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"Błędne koło: reprodukcja kultury podklasy społecznej", Arkadiusz Karwacki, Toruń 2006 : [recenzja]

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tion of universities, which in his opinion would lead to the fall of university mission. On the other hand, he does not analyze the problem of graduates in the study programmes that are not adapted to the requirements of the job market and are not consulted with employers. Here also returns the question of tuition fees for higher education. What is it that a student should pay for if outside university he or she must invest considerable sums of money in education, learning foreign languages, or computer skills. It seems that, when looking for the model of government policy towards universities this issue should also be considered.

Antonowicz created a coherent set of recommendations for Polish politics towards universities. Apart from the postulates described above, the author also speaks about the necessity to stabilize the legal order, make more flexible forms of employment and decentralize personal policy. He opts for the strengthening of the position of a rector and organizational leadership, as well as for the replacement of the rule of democracy with collegiality, which would improve the decision-making processes and enabled an inside integrity of the undertaken actions. In the state-controlled putting of universities to the market, they should notice themselves the chance to build their autonomy and subjectivity. A diversification of the sources of finances, co-operation with business, but also with local authorities and organizations from outside the government will make it impossible for them to be dependent on only one partner. Nevertheless, the state and society must remain the main sovereigns of universities, so as not to let the schools fully devote to the market and commercialization.

The book by Antonowicz must be recommended to everyone who is connected with a university and is interested with its future.

This work constitutes a kind of a compendium of knowledge about the ideas, values and specifications of universities, which is essential to anyone who takes part in the debate on higher education, who forms the government policy towards universities. Similarly, students should also learn more about the history, values and problems of their Alma Mater, since it would enable them to take a constructive and serious part in the discussion on the fate of universities, and not only to be limited to the instrumental treatment of education. The ideas of the author for the Polish area of higher education arise from righteous assumptions on the necessity to change numerous aspects of university activity when facing new social and economic challenges and conditions, accompanied by preservation of the core of the institution's values. However, a part of the projects may appear very difficult to accept by all the interested subjects: academic communities, authorities, and society.

Magdalena Dybaś

Arkadiusz Karwacki, *Błędne koło. Reprodukcyjność kultury podklasy społecznej* [Vicious Circle: Reproduction of the Social Underclass Culture], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2006, pp. 243.

The analyzes of the social position of the former workers of State Farms (PGRs) and their families constitute an important fragment of the sociological study of Polish political system transformation. It is in relation to this group that the researchers dealing with the problem of poverty starts to form a hypothesis on the creation of the Polish form of so-called underclass – people constantly ex-

cluded from full involvement in the economic, social, cultural and political life in Poland. The discussed work creates a part of these studies over the processes of social marginalization of the people that live in the areas of former PGRs, which have so far been conducted by Elżbieta Tarkowska and Katarzyna Korzeniewska, Zofia Kawczyńska-Butrym, and Elżbieta Psyk-Piotrowska.

The problems included in the book refer to the questions about the causes and forms of the mechanisms that recreate the “culture of poverty” among the former workers of PGRs. In other words, the goal of the study – in the author’s intention – was an endeavour to answer the question: “Why do the young inhabitants of post-PGR communities inherit the low cultural capital and have minimal chances of [...] getting out of their local circles of social degradation?” [pp. 11–12].

The reviewed book consists of an *Introduction*, six chapters and a *Conclusion*, as well as of a bibliography and a summary in English. The initial three chapters are theoretical in character. In the first chapter, entitled *Global Background of the Current Local Crises*, the author tries to put the problem of the creation in the former PGR regions of a new social category – the underclass – in the context of the current globalization processes. If we refer to the works by Bauman and Lasch, Karwacki, they emphasize the ambivalence of the processes: on the one hand they contribute to the sudden increase of productivity, the “shrinking” of the world, popularizing pluralism, multiculturalism and individuality – understood as emancipation of an individual from the traditional, limiting and enforced social frames; on the other hand, they lead to an overstretched concentration of the produced goods in the hands of the few elites, and they contribute to

