Summary. The aim of the study is to show the role of culture in constructing human rights and translating them from theory to practice. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Western world seemed to unite, the differences between the developing West and the East that had been functioning behind the Iron Curtain, began to disappear. However, on September 11, 2001 new problems and cultural differences revealed themselves. It became clear, that - despite globalization - the world is not becoming the same. There are divisions that exclude security, so important for maintaining the status quo. Human rights established after the Second World War function well only in theory, and in practice there are many examples that question the effectiveness of these laws. One of them is the current refugee crisis. The article shows the role of art, and more specifically reportage photography, which is giving the voice to the Other, who needs help and can effectively speak to the social worlds, bringing the history of a particular person/group closer, revealing what connects us culturally.

Keywords: the Other, human rights, cultural studies

I was born after the fall of the Berlin Wall – meaning that I am a child of the first generation of a new Poland, a new Europe, a new world. And a different world, because it seemed that it had just overcome decades of antagonism: a world in which the division into the West, developed in terms of the economy and civilisation, and the
East, which in many respects was backward, had come to an end, or at least every-
thing was well on the way to that being the case. The wind of change had blown,
Europe had united, the wall had fallen and the iron curtain had tumbled down; uni-
fication ensued.

At that time, the generation of today's twenty-somethings did not realise the
gravity of this turning point. Children's lives back then revolved around their hous-
ing estates, their schools, perhaps nearby localities where their relatives lived – but
that was already a world away. Of course, thanks to school, television and talk be-
tween adults, information reached them thanks to which they acquired some kind
of perception of the place and time in which they lived. It was not that everything
together gave the impression of paradise, but it was a rather positive one. The cir-
cumstances seemed auspicious, filling one with hope, relegating the still fresh but
now bygone catastrophes of the 20th century – world wars and bloody regimes –
into the past. People would say we were now living in a free Poland, that the world
had opened and we were moving closer together. As the years passed there were
more and more changes in the quality and pace of life; we were seeing ever larger
televisions, computers and mobile telephones; we were travelling abroad on holi-
day more often; numerous, diverse products could be bought in the shops. The first
generation of the new Poland only had a feeling that everything was happening
quite rapidly, but after all there was nothing to compare it to. Adults made them re-
alise that they were changes, as that is how they talked about it. Everything seemed
to be heading in the right direction, as if after a period of difficulty everybody was
experiencing relief.

In September 2001, thanks to the new generation of televisions, there was this
bizarre film you could watch, the same on every channel – where two skyscrap-
ers standing one next to the other were gradually engulfed in billowing clouds of
smoke. The picture changed, the solemn face of a presenter filling the screen. It
was no film. Reports had just come in of the attack on the World Trade Center. Not
only children found it hard to believe that this was no fiction. People realised that
something extremely important was happening, there was a sense of fear, perhaps
due to mentions of possible war. It turned out that there was not just one world
after all, just one point of view, one rationale, that by no means were we all finally
safe and close together; that since somebody had been wronged, somebody else
acknowledged that this was how it should be for some reason. It was shown all too
clearly that there were differences of which people were unaware, evidently suffi-
ciently significant to challenge security, something that should after all be guaran-
teed, that was something so obvious that it had not even been given any thought.
The widespread shock that accompanied these events showed that a scenario had
just unfolded that nobody had ever even taken into account, its realisation arousing terror, outrage, a sense of injustice and disbelief.

This is just my private recollection from childhood, based on the logic of an 11-year-old. However, I realise that my surprise regarding what had happened, and the discovery that numerous different rationales existed, was shared then by the whole world. All of a sudden we all realised that there could exist such divisions that ruled out peace and security. A question that emerged was where one could look for this accord, and whether it could be found at all?

