as an important social factor, and one examines its effect on other areas of social actions and its roots in human values and motivations. In this sense the most important general questions are

- Does religion still have an impact on actions after decades of atheist-communist regime and a secularization process as a result of the socialist type of modernization?
- If yes, which are the spheres of life that are more affected with secularization and where can we witness a continuity of religious impact.
- Did the change of political system after 1990 result in a change of the role of religion and religiosity played in the level of the individual. Are there any differences considering different types of religious development in CEE?
- Are there any differences between the effect of the different types of religiosity? Which factor is more relevant: church involvement or supernatural orientations?

There are spheres that are already covered by the paper proposals like morality, ideological-political attitudes, or specially Central- and Eastern European themes like the evaluation of the communist past or the feeling of powerlessness or social apathy. Another group of papers look at religion from a special point of view like religious fundamentalism, or theology. In my opinion these thematic is a very promising one though there would be space for other themes as well (which might be included implicitly in some of the proposals). In my view one of the most important questions is the acceptance of religiosity as a legitimate motivation of attitudes and actions. Value surveys show for the political field that religious influence in politics at both macro-level (“politics-making”) and micro-level (influence of individual political behaviour) are less accepted in Central and Eastern Europe than in the western part of the continent. It is a question whether other spheres of life are similarly affected by a rejection of religious influence.

Another important – and in the paper proposals only partly touched – theme is social participation. The level of civil engagement is significantly lower in the former communist countries than in Western Europe. Religiosity seems to be a key factor for civil participation in many countries, but this question requires a more profound examination.

A third relevant question arises in connection with fundamentalism. The conflicts generated by religious or denominational differences are obvious in some countries of the region but a sophisticated comparative examination might be useful to show developments in societies less divided by religious conflicts.

Most of the papers intend to use comparative survey data. Qualitative data analysis is less easy to use in multi-country comparisons but in some cases it would be fruitful.