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## **In Search of the ‘Spirit of Capitalism’: About Normative Mechanisms Responsible for the Organisation of Social Behaviours**

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### **Abstract**

The starting point for my reflections was a thesis presented by Max Weber more than one hundred years ago. According to this thesis, a Protestant ethos was an important factor responsible for the spectacular economic growth of Northern Europe. In his own reflections, the German scholar paid attention mainly to both Protestant asceticism, which concentrated the energy of believers on the work they did, as well as on theology, especially Calvinism, which provided explanations for hard work and the accumulation of capital.

It seems, however, that in his reconstruction of the Protestant ethos, Weber described universal mechanisms which are responsible for social mobilization in general. The problem is that instead of trying to analyze them, he ultimately concentrated on their cultural manifestations. The main aim of my paper is an identification of these mechanisms. They discipline individuals, or more correctly, they discipline the patterns of playing these social roles, which are functionally significant for initiating and sustaining the mobilization process. In other words, when there is a need in a society to achieve specific goals, including economic ones, it should develop social norms which will be able to bolster the engagement of its members and focus their energy on specific aspects of their life. Moreover, there is a need to prepare non-normative mechanisms, which increase the probability that members of the society will adhere to these social norms.

The reflections in this regard seem to be important mainly for developing states. On the one hand, they should prepare mechanisms which allow them to develop their economies. On the other hand, the members of these states must face many costs associated with their implementation and this problem should also be a part of the discussion.

**Keywords:** social norms, economic development, Weber thesis, spirit of capitalism

**JEL Classification:** P17, Z13

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## 1. Introduction

The reflections presented in this article were inspired by the thesis formulated by Max Weber according to which one of the factors responsible for the economic growth in Northern Europe was the so-called 'spirit of capitalism'. The German scholar understood it as a set of norms and values which had their origin in the Protestant ethic and which made it possible for the new economic order to be formed in these countries. It was later called modern capitalism. Despite the fact that from the very beginning this thesis aroused many controversies and there were numerous attempts to discredit it, it still remains an interesting and valuable theoretical perspective. In my considerations, I adopt the position that in his work, the German scholar described certain universal mechanisms responsible for the social mobilisation process but, in the end, he focused on their economic and cultural manifestations.

I divided my article into three parts. In the first part, I present the thesis formulated by Max Weber as well as critical positions on his theory. In the second part, I concentrate on the social mobilisation process as well as the normative regulations that initiate and maintain it. As I have tried to prove here, there are similarities between the 'spirit of capitalism' described by Max Weber and the organisation of social behaviours typical for social mobilisation. In the last part of my article, I analyse the intermediary mechanisms between the norm and the behaviours of members representing a given society that increase the probability that these members will follow the norm. Again, I quoted certain evidence suggesting that these mechanisms had been identified and described by the German scholar. I finished my deliberations with conclusions in which I make an attempt to prove that this new way of interpreting Weber's thesis can be valuable both from a scientific as well as a practical perspective.

## 2. Weber's thesis and its criticism

It would be worthwhile to start discussions on the 'spirit of capitalism' by defining the original idea behind the Protestant ethic. Its main element turned out to be a particular kind of asceticism incomparable to any other forms which had existed before. The Reformation did not mean overthrowing the rule of the Church as such, but replacing a relatively comfortable, usually only formal power, which was practically unnoticeable at that time, with a much more oppressive way to regulate social life that interfered with all the spheres of private and public existence.<sup>1</sup> While in the times before the Reformation this kind of restrictiveness had been characteristic only of religious orders, the appearance of Protestantism eliminated the differences between a monk and a layman. Ascetic regulations, which had ruled the lives of religious order members before, became common.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this kind of action was to create new behavioural patterns that would make

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<sup>1</sup> M. Weber, *Etyka protestancka a duch kapitalizmu. Wyznania protestanckie a duch kapitalizmu*, Alatheia, Warszawa 2010, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pp. 86–87.

it possible for Christian virtues to materialise. As Weber wrote, it was supposed that these ascetic regulations would lead to the formulation of a conscious and active individual who would not distract his or her energy but would rather concentrate it on a specific area of social life.<sup>3</sup> In other words, disciplining individuals could not take place in a social vacuum. For the ascetic regulations to be able to organise the life of all members of a given society, they had to be strengthened and consolidated by being followed on a daily basis. This was possible through work. In the eyes of Protestant theologians, it was work life that became the arena to test one's faith, while effort and fulfilling one's duties turned out to be a necessary condition for an individual's salvation.