Communication in the modern world –

a series of severances

Over fifteen years have passed since that day. Fifteen years of dynamic change, influenced then and now by, among other things, factors related to globalisation.¹ On the one hand, globalisation is causing communities to interconnect ever more, to be “closer” to one another; a significant role is played here by the economy, which whether wanted or not entangles distant groups in connections of an economic nature. On the other hand, countries are by no means blending²: despite the growing dependencies, the opposite is happening – and it is far from rare for countries to isolate themselves, superpowers are gaining primacy at the cost of smaller countries, and in particular at the cost of various minorities of no significance at all on the political stage or, even worse, becoming pawns in others’ games. Of key importance for this state of affairs is communication, which in today’s world is under question. This applies to both intra-cultural communication and – above all – inter-cultural; a given community as such may have a sense of well-being, while simultaneously being in conflict with its neighbours. Needless to say, one can talk of significant progress in communication, largely made possible thanks to technology. Whereas until recently communication was less frequent and on a smaller scale, today it is relentless. Yet this is not a clear-cut issue. Paradoxically, despite the progress in communication, the lack of dialogue in key, fundamental issues is still a problem. This in turn is leading towards a radicalisation of attitudes and the negation of human rights, which today are the fundamental condition for communication. The world is simultaneously fusing and disbanding before our very eyes. Despite the dynamic growth and ever tighter connections, ideas that until recently seemed credible (democracy, the

¹ Z. Bauman, Globalizacja: i co z tego dla ludzi wynika, Warszawa 2006.
free market, multiculturalism) are collapsing. Withdrawal from these projects is frequently happening because of emotional stimuli, while there is an avoidance of rational critique or confrontation, and thereby discussion, which would be capable of at least creating the possibility for negotiating problems. There are plenty of examples of such communicative severances, the freshest and most important of which for us today is the refugee issue – which we shall tackle later in these deliberations. In the meantime, having taken a brief look at the changes that have taken place over these past 15 years, one can ask the question of whether an attack on the World Trade Center today would be equally as shocking. This is doubtful, if only because it would not be a situation without precedence. In today’s world, terrorist attacks do not often have a mass character, but they do occur sufficiently often for news about them to still be harrowing; however, no longer does such news shock, it does not come as a surprise. Both the fact that today the attack of 11 September would meet with a different reaction, and the enormous number of situations in which universal security is threatened and human rights are broken, leads to rather cheerless conclusions. For a start, it indicates a break in communication and the absence of dialogue. Secondly, situations that should not occur at all are beginning to be generally perceived as commonplace. Perhaps this is happening because we are usually dealing with a general, abstract problem. Attacks occur in some distant place, human rights are broken in faraway lands. Those of us in safety see on the screens images and numbers, the scale of which does not \textit{de facto} matter. What gets through is the facts, and only the facts. As such, the level of involvement in situations of this type is much lower, if it is there at all; the problems seem distant. Nobody is recounting tales of them, or the stories are not being listened to, yet they are what reveals not only the whole but also the detail. They facilitate interpretation, the recreation of the context, a deeper ingress into somebody’s world. They create the space for potential dialogue. Situations more concrete than abstract, and details and contexts more than general outlines, make this possible.

This paper aims to raise the issue of human rights and dialogue in contemporary communication. My deliberations focus on what is moving us away from this, and what enables a move closer to these requirements. This introduction followed childhood memories of the attack on the World Trade Center, the culmination of which will be a presentation of the remaining part of the paper. And so, what comes next is a presentation of the individual story of one specific person in the context of human rights issues and searching for ways to grant the Other a voice, so as to be heard and understood. Then comes a reconstruction of the factors contributing to shaping the idea of human rights, how this idea has functioned over the past century, and its contemporary reception, based on examples of these rights not being
observed. The final section of the paper contains an attempt to diagnose the causes behind such a state of affairs, and the conclusion is reached in the character of dialogue, by default also presenting the role of the culture expert as an interpretative researcher reaching these contexts. And now it is time for a more specific focus.

