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**P. Dlugosh***PhD, Doctor of Sociology,**Institute of Sociology**University of Rzeszow (Republic of Poland)***POLISH YOUTH IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH****1. The beginnings of the sociology of youth and its present state of affairs**

Research on young people has been conducted in Poland for a long time. It was carried out by J. Chalasinski, S. Rychlinski and F. Znaniecki. Following WWII, research on young people was resumed. Work was continued by J. Chalasinski, who published *"The Young Generation of the People's Republic of Poland"* and showed in it the social promotion of young people of rural origin in the People's Republic of Poland [1]. J. Szczepanski analyzed the role of young people in the transformation process of socialist society as well as the operation of the educational system. S. Nowak, based on his examination of young people, tried to forecast the future of society. To this end, in 1959, S. Nowak carried out a research project called "Students of Warsaw". In the period 1972–1974 he also observed the intergeneration transmission of values. S. Nowak's research was inspired by "young people's rebellion" in the West [2].

Young people's problems were also analyzed by R. Dyoniziak, M. Ossowska, W. Markiewicz, B. Golebiowski, W. Adamski, Z. Bauman, M. Kozakiewicz, A. Kloskowska, A. Jawlowska, A. Sicinski and many other scholars.

The sociology of young people was developed by several academic centers in Poland. In Warsaw, apart from S. Nowak and his students (A. Sulek, I. Krzeminski, K. Kosela, T. Szawiel and M. Grabowska), also H. Swida-Ziemba, K. Kicinski, J. Werstein-Zulawski, J. Kuczynski and J. Garlicki took up issues related to different aspects of the young generation.

Sociological research empirically oriented towards young people can also be found at the Jagiellonian University. M. Niezgoda dealt with, and continues to deal with, the relation between education and social transformation. The matter of students' social personality was approached by J. Jerschina too. Problems of young people were also studied by W. Kwasniewicz, K. Sowa and A. Szumakowicz. At present, educational and human capital research projects are continued. Analyses of the social consequences of educational change and new/old educational inequalities were carried out by P. Dlugosh and M. Niezgoda. J. Gorniak's team investigates, among other things, the human capital of university students and that of secondary school pupils. The problems of young people of rural origin were dealt with by K. Gorlach, Z. Serega and Z. Drag.

To date, the Torun center has ranked high among Polish research centers focusing on the sociology of young people. It was at this center that research on young people of rural origin was conducted as part of the Institute for the Development of the Countryside and Agriculture. Research involving the sociology of young people was conducted by A. Kaleta and Z. Kwiecinski. Other researchers who took up this area of inquiry in the following years included R. Borowicz and K. Szafrańiec. The sociology of young people is also studied by M. Kwiecinska-Zdrenka and T. Szlendak.

During the process of far-reaching transformations, young people became a frequent focus of research due to their significant role in the creation of the new order. Research on young people was carried out by CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research), which, at longer intervals, makes analyses of life goals, reference groups, attitudes towards integration, leisure pursuits etc. In Warsaw, the Youth Research Centre headed by B. Fatyga operates as part of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences at Warsaw University. B. Fatyga approaches young people's problems from the anthropological perspective. She has published numerous papers on the culture of young people, lifestyles, leisure and the generation. The center is involved in a number of research projects and it is home to many specialists studying the sociology of young people.

Research related to the sociology of young people is conducted by different academic centers across the country. At Zielona Gora University, a group of researchers studying young people, headed by M. Zielinska, has been created. The researchers focus on the problem of cultural diffusion as well as problems of the borderland near the Polish-German border, studies of generations and leisure. In Wroclaw, at SWPS, research is conducted by J. Kurzepa, who deals with social pathologies among young people living in the borderland. He studies the problem of underage prostitution and abnormalities in the socialization in the Western borderland.

Also Poznan features among the centers dealing with young people's problems. Sociological research on young people is conducted by W. Wrzesien. The issue is also addressed by educators analyzing the influence of popular culture on socialization and educational inequalities. Among the scholars one can find Z. Melosik, Do. Hildebrandt-Wypych, K. Kabacinska and many others.

One should also mention the Lublin center, where many years' studies of morality and religiousness, and of their changes, have been conducted by J. Marianski. As can be seen, there is a wealth of research on young people and we have only mentioned selected projects. The overview of research projects shows that young people are appreciated by scholars who, in their publications, deal with a wide range of topics.

**2. Sociology of youth in the borderlands**

A separate line of inquiry, though strictly connected with the problems of young people, can be seen in the borderland. It concerns mainly the Western and Southern borderlands, represented by numerous related publications.

