

POLISH SOCIOLOGY BETWEEN THE PROJECT OF ORGANISED DEVELOPMENT AND THE IDEA OF A RETURN TO NORMALITY

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Although the turning points in Polish sociology have reflected the turning points in recent Polish history, the discipline also displays an interesting continuity in terms of both its dominant subjects and the public role of sociological knowledge in post-war Poland.

I do not intend to make a comprehensive overview of the achievements of Polish sociology, which are much beyond the scope of one article. Nor do I try to synthesise its successful institutional development (compare Bucholc 2016). After being re-established in post-war Poland, sociology grew into a diverse, multidimensional discipline with its own methodological tradition, theoretical achievements, and strong international standing. For over half a century Polish sociology has been constantly changing, and developing new areas of study, specialties, and schools of thought. For all this time it has been considered a part of the global social science discipline, as Polish scholars have both participated in the development of sociology and their works have contributed to the research and interpretation of contemporary social processes. It is not my aim to reconstruct the history of the sociological field in Poland and analyse its divisions, although I am aware of their existence. I am rather looking for Polish sociology's consistency in its approach and main problems in regard to its primary object: Polish society. I assume some continuity in the way the role of sociology and sociological diagnoses have been perceived in Poland.

Sociology under state socialism (not only in Poland) was focused on problems typical of peripheral modernising societies. The conditions and restrictions of social development continued to be a constant topic of soci-

ological research during the entire post-war period. Comparing the sociological agenda before and after 1989, the dominant problems concern such issues as induced development in a peripheral and backward economy; the role of social engineering; ideas of modernisation, industrialisation, and Westernisation; and shifting social attitudes as a reaction to deep structural change. Interpretations have wavered between the idea of implementing a modernisation project and a search for the specificities of the “Polish way.” There is also an interesting continuity in the public role of sociology. Sociologists in a developing society inevitably participate in the design of transformations and oversee their progress. This creates specific problems for researchers in determining their position in relation to the subject of study.

My intention is to mark some features of successive stages of sociology’s development after the Second World War as seen from today’s perspective. In the beginning, sociology was focused on perception of the communist revolution as a social laboratory. In the 1960s and 1970s, in turn, Polish society underwent enforced industrialisation and urbanisation. In the next decade, studies were dominated by the critical analysis of the communist system in crisis. Finally, after 1989 social scientists started to study the post-communist transformation, which was seen as a “return to normality.” All the time, sociological studies oscillated between the monitoring of project implementation and recording of new grass roots processes. The social roles of sociologists were complex, and went far beyond the purely cognitive, involving questions of responsibility, commitment, and the usefulness of research. The Polish intelligentsia is imbued with the ethos of serving the public; social scientists also defined their motives in these terms.

/// The 1950s: A Social Laboratory of Structural Changes

The first post-war decade saw a profound transformation of Poland’s social reality. Aiming to implement the ideological postulate of “a new order of social justice,” the new authorities introduced systemic reforms, reaching the structural foundations of society. Their ideological goal was to activate the country’s modernisation potential and enable a civilisational leap forward to industrial society. This policy served as a tool for the legitimisation of the new regime, which was imposed by a foreign power. In the first years after the war, the principal objective was to radically intensify and consolidate the transformation of the social structure of traditional rural

society. In line with their ideological and political agenda, communists based their rule on the rhetoric of social revolution. At its core was the postulate of transforming property relations in order to eliminate the “property-owning classes,” mainly entrepreneurs, merchants, and the bourgeoisie, as well as the remnants of the landowning class and aristocracy. The land reform of 1944 and the subsequent nationalisation of trade and industry were followed later by the preferential access of peasant and working-class children to higher education; enforced industrialisation; and expansion of urban industrial centres. One of the direct results of these policies was increased rural-to-urban migration, which came on top of the mass movement of populations after the end of the war, with the border changes and the colonisation of the so-called Western Territories (*Ziemie Zachodnie*). This was followed by changes both in the social structure and in the state of social awareness.