Coming up against the concrete

Le is 30 years old, and comes from Vietnam. This spring he is taking walks around Poznań, smiling and carefree, with a backpack — just like a tourist. He sits on a bench, looks around, glances at the buildings and observes passers-by. It’s a warm, sunny morning, so he pushes up his sleeves, unveiling tattoos on his arms: Vietnamese boats, aphorisms in English, and theosophical symbols. He explains what is what, and why it is important to him. Asked about his impressions, he praises the city, starting with the living conditions, then the beauty of the Polish women, and ending with the weather. He had been to Warsaw earlier; later, when he’s had enough, he’ll go maybe to Berlin or Barcelona, or perhaps somewhere else. It isn’t a problem for him, he works remotely, and is a freelancer who makes a good living. Normally he lives in Norway, but there’s not enough sun or people there, hence his travels. Probed about how long ago he left Vietnam and why, he begins talking about the brutish regime, brain-washing, his own activism and the repression that followed. Ultimately events led to rather a tragic paradox: currently Le can be practically anywhere in the world but cannot return to his home country, even though this is what he would most like to do. In a sense he is simultaneously a tourist and a refugee, but the lifestyle he has chosen makes him a kind of modern-day nomad, attaching to communities but only for a moment, usually roaming on his own, no longer in search of food or better living conditions. Le is in search rather of ideas, whether eastern or western, from which he shapes his outlook, attempting as he does to have a life as satisfactory as possible, bearing his political and private situation in mind. But he is a wanderer — and in this sense is a victim.

Conversation with Le leads to three conclusions: firstly, that human rights are being broken all the time in the world, and this is a fact. Secondly, that these rights are an abstraction, which one is induced to ponder over more than anything else by an encounter or even a clash with something concrete. Thirdly, culture both moves one further away from them, and brings one closer. Understood as an ideational

3 Le is under so-called “supplementary protection.” For more on forms of protection for refugees and immigrants, http://uchodzcy.info/infos/pojecia-i-definicje/ [17.07.2017].
sphere, a collection of attitudes, models and values, culture in this case is a source of difference, although it also demonstrates a unifying function. These theses are proved later in the essay, supplemented with an analysis of photography as a medium bringing concrete individual stories closer to the onlooker. Classic texts also prove helpful, as too do widely known photographs, photograph-symbols – which is by no means a haphazard choice.

To care about the Other

The story of the refugee from Vietnam, involving facts though also based on a subjective narrative, is probably better than scientific papers at generating awareness of the issues related to that country’s communist regime. Human rights are violated in Le’s home country, but it is not the only place where they are not respected. Perhaps they do not really exist, are no more than a kind of grandiloquent construct, an idea not reflected in reality? Or – to be less radical – a project that has only been realised piecemeal. As a shared dream of humankind, of preventing conflict and enabling a fusion between diverse communities, they have become something of a double-edged sword – the need arises for creating regulations that help us protect cultural otherness, while on the other hand because of the factor of difference they cannot become something universal. The other person is a separate, distinct being. “From the point of view of this assumption, it is indeed incomprehensible that I may care about what is absolutely beyond-Me, meaning an Other Person,” deduces Lévinas, yet attempting to find a justification for taking this Other into consideration. He propounds the demand for an ethical encounter between Faces, which is possible thanks to existing for the Other. Wojciech Kalaga considers such a solution insufficient; in his opinion, within every Other resides their Other, and therefore a Third. Although it is the Other who shows the world from a different perspective, thereby broadening it, such a binary approach differentiates more than it connects. The fact that the source of our identity resides within the Other gives rise to certain obligations towards the latter – Kalaga asserts, proposing that being for or with should be replaced by “being through the Other,” appealing at the same time for this obligation to be shared, as otherwise “blind concern for the Other will turn into indifference towards the Third.”