the intensification of the processes of social marginalization and disintegration of local communities. It is to the reaction of the communities to the crisis caused by the influence of globalization processes that the author gives a salient role. The reactions can take the form of building opposition, personal or inclusive communities. The first are communities “consolidated as a result of economic marginalization and of rejecting the social identity of some groups in a give society”, the second are “nets of loosely connected individuals with shared interests and business that are characterized by no longer public relations (limited to their households) and by «privatization» to their closest friends”. An inclusive community, on the other hand, is based “on an ideological and view-point pluralism, trust and co-operation. The common good, or the public business constitute the major value here” [p. 39]. It is with the creation of this last type of local bonds that the author connects his hopes to overcome the threat created by globalisation processes. According to Karwacki, the successful (i.e. effective and adapted to the reality of the modern, globalised world) forms of social help in the post-PGR areas should be based on the activation of these local communities, on mobilization of the social strength hidden in these communities, on the release of their hidden potential. In other words, the aim of the supporting action in the post-PGR environment should be the creation of social capital – both on the level of an individual (a change of attitude and mentality of some people), and of a community (building mutual trust, social norms and a net of connections among the inhabitants of a given community). In his book, Karwacki refers then both to the Bourdiean and the Putnam’s understanding of the term of social capital.

In the second chapter, entitled *Education-al Environment Facing Social Transformation*, the author notices that the models and structures of young people socialization are relative for specific social groups. The personality models, norms of behaviour and values transferred in the process of socialization can be both functional from the point of view of a local environment, and dysfunctional for the social system as a whole. Such a situation takes place as far as the post-PGR communities are concerned: children of the former PGR workers are at home under the influence of “survival socialization”, which is supposed to make it later possible for them to successfully function in the deprived local environment. Simultaneously, acquiring this socializing message results in the fact that the children that come from socially handicapped communities are successfully shut away from the way to social advancement in the global social system.

The third chapter (*Underclass and Culture of Poverty – Terminology and Interpretation Conflicts*) is devoted to the discussion of debates taking place in sociology on the meaning of the terms “underclass” and “culture of poverty”. The author describes in detail the discussion and thoroughly presents the difference in attitude both in the first and the second approach. He tends to support the Wilson understanding of the underclass as a social category that arose as a result of structural enforcement (technological progress and the accompanying structural unemployment), the members of which category – as a consequence of being pushed to the margin of society – gradually create the foundations of subculture “based on total negation of values recognized by society” [p. 96]. According to Karwacki, among the former workers of PGRs there has evolved – in consequence of socio-economic

transformation accompanying Polish system change – an independent cultural identity, transferred in the process of socialization to the next generation [pp. 133; 215].

In the fourth chapter, entitled *Underclass and Its Culture in Post-PGR Communities*, the author analyzes the features of the former workers of PGRs using – defined by Mary Daly – five dimensions (spacial, structural, deprivation, temporary and cultural) that constitute the phenomenon of underclass. Therefore, to start with, the post-PGR areas are spatially isolated (most of them are located in areas distant from cities or villages), moreover, their inhabitants limit relations with their neighbours to the essential minimum (a phenomenon of the so-called “shutting off at homes”), which inhibits or prevents the creation of the so much-wanted in these areas social capital. The inhabitants of post-PGR areas are also characterized with a low spatial mobility, which results from an action that began after the closure of PGRs and was based on buying out the farm flats: “most of the workers were obliged to take credits when buying out their flats. Facing problems with redemption of the credits, they could not get rid of them on the free market, which then made migration and working somewhere outside their place of living impossible” [p.121]. Apart from that, the regional isolation of the PGR inhabitants and their children is strengthened by the division into the “commuters” and the “natives” that can be found in many secondary schools, which adds to limiting educational chances of the former ones.

A factor that strengthened the marginalization process of post-PGR communities was also the dissolution of the institutional net created till 1992 by State Farms. Since marginalization is based on exclusion from the func-

tioning in the institutional and organization structures of society, the institutional gap in these areas resulted in deepened poverty.

“The spatial isolation and the resulting limited access to educational institutions causes constant decrease, possibly hibernation of the current low cultural capital, which influences the missed adjustment of the competence of individuals to the requirements of free market economy. The resulting limited possibilities of employment contribute to low household income, and thus, without the essential financing, spatial barriers are for many an impervious surface” [pp. 124–125].

According to Karwacki, this “long-lasting, rooted in Polish People’s Republic addiction from help «from outside» has noticeably influenced the formation of Polish underclass” [p. 127]. He thinks that poverty in the post-PGR areas is “substantially rooted in time and cannot be considered only from the perspective of more than a dozen years of transformation”, and the system transformation “did not bring to life «the culture of poverty», but in a way revealed it” [p. 128]. Poverty among the former workers of State Farms most often takes a permanent form, and the addiction to social help and treating them as a “wage” seems normal and natural there. “Getting used to” social benefits is accompanied by other elements characteristic for the culture of poverty: resentment towards the representatives and institutions of the existant order (the police, government, authorities) and blaming them for their own, difficult situation; lack of childhood understood as a safe and long-lasting phase; early sexual initiation of youth; home violence towards women and children and treating it as a certainty without any need for explanation. The only feature of the culture of poverty described in the classic works by Lewis

and absent in the research by Karwacki is the tendency to live in informal relationships.