The task for sociologists was to follow these processes. Poland became a social laboratory for radical reforms. The first years were essentially a continuation of the pre-war trends in Polish sociology, both in terms of the focus of studies and of interpretations. According to Jerzy Szacki, “maintaining continuity was all the easier for the fact that sociologists, most of them left-wing, were initially convinced that their expertise could be used in the new socio-political order. In general, they did not seem to experience any cognitive dissonance when confronting their theoretical views developed before the war with the new ‘social demand’ of the new system” (Szacki 1995: 110).¹ The case in point involved mainly a popular pre-war sociological postulate for the social advancement of the lowest social strata, particularly the peasantry. The old diagnosis of the required social reforms was implemented under the new circumstances of the emerging “system of social justice.” The rhetoric of social revolution dominated in the 1950s. Such a revolution seemed likely to increase the possibility of the practical application of sociological expertise, and to improve the prospects for social diagnoses. However, these expectations proved futile following the rapid Sovietisation and ideologisation of all spheres of public life and the domination of Marxism-Leninism after 1948. Sociology in fact ceased to exist as a science. All departments of sociology at Polish universities were liquidated, and sociological studies were stopped for a few years.

The discipline recovered quite quickly after the fall of Stalinism, and one of the most productive periods in Polish sociology started. It assumed a new form in terms of both methodology and modes of conceptualisation.

¹ All translations from Polish are my own.

One of the important factors in this change was the rare openness and international connectedness of Polish sociology. The first trip abroad by a group of Polish sociologists in 1956 was to France, but it was American sociology that had the strongest impact and replaced the Polish pre-war traditions of sociological studies. First established in 1957, contacts between the Ford Foundation and Polish sociologists developed in the years to come, considerably changed the Polish methodological approach, and introduced new methods of research. Such contacts also helped to open new fields of study, such as social psychology; public opinion surveys; the sociology of law, labour and industry; and social engineering (Sulek 2011). Many Polish sociologists, including Marxists, visited American universities, thus contributing to an opening of Marxist sociology to contemporary trends. It also strengthened the influence of non-Marxist sociological theories, which managed to hold their standing until the end of the People's Republic (Mucha & Krzyżowski 2014: 408; Sulek 2007). Poland is perhaps the only country in Eastern Europe where a dogmatic approach to Marxist sociology was avoided. The striving to overcome provincialism and to build a lasting connection with global sociology was strong throughout the post-war decades (Sztompka 1993: 19).

Sociological study at the time was focused on mass-scale phenomena, reflecting the vision that was propagated of the new order – mainly the social advancement of peasants and workers. On the other hand, the disappearance of entire social classes and the social impact of the process did not become a subject of analysis. Indeed, the end of the landowning class was summed up by the observation that “there are no detailed studies because they have not been conducted at all” (Szczepański 1960: 459). A similar silence surrounded the demise of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and entrepreneurs; no particular thought was given to the lasting effects of the Nazi and Soviet policies of extermination or to the post-war nationalisation of trade and industry.

Sociological studies focused on the changes affecting the social categories that were the main target of the ongoing social revolution. New opportunities and changes in the ways of life of young people from rural areas became an important subject of research. The analysis of materials published in the series *Młode pokolenie wsi Polski Ludowej* [The Young Rural Generation of the People's Poland] set a lasting standard of research on the social advancement of the peasantry. The project closely resembled its predecessor from the interwar period, when Józef Chalasiński collected similar materials concerning the trajectories of peasant biographies (compare

Chalasiński 1938). The total of 5,475 texts collected in the 1961–1962 memoir competition enabled a diagnosis revealing a number of new tendencies, such as increasing individualisation and departure from the traditional rural awareness of a collective destiny, the growing value of education, including higher education, and the increasing urbanisation of the culture of the young rural population. This study also showed the increasing spatial, social, and mental mobility of the peasantry, and the beginning of the professionalisation of farming. (Chalasiński 1964, 1967). All these changes had been confirming the postulated trend toward accelerated modernisation of the most traditional social groups. The project of creating a “new man” involved transformation of the young people migrating to urban and industrial centres: “The working class is forming out of new people who have migrated to cities, urban elements – such as domestic servants and the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie – and, first and foremost, the young people of rural and urban background” (Szczepański 1961: 9).