Apart from asceticism, it was eschatological issues that played an important role in the formation of the Protestant ethic. In his deliberations, Weber devoted a lot of time and attention to the idea of predestination. According to the Calvinist doctrine that lay the grounds for this idea, God, who existed outside time and space, had already divided people into the damned and the redeemed.<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that the Calvinism of that time did not give believers any guarantees that would consolidate their belief that they would be redeemed, it did give certain clues as to who could be part of this group. If God wants the social order to follow his requirements and society to be organised according to this goal, he also wants the social achievements of a Christian man. People predestined to be saved can be recognised by the fruits of their faith as well as their Christian life, the aim of which is to augment God's glory. Considering the fact that the realisation of Christian virtues was to be done by professional activity, this concept had specific economic repercussions. If we assume that diligence was conducive to earning money and the fear of careless behaviours made people save it, it turns out that one of the consequences of the predestination concept was the accumulation of capital and a positive attitude towards those who have it.<sup>5</sup>

In Weber's opinion, these two elements characteristic of the Protestant ethic – asceticism regulating individual behaviours and concentrating people's activities on professional work as well as theological explanation strengthening believers' conviction that hard work leads to salvation – were an indication of the ongoing rationalisation of social life.<sup>6</sup> They also contributed to the formation of modern capitalism and, therefore, to the social order that guaranteed Northern Europe a high level of economic growth. As might be expected, the thesis formulated in this way caused a stormy discussion, initially among German scholars. However, the accusations they formulated turned out to be relatively universal. They were to be repeated in the debate that took place after Weber's work had been translated and published in the United States.<sup>7</sup> They are also used nowadays in global discussions on the thesis.

The first problem indicated by the critics of the above-mentioned thesis was connected with the origins of capitalism. It was pointed out that the Calvinist doctrine imposed certain restrictions on economic activities. Thus, it is impossible to claim that it could contribute to the formation of modern capitalism. Weber also exaggeratedly stressed the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism and at the same time he did not sufficiently notice the origins

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, pp. 73–81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, pp. 53–54.

<sup>7</sup> K. Samuelsson, *Religion and Economic Action. The Protestant Ethic, the Rise of Capitalism, and the Abuses of Scholarship*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto [1957] 1992.

of capitalism in medieval religious orders.<sup>8</sup> Sources of the new economic order were also looked for in Judaism or Confucianism.<sup>9</sup> In both cases, the important role of law in regulating the life of believers, as well as the rational character of the quoted religious traditions were pointed out. The idea that modern capitalism was formed in Northern Europe was also dismissed. According to some critics of Weber's thesis, its roots should be sought in the south of the continent – in Italy.<sup>10</sup> Such arguments can also be given today. They became more important when non-Protestant and non-Western countries started to experience dynamic economic growth.<sup>11</sup>

There were also other objections formulated towards Weber's thesis. Karl Kautsky, as well as some American scholars, especially Richard H. Tawney and Hector M. Robertson, claimed that it was not religious ideas that contributed to the development of modern capitalism.<sup>12</sup> It was the economic transformation and concurrent structural changes that resulted in new social classes (the bourgeoisie) being formed as well as the ideology that would justify their social position and characteristic lifestyle. This ideology turned out to be the strict Protestantism of that time. There was also an opinion, still present in today's discussions, according to which the economic growth in Northern Europe would not have been possible without colonial conquests and the transfer of Asian technologies.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Towards the reinterpretation of Weber's thesis