Eliminating double ethics in favour of an ontological co-dependency of numerous selves is ultimately a unifying idea, but theory – irrespective of its justification – is frequently out of line with practice. After all, human beings as monads are at times uninterested in Another whom they encounter, not to mention those who do not create his ontic situation directly and tangibly. In relating this to the issues touched upon here, it turns out once again that the idea of human rights cannot be achieved universally and comprehensively. However, this does not mean that one should desist from making such attempts; on the contrary, human rights are a solemn matter both locally and in global conditions. After all, the fact that there is no promise that the project as a whole will achieve general success does not make it impossible or even relieve one of the obligation to make efforts towards achieving even a part of it. Art has proved helpful on many an occasion here, serving both artists and social activists. The term *homo aestheticus* seems to suggest that art is something universal, and humans are aesthetic beings sensitive to beauty and capable of carrying out and receiving a creative act. Because of this, artistic works draw attention and can induce one to consider diverse issues, and so also human rights. In this respect it is precisely photography that is probably the most suggestive; a story does not get through to everybody. In bell hooks’ opinion, “talking about the Other frequently erases, reduces”, is the speech of one who hears out the Other to be found in the margins, is autocratic. Hooks invites one to enter this margin, constituting a space of resistance, but thanks to that also a place of supportive action.

**A picture of the Other**

In this case, photography is a certain kind of comment regarding the Other and in this Other’s name. Of course the author’s intention is also significant; sometimes a photograph is created with a particular purpose in mind, at other times it is the work of chance – but for the requirements of the deliberations here, the most important thing is the reception of photographs that manage brilliantly to encapsulate in a single frame the story of a person or even an age, an era. Response to the most shocking or expressive photographs is a result of how they appeal to the attitudes and emotions of the entity interpreting them. Seen from a specific point of view, they strike at cultural models and values, constituting material proof that a particular situation – whether nearby or even the most distant – really has happened, that it

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occurred to somebody and somebody else saw and documented it. This is precisely where one can observe the unifying role of culture, how artistic works that have come into being due to their creator’s attitude then reach a recipient, and what that entails – that by striking the latter’s attitudes they make potential involvement possible. Didi-Huberman declared that by no means does photography present what is most important. If a photograph encourages one to ponder over what is beyond the frame – then that is good. The photograph-symbols referred to above undoubtedly provide food for thought, they provoke questions about what kind of situation they are a fragment of. If they are unable to actually change somebody’s life (although that also happens sometimes), they do prompt one to reflect, they evoke discussion, and they are a potential stimulus for taking action. Obviously this is not about photographing every individual or collective misfortune; such activity, carried out under pressure, would probably not bring about the expected result, while the condition of credibility would be put into question. However, it is worthy realising that we owe a great deal in this matter to art, and in this case photography – and this is not restricted to artistic, documentary or journalistic photography. This is one of those cases when technological advancement not only does not threaten human empowerment, but enables its protection, while the technical-utilitarian realm also

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functions as a medium for values whose common sharing makes it possible to create the kind of normative convictions that allow for the integration of different communities in global conditions. However, without examples to back them up, these contemplations would in themselves be contradictory, and thus it is time to move on to the photographs. Due to the multitude of images which could be significant for the issue tackled here, and treated as universally known, the choice falls on three photographs: (1) a world-famous photograph from Le’s country, (2) a significant photograph for Poland’s situation in the times of communism, and (3) a contemporary image relating to an issue of importance in Europe today.

Photo 1 presents escapees from a Vietnamese village bombarded by mistake. The photograph would not be so harrowing if not for the nakedness of the girl burned with napalm. Picture 2 was taken the day after the imposition of Martial Law in Poland. The expressiveness of this photograph is extraordinary; a single
frame captures by chance objects that together create a symbol for the entire era. Photograph 3 was awarded first prize in the World Press Photo 2016. In the picture, a Syrian refugee passes a baby through barbed-wire fencing, and outstretched arms on the other side carry the baby into Hungary. The three photographs above differ from one another; the first tells a collective story, but one that is also individual – and it was to prove effective in just such dimensions. When the photograph spread around the world people became aware of the cruelty of the military intervention in Vietnam. A storm ensued, and the pressure of public opinion contributed to the ending of the conflict in the Far East. Within all of this are the trials and tribulations of the napalm girl; the fact that she was in the frame practically saved her life, and even determined how her later fortunes unfolded. The photo Apocalypse Now does not portray an individual tragedy; in it, one sees simply a building, an armoured vehicle in front of it, and a group of people, largely soldiers. But bearing in mind the context, that the building is a cinema bearing a highly meaningful name, that it just happened to be screening Coppola’s Apocalypse Now then, that communist forces are parked in front of the building, and that the date on which the picture was taken was probably the day of greatest uncertainty in the history of the Polish People’s Republic, then we have a picture documenting Martial Law in a Poland oppressed by the communist regime. Taken to the West, it reflected the spirit of the events unfolding beyond the Iron Curtain. And finally the most recent of the three photographs – out of focus and technically imperfect, it nevertheless was acknowledged as the most important photograph of 2015. Regardless of one’s stance on the mass
migration of peoples into Europe, the photograph (as well as its title suggested by the person who took it, and determining how it is interpreted), limited to showing faces, arms, the baby and the barbed wire, probably better reflects the refugees’ situation than the statistics or political disputes served to the public.