Apart from the emerging working class, sociologists were also interested in the process of forming a new intelligentsia, with a new progressive consciousness and new social tasks, as constructors of social change. This new intelligentsia was supposed to be produced by the opening of higher education. Józef Chalasiński criticised the “ghetto of the intelligentsia” (Chalasiński 1946). He returned to his assessment of the 1930s and characterised the class as an anachronistic by-product of peripheral capitalism which was detrimental to society under the new system. His extensive and vehemently critical study advocated the need for the emergence of a new intelligentsia. But the actual progress of these developments was quite far from what had been postulated and expected:

In Poland, the attempt to create an intelligentsia of the working-class and peasant type has failed. The mass process of growth of the intelligentsia by acquiring higher education has occurred as a result of the traditional aspiration to move on from the working class and the peasantry to the intelligentsia. [...] In the current, transitory phase, the intelligentsia has already lost its former social significance, but has not yet acquired a new one (Chalasiński 1958: 30).

Sociological studies conducted in the 1960s, when the generational change at Polish universities became a frequent subject of research, revealed that over 80% of the population with higher education had received

it after the war and over 50% of first-year students were of peasant or working-class background (Szczepański 1963). One of the more important findings was that “the number of people who [had] migrated from rural areas to urban centres was about 2 million, most of them between 18 and 24 years of age” (Pohoski 1963). The paths of social advancement were also monitored in the following years. By 1967 the proportion of working-class and, particularly, peasant students had declined, which indirectly confirmed the mechanism of the reproduction of the intelligentsia (Kubiak & Kwaśniewicz 1967).

Another effect of change was the new social category of small farmers working in factories and cultivating their land, the so-called peasant-workers (*chłoporobotnicy*), whose number was estimated at 1.5 million. The emergence of the group, which would remain part of the Polish social landscape for decades to come, was assessed as a positive element of modernisation (Turski 1963). In the period, rural sociology became an important discipline producing a large number of texts devoted not only to rural–urban migration, but also to analyses of the social situation. These were generally focused on comparing the current state of affairs with that in the early twentieth century and the interwar period, indicating the progress made in key areas. Sometimes this even involved repeat studies, as was the case of research on the village community of Żmiąca in the south of the country, first conducted by Franciszek Bujak in the early twentieth century and repeated fifty years later (Bujak 1903; Wierzbicki 1963).

Macrostructural analyses indicated the disintegration of the class structure, a process which was in line with the postulated model of a classless socialist society. However, the next decade saw the first observations of a divergence in status factors and a gradual decomposition of the social order of the People’s Poland. These interpretations not only revealed the failure of the project of a communist revolution, but also indicated new, negative phenomena stemming from the reality of “real socialism” (Wesołowski 1975).

/// The 1960s: The Social Effects of Organised Development

The rhetoric of a “social laboratory” gradually subsided and gave way to the paradigm of industrialisation, the key issue discussed at the third Polish Sociological Congress held in 1965 (the first one after the war). This was a time of relative stabilisation and professionalisation of sociology, accompanied by a substantial release of ideological pressure. Marxism was

accepted as a general frame of reference, as socialism was accepted as a political and economic system (Bucholc 2016: 35). Empirical studies were proliferating due to the assumption that Poland was still a place of deep social transformation. Growing methodological competence was an additional factor. The visits of prominent Polish sociologists to research centres such as the Department of Sociology at Columbia University or the Bureau of Applied Social Research helped to introduce new research methods and resulted in the widespread conviction that methodology was the key to “modern” sociology (Sulek 2010: 332).

Industrialisation was approached as a combination of different processes forming the fundamental basis of all the changes and identified as a factor that “made an impact on all current developments in Poland” (Szczepański 1967: 5). It was understood as “a process of developing industry in the countries where it did not exist or was very weak, in the course of which a change occurs from a traditional society to one based on technical civilisation.” The role of sociology was to rationally organise the processes in question (ibid.: 7); there was even a special institution established in 1962 for the purpose – Komitet Badania Regionów Uprzemysławianych [Institute for the Study of Regions Undergoing Industrialisation]. In 1971 it was transformed into the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Science, which exists to this day.

Throughout the communist period in Poland, industrialisation was perceived as the key factor having a constant and paramount influence on society. In fact, it was treated as a synonym with “building socialism,” as it embodied the implementation of the objectives of the system, where accelerated modernisation and closing the economic and infrastructure gap were identified as the main goals. At the time, Polish society was frequently analysed in terms of the product of organised industrialisation, and the positive social effects were considered to outweigh the costs of the process (Sufin 1979). It was not until much later that problems generated by the rapid expansion of industry across the country became apparent. Furthermore, interest in urban studies stemmed from the perception of urbanisation, much like industrialisation, as a vehicle of social development. Drawing on modernisation theory, the transformation of local communities was interpreted as a case of exogenous development induced by centrally planned industrial growth and the expansion of urban cultural patterns promoted by the centralised media. Large-scale studies on urban development were conducted, especially on new forms of housing estates (Jałowiecki 1976; Piotrowski 1966; Turowski 1976, 1979; Ziółkowski 1967).