We should mention here research carried out by H. Merkens [3] in Zielona Gora and Berlin. The findings show that Polish youth resembles German youth in terms of their perception of the future, life orientation, family resources, attitude to one's profession and politics. The aspirations of young people living in near-border cities have been studied by E. Narkiewicz-Niedbalec [4] and B. Wozniak [5]. A great contribution to the generation of knowledge about young people in the borderland has been made by L. Goldyka. He investigated their attitude to European integration, life aspirations and social orientation.

One can also find research projects focusing on young people living near the Polish-Czech border. Interesting findings have been generated by research on young people from the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia done by B. Pactwa [6] from which it follows that most young people decide to study at a university and believe that higher education will guarantee a job, and that most frequently they want to have their own businesses. We can also refer to research done by T. Soldra-Gwizdz [7; 8] and A. Szczurek-Boruta [9] showing a picture of young people living in the Opole region and in Upper Silesia.

Several Polish-German research projects focusing on young people have also been undertaken. Qualitative results of this research have been presented by B. Fatyga, K. Gorniak and P. Zielinski [10]. Also quantitative findings have been presented, showing similarities and differences between the attitudes, lifestyles, religiousness and identities of young people in both countries [11]. Similar (at least in some respects) comparisons between Polish and German young people in the context of social trajectories were made by B. Mach [12]. While we have extensive knowledge about young people near the Western and Southern borders, knowledge about young people living near the Eastern border is much more limited.

In the Polish-Ukrainian borderland one should note research carried out by J. Nikitorowicz [13] related to the cultural identity of Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian youth. It

follows from the research that young people in the borderland are family-centred and oriented towards private goals and stabilization. As compared with Polish and Belarusian youth, Ukrainian young people identify with the nation to the greatest extent. On the other hand, Polish youth has higher educational aspirations and declares higher mobility. The greatest pessimists are found among young people from Belarus, which may be linked to this country's political situation.

In the Eastern borderland, and in particular in the Podkarpackie region, research was carried out by the Youth Research Centre at PWSW (East European State Higher School) in Przemyśl in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011. Based on the research, we know that the main life goals of young people are as follows: getting a job, starting a family, gaining respect and achieving a high quality of life. High aspirations related to education prevail. At the same time, people with the highest competences declare that they intend to leave their region. Young people have the ability to exist in information society, but this ability amounts to basic computer skills, using the Internet or the mass media [14].

### 3. Current research problems – in search of *homo sovieticus* among Polish youth

For many years now, young people have been an important subject of sociological, pedagogical and anthropological research as well as of other studies. Researchers usually take a closer look at young people when social changes take place, since, according to K. Mannheim [15] young people are an innovative factor and constitute potential which may be used in the transformation process. This, however, applies mainly to dynamic societies [16; 17].

The justifiability of the above claims is verified by the events of the so-called Arab Spring, the occurrence of the 15-M Movement in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street initiative in the US or young people's protests against ACTA. Following the dissatisfaction with the social and economic situation, an "indignant generation" is emerging. Young people display a demanding attitude here. If one is to accept free market and liberal democracy as axiomatic, one may conclude that these protests are anti-system in nature, and this is not a factor which promotes modernization. One can conclude, after P. Sztompka [18] that young people are affected by postmodernism trauma and that protests serve to introduce changes which remove traumatogenic factors: high unemployment, inflation of diplomas or "junk" contracts. Protesting against such phenomena, young people want to remove obstacles which impede their entrance into adulthood.

Problems related to globalization and the entrance of peripheries into the world system overlap with local phenomena embodied by transformation and modernization processes. We remember that in 1989, Poland as well as other Central and Eastern European countries, started a far-reaching and comprehensive social change affecting all walks of life. Beside their positive results, the changes have brought many negative phenomena as well. P. Sztompka refers to them as a social and cultural trauma. He mentions the first wave of trauma which was related to the cultural change, the second, related to the negative consequences of changes (unemployment, decrease in the level of social security) and current traumas arising from the current situation (e.g. inflation of diplomas). They are all a serious system obstacle which will delay the social transformation process, at least until socialized young people appear, in new circumstances, deprived of characteristics typical of representatives of the older generation. In this case, it applies to the replacement of the *homo sovieticus* personality with the *homo economicus* orientation. This claim is close to that put forward by Mannheim and it explicitly positions young people as the demiurge of changes. On the other hand, the above leads to the conclusion that the success of social change, transformation and modernization is possible when the generation change occurs.

However, as shown by research CBOS, the above hypothesis has not been fully confirmed. While it is true that when one considers the level of educational, life and consumption aspi-

erations as well as lifestyles, one can observe pro-modernization attitudes among young people. However, when one looks at deeper system attitudes, it turns out that the affirmation of changes among young looks different.