Despite the fact that there have been many papers whose authors tried to prove Weber's thesis empirically in the last few years,<sup>14</sup> it is hard not to agree with the criticism towards his theory. Thus, it could be worthwhile to look at the opinion discussed here from

<sup>8</sup> See M. Peltonen, *The Weber Thesis and Economic Historians*, "Max Weber Studies" 2008, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 79–98; J.I. Bakker, *The Weber-Rachfahl Debate: Calvinism and Capitalism in Holland?* (Part One), "Michigan Sociological Review" 2003, Vol. 17, pp. 119–148; K. Samuelsson, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> See W. Sombart, *Żydzi i życie gospodarcze*, Spółka Wydawnicza Warszawska, Warszawa 1913; S.H. Frankel, *Modern Capitalism and the Jews*, Oxford Centre Press, Oxford 1983; S. Wagner-Tsukamoto, *Questioning the Weber Thesis: Capitalist Ethics and the Hebrew Bible?*, "Sociology Mind" 2012, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1–11; D.J. Chalcraft, A. Harrington, *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Max Weber's Replies to His Critics, 1907–1910*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool 2001.

<sup>10</sup> H. Lehmann, *The Rise of Capitalism: Weber versus Sombart* [in:] *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, eds. H. Lehmann, G. Roth, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. E.B. Adas, *The Making of Entrepreneurial Islam and the Islamic Spirit of Capitalism*, "Journal for Cultural Research" 2006, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 113–137; A. Chan, *Confucianism and Development in East Asia*, "Journal of Contemporary Asia" 1996, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 28–45; T. Chong, *Asian Values and Confucian Ethics: Malay Singaporeans' Dilemma*, "Journal of Contemporary Asia" 2002, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 394–406; M. Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, The Free Press, New York 1993; M.H. Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülan Movement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. K. Samuelsson, op. cit., pp. 111–112; R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*, University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor [1926] 2005; H.M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism: A Criticism of Max Weber and his School*, Kelley and Millman, Inc., New York 1959.

<sup>13</sup> J. Goody, *Capitalism and Modernity: The Great Debate*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2004.

<sup>14</sup> R. Grier, *The Effects of Religion on Economic Development: A Cross National Study of 63 Former Colonies*, "Kyklos" 1997, Vol. 50, pp. 47–62; R.M. McCleary, R.J. Barro, *Religion and Economy*, "Journal of Economic Perspectives" 2006, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 49–72.

a different, more abstractive perspective. From the sociological point of view, it would be worthwhile to treat the economic growth in Northern Europe as a manifestation of social mobilisation. I understand this concept as the process of integrating and directing the activities of members of a given society towards the realisation of certain tasks or goals. An important element of the mobilisation process is making individuals willing to act and concentrate on certain areas of social life. As Amitai Etzioni described it, using social energy is the sociological equivalent of physicists using nuclear power. When it is released in an explosion, it becomes the most destructive power we know. However, when it is released gradually and is used to serve humankind, it becomes the most potent tool. A similar situation takes place in the case of social mobilisation. According to Etzioni, there is enough energy hidden in social molecules and communities to make the realisation of certain values possible.<sup>15</sup>

For the social mobilisation process to start, the circumstances that a given society exists in have to be interpreted by this society as conducive to change or forcing this change to happen. If we decide to consider the economic transformations which have taken place in Northern Europe since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we cannot overlook the historical context of these transformations. It was the time when ores from the New World started to pour into the continent, which made the standard of living in the south of Europe start to rise. The demand for consumer goods, which had been brought from Asia until then, grew significantly. After the trade routes were interrupted by the invasions of Turkish tribes, the situation changed. There was a market niche that countries from Northern Europe could fill. Due to the fact that the whole continent was struggling with a demographic crisis at that time, basing economic production on the brutal exploitation of people became impossible. Thus, the countries in Northern Europe faced new possibilities and challenges. Filling the economic niche was possible only by initiating the process of mobilisation and using this process to create a new way of organising economic life.<sup>16</sup>