The research was based on the assumption of almost unlimited possibilities of effective top-down regulations and the vision of a harmonious and conflict-free process of development in a centrally controlled society. Local, homogeneous, and closed communities were seen as anachronistic and to be replaced by vertical forms of organisation. At the same time, new patterns of local integration and cohesion were expected to flourish in industrial towns and cities.

/// The 1970s: The Social Engineering of a Socialist Society

As interpreted toward the end of the 1970s, the changes entered a new phase in which revolutionary methods were no longer justified. State intervention in the economic process might have been necessary at the point of departure, under the circumstances of a backward country “where different developmental barriers make it impossible to break away from the vicious circle of reforms followed by conservative backlash, stagnation and renewed attempts of reforms” (Morawski 1980: 115). However, the situation in which economic transformation reaches a certain level “both allows and requires a departure from the strategy of enforced industrialisation with its typical centralised decision-making system” (ibid.: 123). At that point of development, the control of the social system could be replaced by increased social participation. Over time, the justification for the top-down implementation of the modernisation project weakened significantly.

In the decade of the 1970s, technological progress became an important objective of Polish economic policy, in line with the expected gradual convergence of capitalism and socialism. The idea of a scientific revolution then gained increasing popularity in sociological studies. The role of knowledge in society and the problem of spreading innovation in a technological era appeared on the sociological agenda. The language of analysis incorporated Western reflections on the coming of a post-industrial society (Markowski 1973). In the context of state socialism it was associated with open opportunities, the professionalisation of social roles, and a functionalist view of society. Sociologists diagnosed high vertical mobility, even in comparison to Western societies (Janicka 1973).

All these changes were understood as the delayed effects of top-down, organised development and the implementation of public policies. They were based on a belief in the rationalisation of social life and the predominance of planned processes, because the assumptions were that, in state socialism, individual action did not create social structures spontaneously,

but filled centrally designed structures. This kind of sociological reflection shared an underlying vision of the peaceful coexistence of different sectors of society, rooted in the paradigm of structural functionalism, which was a popular theoretical framework at the time. It was based also on trust in science as an important factor in managing the economy and society.

During the first three decades of post-war Poland, sociology did not display an interest in the methodology of the changes introduced by the communist project. Flat empiricism seemed to be a safe way out of ideological pressure. In fact, the first attempts at theoretical reflection on socialist society only date back to the 1970s (Wiatr 1971, 1974), when the category of modernisation came to be applied within the framework of the Marxist theory of social development. In looking at social change from the perspective of individual life and interpersonal relations, the concept of a “society of open chances” was used (Narojek 1980). Such a society was also based on the idea of a “planned society,” where all trajectories had been previously established, and thus this openness was a bit ambivalent (Narojek 1975). Most analytical studies were conducted from a broad macrostructural perspective and remained focused on top-down social processes organised by the party-run state (Narojek 1973; Sarapata 1965; Staniszkis 1972; Szczepański 1973; Wesolowski 1970). The conviction that it was possible to plan and centrally manage large-scale social units was in line with the emergence of studies on social engineering. Indeed, the potential for the practical application of sociological knowledge seemed to improve with the progress of the new system (Podgórecki 1968). In the period, the project of modernisation through enforced industrialisation led to the popularity of technocratic attitudes, which narrowed the ideological margin and favoured pragmatic solutions. This approach can be confirmed by the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s over four hundred industrial plants employed in-house sociologists who were supposed to contribute to effective management by using their sociological expertise and methodology in practice (Kwaśniewicz 1995: 66).