A more profound, more detailed analysis of these photographs is not about to follow; after all, their meaning depends largely on the viewer. This is a kind of case study devoid of words. As Susan Sontag asserts, a photograph’s reception is determined by the one looking at it, and from what perspective. The onlooker’s experience and the moral, political or cultural attitudes they represent are what matters here. “Photographs unveiling certain spheres of misfortune, the existence of which we had no suspicions, will not affect public opinion if they do not encounter an appropriate configuration of feelings and attitudes”.9 The question therefore is: where does the success, or perhaps rather the effectiveness, lie in photograph-symbols? For some reason they become significant, important and popular; they attract universal interest. They are tied to specific historical situations, they grasp the spirit of an era, the specifics of a given event. For this reason they are understandable, and that is why they affect the recipient. Conjecture regarding how these photographs will function 50, 100, or 150 years from now will only be speculation. Perhaps this is where the crux lies; photography allows one to capture and immobilise what is happening in the here and now, thanks to which it is credible and authentic. Insight into the experiences of Others, various, distinct and separate, whose experience fits as it were within the perspective of our lives or a nearby story, allows in a certain sense for the creation of a community of fate, if only in terms of perceptions. In this case, it refers to the sphere of feelings, emotions and emotional attitudes. But what can one relate to in a cultural perspective when talking about human rights, such as not to embed them economically (and so instrumentally) or from a legal angle (as fears of sanction), if not to the sphere of those values that make us human?

From the concrete to the abstract

People are moved by the story of Le or of the protagonists in the above photos (or the groups that they represent) because they focus on the individual. But what happens when individuals are no longer in view, and a development takes on a mass scale? Human rights seem essential if there is to be talk of any guarantors of safety in today’s globalising world. So how in that case to ensure that not only the idea of human rights exists, but so too the actual rights sensu stricto and such that their

power is binding and not purely declarative? It is obvious that they are something necessary and essential for every person, to protect their empowerment, and it is also in our common interest to have them as a guarantor of stability and a tool for protecting the weaker from the stronger. Human rights are a legal construct in force practically all over the world – and everywhere they are the same. So can one speak of their universality? Unfortunately, researchers of culture have to be aware that these rights are not universal, as there are no cultural universals in which the West now wants to believe, particularly since World War II.

The conflict of 1939-1945 and the bloody regimes related to it constitute the greatest catastrophes of the 20th century, exposing the issue of human rights and entailing unprecedented examples of their violation in the form of crimes against humanity. What happened during the events directly connected to the World War II casts doubt on legal solutions, and especially the understanding of human rights in the trend of legal positivism. The thinkers in this movement did not take the factor of place into account, and in this context the problem of human rights and the rights of universal validity is raised. In order to shed some light on the specifics of the impasse faced by legislators in the face of the 20th-century cataclysms, it is worth using a concrete example, and citing one of the greatest philosophers of those times – Hannah Arendt – presenting the casus of Alfred Eichmann. Arendt describes his story in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, focusing above all on the trial of one of the biggest criminals of Nazi Germany, held in 1961 in Jerusalem. Arendt’s work can be analysed on numerous planes, but here the most important is the problem of the law according to which Eichmann acted. Accused of and condemned for crimes against humanity, during his active service for the Third Reich Eichmann carried out his actions in keeping with the law. Besides, this was one of the arguments he raised most often, proving that he carried out his actions based on commands given by his superiors. An enormous part of Eichmann’s ventures did indeed proceed in just such a manner. Eichmann acted pursuant to the law in force in the Germany of the day. However, if one were to take into account actions carried out on the command of superiors or the state’s legal acts, then one would be unable to accuse not only Eichmann, but even Hitler himself. Considering the losses, the gigantic number of victims and all the horrors the Nazis were responsible for, that would bear all the signs of dismal absurdity and would violate one’s elementary sense of justice. History has proven the impossibility of such a state of affairs, but has nevertheless significantly illuminated the issue of the rights of universal validity and the urgent necessity to reflect on this in the