Specific social norms, which eventually contributed to the formation of what Weber called asceticism, played an important role in this undertaking. I understand the idea of a norm as a behavioural pattern that is desired and expected in a given society. Initiating and maintaining social mobilisation largely depends on defining normative regulations – regulations that will discipline individuals (strictly speaking, discipline the social roles played by an individual) – as well as focus an individual's activities, which had been dispersed before, on specific areas of social life. From the evolutionary perspective, these kinds of norms can result in the fulfilment of values important for a society or make the society adapt to new circumstances more easily. The norms that are more useful in this situation replace the norms that make the achievement of goals more difficult or even completely impossible.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A. Etzioni, *Aktywne społeczeństwo*, Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos", Kraków 2012, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. A. Anievas, K. Nisancioglu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2015; N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Penguin Books Ltd., London 2011; J. Goody, op. cit.; D. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Countries Are So Rich and Some So Poor*, Norton & Company, London – New York 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. R. Axelrod, *An Evolutionary Approach to Social Norms*, "The American Political Science Review" 1986, Vol. 80, No. 4, pp. 1095–1111; E. Mohlin, *Internalized Social Norms in Conflicts: An Evolutionary Approach*, "Economics of Governance" 2010, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 169–181; E. Ostrom, *Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms*, "Journal of Economic Perspectives" 2000, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 137–158.

It is worthwhile looking at this process from the perspective of an individual. In the situation of mobilisation, an individual faces the necessity to either adapt to new norms or follow the already existing norms more than before. In other words, a set of desired behavioural patterns that an individual should realise in his or her life is formed. Here it is worthwhile referring to Sigmund Freud, who in his work entitled *Civilisation and its discontents* concentrated on this process of disciplining which, in his opinion, demonstrated itself in the transformation of the pleasure principle into the reality principle. This transformation covers various phenomena that put pressure on individuals so they eventually move from immediate satisfaction of needs to postponing them, from having pleasure to restraint, from rejoicing and having fun to hardship and labour. Although Freud was inclined to claim that this kind of phenomenon is typical for the formation of culture as such, the process he described significantly intensifies in the period of mobilisation – when efforts and deferring gratification become more important.<sup>18</sup>

At the level of a social role, the process of mobilisation demonstrates itself in the fact that the behavioural patterns consistent with the norms replace the behavioural patterns inconsistent with these norms or are neutral towards them. I have presented this phenomenon in the scheme below. The squares represent social roles. Within each role, a repertoire of potential behavioural patterns typical for this role can be distinguished (the smaller squares). In the situation of mobilisation, this repertoire is redefined. Behavioural patterns that are consistent with elaborated and effective normative regulations (black squares) start to appear within the repertoire typical of a given role more and more often.

Scheme 1. The process of disciplining the social role



Let's relate these deliberations to the Protestant ethic described by Weber. Considering the normative regulations typical of this ethic, the German scholar noticed that they had contributed to the creation of an ascetic way of life manifested mainly in a professional activity. Here one starts to wonder: when does mobilisation imply such a kind of asceticism and when it does not? We can assume that it is more probable to experience an ascetic lifestyle when: (a) there are many norms that individuals have to follow and (b) the society demands that the discrepancies between desired and actual behavioural patterns are as small as possible. As a result of the Reformation, not only did the number of obligations, as such, turn out to be large, but the pressure to meet these obligations became much more important.

<sup>18</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Martino Publishing, Mansfield Centre [1930] 2010.

#### 4. Intermediate mechanisms

An important role in this process of disciplining individuals, which is characteristic of the social mobilisation process, is played by intermediary mechanisms. They intermediate between the norm and the behaviour realised by an individual. At the same time, they increase the probability that an individual will follow the patterns that are socially desired. Thus, while the norms function in an individual's mind as cognitive representations of how an individual should behave in a given situation, the indicated mechanisms result in specific motivation and interpretation schemes that strengthen an individual's belief that following the norms is justified and beneficial. Among those mechanisms, I distinguished discursive strategies and social sanctions. Let's look at them closely and consider how they influenced the way that individuals functioned in the process of mobilisation initiated by the Reformation.