In that comparatively good period for sociological research, a sociologist was increasingly seen as a professional engaged in diagnostics and in evaluating research, but usually on a rather small scale. A sociologist might also have a role as an “expert on the future,” working on a new theory of socialist society (Bielecka-Prus 2009: 90). This kind of theoretical challenge ought to be seen in the context of the general sense of falsehood and fake activities in the 1970s. I generally agree with Marta Bucholc that sociology in those days “was mostly a way of thinking about society and not

a way of asking it any particular questions in order to receive a response” (Bucholc 2016: 47). The main tasks of sociology – as they were understood then in a critical evaluation – were not met in that decade. They included the documentation of new social phenomena and processes in Poland and the formulation of scientific empirical diagnoses of society, which were different from journalism, and useful for practice. Sociological analyses were fragmentary and did not result in comprehensive conclusions and generalisations for sociological synthesis. There was especially a lack of empirical works about ongoing changes in attitudes, values, and social awareness, since in socialism public opinion could not find expression in open political life. Sociologists also avoided explorations of the relationship between society and the authorities (Sulek 2011: 205).

/// The 1980s: Critical Diagnoses of the System in Crisis

Still, there were some sociological points of interest that made connection with social reality. The earlier focus on social advancement evolved toward an interest in generational change and new expectations and aspirations shaped by decades of “real socialism.” The younger generation was supposed to demonstrate “innovative attitudes,” which had been identified as a tool of social change. The consequence was research projects into youth and young adults, including workers (Adamski 1976, 1980). Empirical studies of social awareness revealed an unexpected picture of society subjected to a holistic and radical remodelling. In the best-known example, a team led by Stefan Nowak investigated the values and attitudes of young Poles. The team’s work, which began with a survey of Warsaw students in 1957 (see Nowak 1991), led to a theoretical framework for the category of attitude (Nowak 1973). More importantly, toward the end of the 1970s it also provided an overall critical assessment of the value system of Poles. On introducing the image of the amorphous social mass (“grits,” *kasza*) of real socialism into sociological discourse, Nowak wrote:

For it is a model of the value system of a society in which the old social groups have been thoroughly reshuffled, and therefore the former axiological structures which were characteristic of the old social groups have been more or less accidentally mixed up. This is the model of a society in which, after the destruction of the old centres where values crystallised, new factors in the crystallisation of values have not worked effectively enough to form satisfactorily

cohesive axiological structures. I would suggest that the reason for this lies in the absence of bonds on a wider scale than that of primary groups based on direct contacts, and in the absence of institutional articulation of the interests and aspirations of the different social groups (Nowak 1979: 173).²

An in-depth survey of attitudes conducted on the eve of the Solidarity revolution was in fact a concealed diagnosis of political awareness (compare Krzemiński 1998). Indeed, since everyday experience of real socialism resulted in a widening gap between what people thought and what they actually did, a survey of their awareness, attitudes, and aspirations aimed to reveal the hidden but important characteristics of Polish society.

Despite these few attempts to recognise the state of social awareness at the end of the 1970s there was a general feeling that Solidarity came as a surprise to sociologists (Sulek 2011: 243–265). Some were deeply engaged in opposition activities before 1980. During the “Carnival of Solidarity” in 1980–1981 many were participating in the political developments in different roles, as experts advising Solidarity, taking part in strikes, and practicing Alain Touraine’s idea of sociological intervention (Touraine et al. 1982).

Further work by Nowak’s team was conducted after the rise of the Solidarity movement in 1980, when sociologists focused on the social perception of real socialism and visions of everyday life from the grass roots perspective (Marody 2004 [1981]). One of the most important observations was the progressive delegitimisation of the socialist system (Nowak 2004 [1984]). The crisis was attributed to a persistent deprivation of important social needs and values, such as equality and justice. Sociological surveys came to include questions concerning strategies of adaptation under conditions of a worsening economic and political crisis. In the final years of communist Poland such surveys frequently revealed attitudes focused on survival, which “in a longer time perspective seem[ed] to be leading to the disintegration of the existing social order, a disintegration involving decomposition rather than change” (Marody 1988).

Sociological diagnoses identified a general active rejection of the system at the level of declarations and attitudes, and, on the other hand, the development of individual strategies of adaptation, based on passive acceptance, in the sphere of actions. Relations between the world of official institutions and society were approached in terms of processes of adaptation, which gradually changed the increasingly more troubled system.

² English translation from Nowak 1981: 28.

Sociologists were also interested in its progressive delegitimation in the eyes of citizens (Rychard & Sulek 1988). All their endeavours focused on explaining people's spontaneous activity and mental states, since this is where they located the causes of the deepening crisis and mass social mobilisation at the time of Solidarity.