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context of the events of the 20th century in the face of the dynamic transformations that the world was facing. Before World War II there was no discussion regarding the legal standards considered in this article; people were assumed to be decent, and to know how they should (not) behave.

In the 1940s, when legal positivism was doubted, an urgent need arose for the establishment of rights intended to protect every person, irrespective of the place and regardless of the political system. This attempt could not be based on legal currents that had proved a disappointment, and neither could it be based on natural law. This was because the latter, according to its proponents, is common to all cultures, thanks to which, even despite the differences that occur, it links all people, and as such also determines certain universal rules of conduct. Those favouring law thus understood are of the opinion that certain universal circumstances exist which allow for law to be derived, and their source may be nature *per se*, divine will, reason, or an innate sense of justice and morality. Natural law is lasting and unchanging, and is a bearer of autonomous, universal values, and above all – takes precedence over any positive law. It is essentially constructed on ethical motives, and ethics cannot be decreed. Even if one assumes that somebody’s duties related to human rights have their origins in, for example, divine will, one cannot expect that they will also be extended to those who negate religious systems and the very existence of God. This brings to mind an absurd situation where during a street fight we would expect the brawlers to abide by specified rules.

International organisations were therefore established, their purpose being to watch over human rights. This responsibility was placed with the western world – and it was the West as the centre,11 as the stronger, that was burdened with the obligation of engaging in dialogue regarding human rights. The United Nations, the Council of Europe, and in later years also the European Court of Human Rights were the organs to which the job of tending to peace and national security, and thereby also the implementation of human rights, was transferred. The establishment of organisations of this type was an important step, and provided grounds for believing that the events that took place during the Second World War would not be repeated. The West wanted to believe in the propagation of human rights, while the post-war history of western civilisation was shaped largely by Nuremburg and the trials for crimes against humanity. For obvious reasons, the idea of multiculturalism emerged, and it seemed to be an idea that was possible to turn into reality.

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Human rights in practice

Following the Second World War the idea of human rights seemed promising, an idea with a future. However, voices of criticism are being raised, emphasising than human rights are a creation of Western thought, and are also a construct created from the victors' point of view. And, as Hitler pointed out, nobody judges the victors. They judge the losers, and Eichmann's trial is the best example of this. Critics also point out that it is absurd to believe in the universal right to happiness (Kołakowski)\(^\text{12}\) and that human rights cause a blurring of the sense of obligation, a decline in responsibility (Osiatyński).\(^\text{13}\) To some extent, the critics would seem to be right – the winners established human rights and appointed the organisations responsible for them. But they made exceptions for themselves – and the fight between systems shifted to the so-called Third World. One could multiply examples of conflicts in which the civilian population has suffered – Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Northern Africa et cetera. Then the problem did not affect the West directly, while the only important issue that needed considering was whether international organisations should intervene and whether one could get involved in situations where wrong was being done to certain countries or ethnic groups. The matter seems relatively clear when talking of cases where there is evident evil at work, when there is an evil-doer intent on doing evil. The matter becomes more complicated when this evil is something the community, and even the wrongdoers, are unaware of. This is where researchers of culture can help, assisting in recreating the context, helping to understand the situation, to see it from the inside.\(^\text{14}\) Although international law, as well as one's moral obligation towards the Other whose rights are violated, tells one that as observers we should do all in our power to help the latter, we frequently do too little, examples of which could be both the conflicts listed above, and the situation Europe is affected by directly today: the refugee crisis.