Discursive strategies should be understood as different kinds of actions formed by symbolic elites that present themselves in the form of narrations, myths or argumentations. They put pressure on the members of a given society to make them adjust to the norms necessary for initiating and maintaining mobilisation. Within the strategies defined in this way, many different actions can be defined. These include narrations based on the social categorisation process. In the social mobilisation process it becomes necessary to create a new social identity which would make a given *ingroup* clearly stand out in contrast to other important *outgroups* (reference groups).<sup>19</sup> A significant role in this process of differentiating a group from its social surroundings is played by these social norms, which at the same time turn out to be functionally important for the mobilisation as such. By following these regulations, members of an *ingroup* not only emphasise their individuality, but they also interpret it in such a way that allows them to gain or maintain high self-esteem. This process is accompanied by the narrations that place an individual's life or a society's history in a wider perspective.<sup>20</sup> These kinds of actions can be found in the Calvinist doctrine, mainly in the concept of predestination, where distinguishing the redeemed from the damned becomes important.

Another kind of strategy is to create role models – specific ideal types that are an example to follow for members of a given society. They personify all these behaviours that are expected in the mobilisation process.<sup>21</sup> In the case of the Protestant ethic, a role model was a real Puritan who spent his day working, who expected a lot from himself and who avoided pleasures. In order to convince the members of a society that this model can be achieved, and to authenticate the narrations created by symbolic elites, individuals who match this model to the highest degree are identified and glorified.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, *An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict* [in:] *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. W.G. Austin, S. Worchel, Brooks & Cole, Monterey 1979; M.A. Hogg, J.C. Turner, *Intergroup behaviour, self-stereotyping and the salience of social categories*, "British Journal of Social Psychology" 1987, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 325–340; A.S. Haslam, S.D. Reicher, M.J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power*, Psychology Press, New York 2011.

<sup>20</sup> K.J. Reynolds, E. Subašić, K. Tindall, *The Problem of Behaviour Change: From Social Norms to an Ingroup Focus*, "Social and Personality Psychology Compass" 2015, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 45–56.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. D. Wälczak-Duraj, Ład etyczny w gospodarce rynkowej. *Doświadczenia polskiej transformacji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2002, pp. 23–25.

Apart from discursive strategies, an important role in the mobilisation process is played by social sanctions. From the behavioural point of view, they are responsible for correcting an individual's behaviours to make them as consistent with the norms developed by the whole society as possible. Sanctions play the role of strengthening or aversive impulses, they consolidate actions consistent with the accepted regulations and they eliminate the unwanted ones. The social mobilisation process in a given society runs smoothly when the system of these sanctions is: (a) efficient (e.g.: when rewards for an individual are actual gratifications); (b) fair (when expected behaviours are rewarded and the unwanted ones punished); (c) transparent (when it consists of understood and commonly known principles); (d) stable (when it is lasting and not subject to frequent changes).<sup>22</sup> When this system malfunctions, even convincing discursive strategies are not able to keep the members of a society highly involved. Destroying the former social structure, which was based on assigned positions and characterised by significant distances between particular segments of a society, and replacing it with a more egalitarian structure whose source of control was no longer exclusively the rulers but all members of society, had a huge impact on the effectiveness of the mobilisation process initiated by the Reformation.<sup>23</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

The main objective behind my deliberations was an attempt to prove that the Protestant ethic analysed by Weber is a set of specific normative regulations that discipline individuals and concentrate their activities on work as well as concurrent intermediate mechanisms that take the form of theological explanations (e.g.: the concept of predestination) and social sanctions that increase the chance of Protestant believers to follow these regulations. In other words, Weber considered universal mechanisms responsible for social mobilisation but he eventually focused on the specific exemplification of this process.