A long-term project to diagnose the growing social conflict, by a team under Władysław Adamski, was an interesting example of the kind of surveys begun in the 1980s. The study was pursued throughout the period of martial law and the subsequent "stabilisation," until the climax of the crisis in 1988 and 1989. Working on the assumption that continuity of social phenomena prevailed over revolutionary changes, the project identified an increasing awareness of group interests and their articulation as the reasons for a social conflict of a structural nature. Economic demands gradually transformed into political ones, reaching the core of the system (Adamski 1982: 5–7). The gaping disparity between the ineffectiveness of the socialist economy and the level of needs and aspirations resulted in a general conflict. In an attempt to pursue its origins, sociologists referred to the historical background for explanation of the specificities of structural and mental changes in the era of real socialism (Adamski 1985: 30–31).

From the 1980s on there were more sociological studies, which pointed to the systemic limitations of real socialism, though no one expected its complete fall. Jadwiga Staniszkis provided an in-depth analysis of the ontology of socialism and its structural pathologies (Staniszkis 1981, 1992). She also interpreted the Solidarity social movement, introducing the frame of a self-limiting revolution (Staniszkis 1984) and later describing the final stage of the Polish system of power as "stabilisation without legitimisation" (Staniszkis 1987). In 1988 Witold Morawski explained the necessity for fundamental reforms, using the concept of a vicious circle of mutually negative reinforcement whereby close interdependence between the areas of the economy, politics, and society was the cause of recurrent crises (Morawski 2005 [1988]: 253). Based on their diagnoses, which indicated both the system's dysfunction and the rise of new social attitudes and behaviour, social scientists concluded that fundamental systemic changes would be required in the near future.

These critical scholars were engaged in the opposition, and their books, under the conditions of censorship, were published in a very limited number of copies. However, their influence on Polish public opinion was much wider than might be expected thanks to the practice of "oral sociology" (Sulek 1987). The discipline aimed to "spread social self-awareness"

by making people realise their needs and aspirations (Lutyński 1987). In a society deprived of free access to information and the circulation of ideas, sociologists saw themselves as “a medium giving voice to social moods, attitudes, and aspirations” (Ziółkowski 1987: 20). In 1986 the Warsaw branch of the Polish Sociological Association prepared an expert opinion – including a radical programme of change – on the state of society (Sulek 2011: 159). The next year, a report by Stefan Nowak, calling for urgent, deep social and systemic reforms, was published in a sociological journal (Nowak 1988). The decade of the 1980s was a historical moment in which the need to know and the need to act were intertwined in the biographies of many Polish sociologists. Yet sociological work was mainly about conducting research and gathering data. The need for a theory that could synthesise the results of empirical research was emphasised (Sulek 2011: 241), but a comprehensive model for the social processes of the final years of the People’s Republic was not provided. At that moment Polish sociology was enjoying its greatest degree of attention from the international academic community. Polish sociology delivered descriptions of landmark events, but much less often provided comprehensive explanations.

/// The New Project: The Post-Communist Return to Normality

At a time of mounting social conflict, sociologists mainly studied the state of social awareness and factors motivating people to act together. Researchers approached the mechanism of change from the perspective of individual social actors. After the breakthrough in 1989 their perspective radically changed. The fall of the communist order and the necessity to create an entirely new economic and social project produced a new situation, which in a number of ways resembled the revolutionary surge of the early post-war period. This time, however, it involved the completely different intellectual atmosphere of “a revolution in the name of a return to normality” (Rychard 1995), which was not conducive to asking new questions or making assumptions that Poland’s transformation might entail new factors.

The departing era was an important point of reference for new sociological analyses. On the other hand, visions of the future did not extend beyond the horizon of transition to a “normal” modern, free-market, democratic society. Social scientists became actively involved in formulating and substantiating the new rules, proposing the directions of transformation, and assessing the implemented measures. This resulted in the frequent use

of the rhetoric of transition. The breakthrough involved a sudden switch from the ideology of socialist to capitalist revolution, one characterised as a kind of “inverted Marxism” (Szacki 1996: 6–7). The victims of this approach included social scientists, who, at least at the beginning, gave up their search for original explanations and the effort to conceptualise local trajectories of change.