In the meantime, the problem is serious. In 2013 the refugee population topped 50 million for the first time since World War II, with 86% of these people living in developing countries. Two years later and almost two thousand people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. Such a situation is of course the result of conflicts of diverse backgrounds, but also the passivity of the international community in regard to the suffering of civilians – of which an example could be the plan to help refu-


\(^{13}\) W. Osiatyński, *Prawa człowieka i ich granice*, Kraków 2011.

An Eye on the Other. On Human Rights

Refugees from South Sudan, of which only 11% was financed by the UN. The Geneva Conventions drawn up after World War II also tackled the problem of the status of refugees and established their right to asylum. One hundred and forty-five states ratified the Conventions then. Today asylum is needed by millions of refugees, above all from Syria, but also from Sudan, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and from East Asia. International law guarantees them protection, but in practice they are turned back to the countries they left behind, or placed in makeshift refugee camps, where they wait in suspension for months for the opportunity to begin a new life. Poland itself has an ambivalent attitude towards refugees; Ukrainians are taken in, persons from Africa or the Middle East tend not to be. Regardless of specific entities' attitude towards the refugee issue, it is clear that international law only ensures their protection in theory. If a particular country is incapable of guaranteeing the protection of human rights within its territory, the international community should intervene. But the peacekeeping forces of the UN are not entering Syria. Organisations established for the purpose of upholding human rights cannot even cope in practice with such small states as Syria or Ukraine, which fall victim to the privileges of the superpowers. Where human rights are concerned, the world is once again facing an impasse.

Conclusion

The reflections so far give little cause for optimism. Nevertheless, although human rights seem little more than an empty slogan, every attempt at elaborating them should be within our common interest. Being generally civilised, the western world is a kind of standard in this area, yet setbacks occur here as well. Western society is the guardian of these standards, but one should take a global perspective, since whereas cases of extreme violation of human rights in Europe and America are isolated, beyond the western world the situation is alarming, and the superpowers are acting beyond any form of control. Although there is no recipe for global success where human rights are concerned, but at least these rights can be constantly negotiated. As such there is a move away from the static towards a dynamic model. The stabilising factor here is culture, whose role is not limited purely to a kind of distributing of meaningful content for the contemporary world in regard to technical and utilitarian knowledge. Culture also functions as a medium for values, the

sharing of which enables the creation of the kind of normative convictions that enable a fusion of differing communities in global conditions. Cultural studies on the other hand is shown here as differentiating and unifying reflection. As a discipline constituting a kind of bridge between different fields in the humanities and allowing one to penetrate the contexts, it investigates not only what links the potential participants to the dialogue, but also what sets them apart. This is important, since contemporary humanity should discern both similarities and differences, and vice versa as well – both differences and similarities. The culture expert seeks what connects communities, and this is important, since in order to intercommunicate (and intercommunicate we must), one has to know not only the superficial touchpoints and what differentiates, but should also become familiar in greater detail, get to know the contexts, so as to understand and grasp that what differentiates does not necessarily have to also divide. There is therefore a call for dialogue, backed by representatives of the social sciences, including culture experts.

The current state of affairs, indicating an urgent need for reflection regarding the issue of human rights, functioning de facto in theory only, has been brought about by the avoidance of dialogue, a retreat from ideas that could not be realised, into a mode eschewing discussion and rational criticism. This is leading to a radicalisation of attitudes and lack of space for debate, because only during the latter is it possible to learn and interpret history, to reconstruct the context. It is precisely because the details of Le’s story are known that people are moved by it. Anonymous refugees on the other hand do not evoke such engagement. In the meantime the appropriate models of political culture, those that encourage dialogue regarding minimum rights, should be created. Only in this way is it possible to make such dialogue really exist, and it is a fundamental condition for human rights, a condition that is obviously insufficient in itself, but which is definitely essential.

**Literature**