The other descriptions of this process can be found in many narrations, including those that are particularly important for our culture. After all, the Jews leaving the house of bondage is nothing more than social mobilisation. While in Egypt, as presented in the Bible, the Jews were a community of slaves, passive even when the Pharaoh ordered the killing of all Jewish boys. It was thanks to their time in the desert, strictly speaking thanks to the laws (normative regulations) they received from God at that time, that they became a group of winners that conquered the Holy Land. What makes some social mobilisations end in success though? It seems that a chance for the socially desired objectives to be achieved increases when a given society: (a) manages to develop normative regulations that increase individuals' productivity in specific areas of social life; (b) the number of these regulations is adequate – in the sense that following them does not strain members

<sup>22</sup> Ł. Kutyło, *Rola systemu gratyfikacji w akumulacji kapitału normatywnego. Rozważania w oparciu o opinie formułowane przez Polaków i Ukraińców*, "Humanizacja Pracy" 2016, Vol. 284, No. 2, pp. 13–32.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic Thesis in Analytical and Comparative Context*, "Diogenes" 1967, Vol. 59, pp. 25–56; S. Andreski, *Maxa Webera olśnienia i pomyłki*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAN, Warszawa 1992, p. 176.

of the society too much; (c) there are convincing discursive strategies that not only propagate desired behavioural patterns but also provide the sense of meaning; (d) there is an effective system of social sanctions that reinforces behaviours consistent with these regulations and eliminates those that are undesirable for mobilisation; (e) there is a coherence between the regulations obligatory in an individual's social environment and those that are necessary for initiating and maintaining the indicated process. When a given society is organised in this way, only then does it have a chance to fulfil its values completely.

To conclude, it would be worthwhile considering the practical implications of the position I have presented here. Despite the fact that the example of social mobilisation discussed in this article, initiated during the Reformation and visible in Northern Europe, had a spontaneous character to a large extent, its identified mechanisms can also be applied during the process of planning social and economic processes or developing certain solutions and public interventions. It is highlighted by some scholars who suggest that economic organisations are able to achieve an advantage on the market by developing and popularising among its members such norms that seem to be conducive to achieving the objectives formulated by these organisations. In their opinion, it is a set of norms and not the organisational culture which had thus far been discussed in the literature that is a deciding factor in an organisation's success. What speaks in favour of that is mainly the fact that norm systems can undergo dynamic changes which also have an influence on the organisational culture.<sup>24</sup> In this case, norms are the social equivalent of biological genes – they determine not only individual behaviours but also the shape of whole social structures.<sup>25</sup>

What is important is that the possibilities connected with applying the mechanisms that are part of social mobilisation reach much further, and it is impossible to limit them to economic matters. For example, one can imagine applying them in the situation when the community's objective is protection of the environment. Achieving this objective will depend on developing proper norms and intermediary mechanisms that give an individual's behaviour some sense and enforce the following of these norms. This problem becomes the focus of attention for Robert Cialdini and his colleagues. They managed to observe that following certain norms (e.g.: 'you should not litter') depended on the context (the more littered the environment is, the more likely that an individual will also litter) but also on the way the norms were defined by the community.<sup>26</sup> It can be assumed that mechanisms responsible for communicating these mechanisms, as well as the community's pressure to follow these norms, play an important role here.<sup>27</sup> As can be seen, re-

<sup>24</sup> M.W. Morris, Y. Hong, Ch. Chiu, Z. Liu, *Normology: Integrating insights about social norms to understand cultural dynamics*, "Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes" 2015, Vol. 129, pp. 1–13.

<sup>25</sup> Due to the fact that social roles are never precisely defined and give space to a certain freedom of interpreting the norms social roles consist of, there are – using the language of evolutionist theories – certain normative regulation "mutations" occurring. They often give a community an opportunity to adapt to the changing conditions better (as long as these 'mutations' are identified and spread).

<sup>26</sup> R.B. Cialdini, R.R. Reno, C.A. Kallgren, *A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 1990, Vol. 58(6), pp. 1015–1026.

<sup>27</sup> M.K. Lapinski, R.N. Rimal, *An Explication of Social Norms*, "Communication Theory" 2005, Vol. 15(2), pp. 127–147.

constructing the process discussed in this article has not only a theoretical meaning. The conclusions can help a given community leave the house of bondage regardless of what this bondage refers to and how it is defined.

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