If we take into consideration the enterprise orientation, then according to 2010 CBOS data, 50% of young people declared that they intended to set up an enterprise in the future [19]. However, this trend continued to weaken and it represented the smallest proportion if we take into account earlier measurements. However, faced with unemployment, only 12% of respondents selected the answer "I would start my own business". When asked about investing money in some kind of business, young people most frequently opted for a small profit and a small risk (43%). A different attitude was observed in 27% of respondents. When asked about allocation of a small sum of money, they stated that they would deposit it in a bank account and the use for current needs, while the establishment of an enterprise ranked the third (18%). Comparable data were yielded by research carried out in the Podkarpackie region [14] as well as studies conducted as part of the Human Capital Balance [20].

As can be seen, the enterprise orientation is not the preserve of young people. It is a characteristic of a minority and therefore it is difficult to expect an explosion of economic development in a situation where there is no achievement motivation. As maintained by P. Sztompka [21, p. 227], economic development is preceded by the spread of achievement motivation. This orientation is expressed in enterprise activity, for which it is necessary. If we take into account results of research on young people, we will not see their ability to take risks. Far more frequent is affiliation, which means that the spread of one's need for affiliation stops individual competition, non-conformism, originality and innovativeness, thus hampering economic development. In connection with the above, one should conclude that one of the prerequisites of modernization has not been fulfilled. Subsequent cohorts of young people have still lower values in the case of this variable, which, for countries undergoing transformation may point to serious problems in the future.

According to CBOS research, the democratic orientation of Polish young people does not look good either. Only one-third of secondary school youth believes that democracy has an advantage over other forms of government. On the other hand, 77% of them claim that parties scramble to get the greatest number of "seats" and personal benefits for their leaders. Only 22% of respondents are satisfied with the manner in which democracy operates in Poland. Only 9% claimed that the situation in Poland points to the right direction [19]. Young people do not take any interest in politics (only 14%), unless they are prompted to do this, which was the case in 2007, when the Civic Platform party won thanks to the broad participation of young people. What is more, 80% of young people state that they have no trust as regards interpersonal relationships [19]. Yet, as observed by P. Sztompka, "the ability of society to undergo self-transformation certainly depends on the nature of forces holding a group together" [22, p. 268]. In post-modernity, with its challenges, trust may turn out to be a fundamental matter determining the condition of society and its ability to pursue active strategies. However, it is the culture of trust that is needed, and not that of cynicism which is recorded by research and which results in social disintegration. Even worse is the situation in the Ukraine deprived of elementary trust for institutions and the human being [23].

Youth protests are usually protests "against" something. The only common goal is the expression of dissatisfaction. Usually, it is the ruling party. One may ask whether we deal with "civic deficit" and what its result will be on the activity of young people [24]. The fact remains that participation in elections, interest in politics, support for political parties is an index of participation in public life. If, in this respect, young people show serious deficits, then the transformation process may be stopped. The approval of changes as such does not rank high among young people either, as indicated by re-

search carried out by K. Szafranec [25]. Young people are not enthusiasts cheering the new order, there is no legitimization of the system. It is difficult to speak of the success of transformation, if only one-third of young people see changes in a positive way, almost 50% approve of capitalism, one-fifth of them assess privatization in a positive way, and a slightly bigger portion welcomes the tightening of ties with the West. The system is more often legitimized by young adults than by nineteen-year olds. The higher the position on the social ladder, the better was the respondent's assessment of changes. Winners' children assess the transformation positively, while losers children provide negative assessments.

Another aspect which shows the level of legitimization of changes is the so-called sense of inadequacy, expressed by one's psychic well-being. In the case of thirty-year olds, a sense of maladjustment to the surrounding world was noted in 12% of respondents. In the group of teenagers, such people represented a much bigger group. In this case, winners' children were in a better mental state than the children of losers. Among young adults who achieved success, a sense of adequacy was clearly higher than among people who experienced problems with their jobs, professional status, family and living conditions. One can reiterate, quoting the author, that comparisons made over time and between the youth cohorts analyzed allow the researcher to observe a growing positive and ambivalent attitude to changes among thirty-year olds as well as a growing ambivalent and negative attitude among nineteen-year olds. If this trend observed among the young people analyzed was to continue in the future, one should expect a growing dissatisfaction and the lack of approval of the system, which merits examination in future.