The new framework of social reality and the mode of its top-down implementation did not appear to be problematic in popular perception or in academic reflection. Sociologists did not focus on the contents and direction of the reforms, but rather on potential social obstacles to their implementation. The most frequent assumption was that the new rules would stimulate a natural, spontaneous, bottom-up process of shaping a new social order. The process of departure from communism showed marked similarities with the introduction of the system after the Second World War. At first, this “social engineering of democratic transformation” (Narojek 1993) did not become a subject of deeper sociological analysis. The idea that transformation to the free market and democracy would be quite an easy task was based on the conviction that it met the expectations and aspirations of Poles and that it guaranteed success similar to that achieved by the developed Western states. There was very little consideration of other possible options for a “Polish road to capitalism” (e.g., Kowalik 1992). The primary focus of academic interest was the question of overcoming the burden of socialist residues.

Seen from a distance, real socialism was perceived as a particular type of society, characterised by a modernisation referred to as “selective and imperfect” (Ziółkowski 1999), “reversed” (Buchner-Jeziorska 1993), or “false” or “apparent” (Morawski 1998). It was a mixture of imposed modernity in certain areas of social life and the remains of a traditional society in others. The mental outfit of Poles was severely criticised as lacking in civilisational competence: not only did they not have the skills and attitudes essential for the free market and democratic environment, but also displayed a widespread mentality at odds with the concept itself (Sztompka 1991, 1994). In other words, not only were Poles not ready to rise to the challenge of modernisation, but it could even be said that, owing to their socialist mentality, they were obstacles to progress toward a fully modern society.

In the first years of the transformation, sociologists focused on individual and collective social actors only in two roles: those who implemented the project of transformation as accepted by social scientists, and

those who slowed down the pace of the process and came in the way of progress toward a modern society. Society was not regarded as an active subject of the events. Consequently, research topics rarely reflected the real social problems of particular groups or individuals but stemmed from the transformation project.

It was not until a few years later that sociologists slightly modified their approach and identified people making a daily effort to adapt to the new rules as actors in the transformation: "The actors are invisible, which does not mean they do not exist at all" (Rychard 2002: 154). Although this perspective led to interpreting the situation in terms of hybrid solutions, Poland's social reality was still described by comparing it to the Western European model of modernisation. On the other hand, what came into focus were the social costs of the sudden transformation and the emerging pathologies of the new system. The turn of the millennium saw comments on the "drift of the system" (Giza-Poleszczuk et al. 2000: 22) and the consolidating social division. Sociological studies also observed that the process of accelerated modernisation involved increasing differentiation, resulting in the emergence of "a society of two vectors." On the one hand, "Poland has been emerging as a modern, cosmopolitan country of high-earning and widely travelled people. However, it is more and more evident that some regions have not managed to catch up and have remained traditional, rural, and marginalised. A journey from Warsaw to a village in north-east Poland is a journey in time" (Giza-Poleszczuk 2004: 265). The term "real post-communism" reflected the idea that the new order was very different from the original plan, incomplete and deformed, just like in the case of the old "real socialism." Deformations were caused by the imposition of new systemic solutions on certain old rules and institutions, as well as on the enduring older mentality (Staniszki 1991, 1994).

Piotr Sztompka, in his theory of cultural trauma, gave a more optimistic interpretation of the processes in the 1990s. Usually trauma is the result of abrupt and profound social change that causes the sudden dysfunction of existing adaptation strategies. Such trauma can lead to two alternative scenarios: the "vicious circle of cultural destruction" or the "virtuous cycle of reconstruction." Though the Polish trauma was characterised by an increase in distrust, political apathy, and lack of faith in the future, by the mid-1990s, its symptoms had begun to disappear. Fatalist attitudes were replaced by a growing sense of agency. The trauma was overcome and became a positive force in the process of cultural reconstruction and the consolidation of a new "cultural complex" (Sztompka 2004).

In the course of time, the key paradigm of transformation as imitative modernisation came under increasing scrutiny. The critics questioned the cognitive value of the model and raised the essential specificity of post-communist societies. Unlike before, their argument was based around the history of peripheral and backward Eastern Europe rather than around the experience of real socialism. This approach paved the way for critical reflection on the distinctive traits of Polish society (Kolasa-Nowak 2015). At the same time, other analyses treated the current Polish social phenomena as part of universal European experience. Polish integration with Europe opened the way for considering the place of Poland in the global system, and new challenges stemming from modern global processes. The post-communist transformation came to be perceived as a process gradually dissolving in global social change.

/// Conclusions

As described above, the next phases of development in Polish sociological analysis reflect the changes in Poland's social reality. The common frame for all interpretations was that of a modernisation project for a backward society trying to catch up. During all the post-war years Poland has seemed to be a constant social laboratory. Polish society has undergone two deep social transformations. The initial discourse of a revolutionary project later gave way to the image of gradual normalisation. In the "planned" society, where social life was rationalised and subject to social engineering, social change was perceived as the effect of a conscious design, and society as a passive recipient of organised development. However, in 1980 the economic crisis revealed not only a social conflict but the ineffectiveness of that top-down policy. It became apparent that "the success of state socialism was not based on a utopia of classless society, but on the promise of total modernisation and widespread promotion to 'the state bourgeoisie'" (Kochanowicz 1992).

The unexpected explosion of social activity and mass-scale delegitimation of the existing order drew sociologists' attention to current events. They explored the motivations of the social actors and the conditions of involvement in the mass social movement. While the situation was dynamic and open-ended, and the system was plunging into crisis, grasping these social phenomena had its important political and practical implications. Social scientists then played a considerable role in shaping the discussion on Poland's prospects and providing arguments for change in the political

system. Binding the scholar's function with that of the citizen has been a tradition from the beginning of Polish sociology.

However, the situation changed fundamentally after 1989. From being in the position of critics exposing the pathologies of the socialist system, sociologists switched to being technocratic advisors, which was a role some of them had practised before (Szacki 1993: 175). Advocating the implementation of reforms, they yet again became occupied with whether Poles were ready to rise to the new challenge. The topics of research were rarely the problems of society, of particular groups or individuals, but rather were derived from the project of transformation. For some time sociologists assumed that "Poland was only a place where something is happening 'with society' – some invisible hand is leading them to democracy and the market: another historical necessity is being fulfilled" (Sulek 1995: 12). After some time the broadly postulated "return to normality," understood as a rejection of the communist period, came to mean Poland's return to its peripheral position in Europe. This made it clear that sociological thinking was still revolving around old notions of "backwardness," "catching up," and "development management."

In a situation where society is subjected to large-scale reforms, the study of the course of induced changes is made according to the adopted assumptions and images of the expected effects. This is why the scale of sociological analyses was so large and the attention of researchers focused on entire social categories. As Zygmunt Bauman wrote about the sociologists of backward societies, "they see their society in motion, in the 'process of development,' as still unfinished, immature, and thus perceive reality as temporary and transitional" (Bauman 1999: 35).

Polish social scientists often acted as agents of change, advocating the project which they perceived as beneficial for society. In doing so they acknowledged the impact of the past to be overcome and focused on a destination point set in the future. As a result, they tended to give less attention to the present, which seemed transitional and hybrid. On the other hand, sociologists who began to look critically at reality rejected the previous interpretations and sought new ones. This happened in the 1980s when social conflict and the economic crisis ended with the fall of communism. New, often surprising events became the source of knowledge. Consequently, social scientists had become more open to discovering new phenomena. They abandoned the previously accepted categories and measures. Those who supported society's opposition wanted to explain and justify rejection of the system by the people. It was thereby easier to move beyond the

model of accelerated and necessary modernisation. Similarly, today, when the idea of completing Poland's modernisation by European integration seems exhausting, sociologists have an opportunity to ask new questions and formulate new explanations. Departure from the narrative of catching up and imitation creates a chance for a more specific view of the social processes in Poland.

Transl. Piotr Styk

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/// Abstract:

For all the post-war decades sociology in Poland has been focused on problems that are typical of peripheral modernising societies. The aim of this text is to identify, from today's perspective, successive stages of sociology's development after the Second World War. In the beginning, sociology was focused on perceiving the communist revolution as a social laboratory. In the 1960s and 1970s, Polish society underwent enforced industrialisation and urbanisation. In the next decade, studies were dominated by critical analysis of the communist system in crisis. After 1989, social scientists started to study the post-communist transformation, which was seen as a "return to normality." The entire time, sociological studies oscillated between the monitoring of project implementation and the recording of new grass roots processes. The author considers that sociology's recent departure from the narrative of catching up and imitation creates a chance for a more precise view of social processes in Poland.

Keywords:

induced development, modernisation, post-communist transformation, post-war Polish sociology, public role of sociology

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