Reception of the quality of social life by young people was in no way better. In this case, K. Szafranec compares the results of research on modern youth with studies carried out a long time ago and she concludes that despite huge system changes, reception of the social world by young people has changed insignificantly. If young people see system circumstances in such an unfavorable light, one can venture the claim that there are no changes related to the improvement of the quality of social life. The lowest values were noted in the case of interpersonal relationships, since social reality is dominated by the rat race and the culture of distrust. Young people also lack a sense of security, because changes carry with them threats and social reality is filled with insecurity [25, p. 114]. Even greater "deviations" from system norms can be seen in the case of questions related to the operation of economy. As many as 83% of respondents decided that providing everybody who wishes to work with a job should be the responsibility of the government. What is interesting, 45% of respondents supported the idea of maintaining jobs which in fact are not needed, but which are maintained to prevent unemployment. Also, 67% of subjects claim that in Poland there are too big differences between the highest and lowest incomes.

Young people who were socialized in capitalism are not pro-capitalist at all and one should rather think that they display characteristics of *homo sovieticus*, which may significantly prevent further changes from taking place in Poland [26]. One sees here strong statist and egalitarian trends which may hamper further modernization of Poland. Again, it is worth quoting P. Sztompka [27] who believed that there is no democracy without democrats, i.e. citizens filled with the democratic ethos, who want to, and who can realize democratic values. There is no capitalism without capitalists filled with the ethos of enterprise and competition, who want to, and who can realize capitalist values. There is no pluralism and openness in culture without open, enlightened, critical and tolerant participants in cultural life. They are indices of change-oriented personalities. One can talk about far-reaching mental changes when a block culture is replaced by democratic and market cultures.

As can be seen in the case of research carried out in Poland, not all constitutive features of capitalist society are embodied by young people. Above all, they show values oriented towards security, conformism, paternalism and a demanding attitude.

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### Summary

**Długosz P. Polish youth in the light of sociological research.** – Article.

The purpose of the article is to present the achievements of Polish sociology of youth. The information presented therein shows that Polish sociology of youth has a rich tradition and derives from the pre-war period. Along with socio-political changes, there was a shift in the problems with which it dealt. The specificity of the considered problems also determines the location of academic centers involved in youth. Academic centers rather analyze the problems of youth globally. In turn, those located on the fringes consider issues related to the specificity of the borderland. Along with the accelerated social change, youth policy becomes very important. One of the main points made by many researchers is the analysis of the adaptation strategies in the face of the challenges of capitalism. Abundant research shows that young people are partially adapted to it. Certain elements of homo sovieticus personality are still noticeable among the youth, which may hinder further changes.

*Key words:* Poland, sociology of youth, research, homo sovieticus personality.

### Анотація

**Длугош П. Польська молодь у світлі соціологічних досліджень.** – Стаття.

Метою статті є представлення дослідницького доробку соціології молоді в Польщі. Наведена інформація свідчить, що польська соціологія молоді характеризується багатою традицією, початок якої закладено ще в передвоєнний період. Поряд із соціально-політичними трансформаціями зазнавали змін і проблеми, якими вона займалася. На специфіку розглянутих проблем впливає також розташування академічних центрів, які займаються дослідженням молоді. Головні академічні центри вивчають проблеми молоді переважно в глобальному масштабі. У свою чергу прикордонні університети досліджують тематику, пов'язану зі специфікою цього

прикордоння. З прискоренням соціальних змін особлива увага звертається на проблематику молоді. Однією з головних проблем, над якою працюють багато дослідників, є аналіз адаптаційних стратегій до викликів капіталізму. Результати численних пошуків свідчать, що молодь до нього є адаптованою частково. Як і раніше, серед молоді помітні риси особистості homo sovieticus, які можуть ускладнювати впровадження подальших змін.

*Ключові слова:* Польща, соціологія молоді, дослідження, особистість homo sovieticus.

### Аннотация

**Длугош П. Польская молодежь в свете социологических исследований.** – Статья.

Целью статьи стала презентация научного багажа польской социологии молодежи. Представленная информация показывает, что польская социология молодежи имеет богатую традицию, начало которой заложено еще в предвоенное время. Наряду с социально-политическими трансформациями изменения претерпевали и проблемы, которыми она занималась. На специфику рассматриваемых проблем оказывает влияние также месторасположение академических центров, занимающихся молодежью. Главные академические центры анализируют преимущественно проблемы молодежи в глобальном масштабе. В свою очередь приграничные университеты исследуют тематику, связанную со спецификой данного приграничья. Вместе с ускоренными социальными переменами особое внимание обращается на проблематику молодежи. Одним из главных вопросов, затрагиваемых многими исследователями, является анализ адаптационных стратегий по отношению к вызовам капитализма. Результаты многих исследований говорят о том, что молодежь частично к нему адаптирована. По-прежнему среди молодежи заметны элементы личности homo sovieticus, которые могут затруднять внедрение дальнейших изменений.

*Ключевые слова:* Польша, социология молодежи, исследования, личность homo sovieticus.