In the next chapter, entitled *Reproduction of the “Culture of Poverty” in Post-PGR Societies* Karwacki forms a view that in relations to the constantly poor societies, there must be noticed an “alternative” – not – “negative” social capital. Among the former workers of PGR there was created “a system of attitudes, beliefs, norms, and values, which in the opinion of the concerned is an illustration of an active and independent search for the solutions to problems. *What is commonly called a pretentious attitude is a strategy of survival, which in particular circumstances is more likely to succeed than active search for work*” (my emphasis – T.D.) [p. 154]. However, as I have mentioned before, the strategies generated and acquired in a family and peer groups to survive in a local, deprived social environment make it impossible to achieve success on a larger scale. From their families and peer groups the young inhabitants of former PGRs take over the low level of educational aspirations, the sense of “temporariness” and the immediate aspect of needs and goals or ignorance as far as successful ways of family planning are concerned. Educational institutions do not try, on the other hand, to break this “alternative” habitus – as Karwacki writes, “for the members of post-PGR communities, school has partially performed the educational function, transmitting the basic knowledge, yet it does not shape the attitudes characteristic of the wider society. School does not fulfil the adaptive-cultural function, since it fails to make a connection with children, it does not attract their attention outside classes, and it is not able to transmit and «implement» cultural content. School, then, does not either fulfil the caring and shaping function, since it sustains

the attitudes internalized in a family and a peer group, and it sustains, at the same time, social statuses. Educational institutions do not level disproportions among children, what is more, they seem to sustain and deepen the divisions” [p. 181].

In this situation it becomes necessary to intervene as far as social politics is concerned. The last chapter of the reviewed work is devoted to such suggestions, entitled *Reproduction of the “Culture of Poverty” of Post-PGR Communities as a Challenge for Social Policy*. Karwacki presents himself there as a decisive follower of the so-called active model of social politics. He thinks, that social help that limits itself only to redistribution of financial means will never be effective. This is not, however, about a total resignation from providing benefits, but about decreasing the number of monetary allowances and a reform in the system of their gratification [p. 205]. The author has a few specific suggestions of such changes. As he writes, “A sum provided for a benefit for a specific family should be divided into parts, of which only a certain per cent should be given in cash. The rest should be spent on additional financing of heat fuel, the rent, food coupons in the local shop” [p. 205]. The help should be foremost directed to young people. *Notabene*, it is impossible to resist the impression that the author predestines the whole older generation of the former PGRs workers to waste as completely “unreformable”. Yet, the key to successful social policy towards youth should be education that provides chances to learn about the world outside the local, deprived system. It results in, according to Karwacki, a necessity of complex investments into social facilities for schools, their sports infrastructure, the system of scholarships (social, motivating, and sports) and free, given by

school textbooks [p. 207]. In the *Conclusion* to his book, the author claims, “We will achieve success and it will be impossible to say that poverty is not inherited in the post-PGR communities, when a part of the active young individuals is able to achieve professional success, the sense of multidimensional freedom (in reference to Amartyia Sen) coming back to where they grew up and feeling a bond with the neighbourhood and common local interest, and being simultaneously able to form cooperation norms” [p. 219].

Summing up, the reviewed book constitutes a proper conclusion to the research that has been conducted from the beginning of Polish system transformation on the social marginalization of the post-PGR communities. Its advantage is undoubtedly realizing that the norms and values common in the circles of the former workers of PGRs are, from the local point of view, functional. The tragic paradox of the social position of youth that lives in the post PGR areas is based on the fact that by acquiring the subcultural message that makes it possible for them to survive in the pauperized surroundings, the young simultaneously shut off their way to future escape from the environment. Therefore, it is not enough, the author writes, to ritually condemn the people that live in the enclave of poverty. They need to have access to resources (mainly educational and financial) and to receive patient and consequent social help.

The reviewed work is not free from flaws. It is foremost surprising that the author has included few of his own discoveries in the studied area. Karwacki draws his conclusions referring mostly to works by other authors (without the references to works by Elżbieta Psyk-Piotrowska or Elżbieta Tarkowska and Katarzyna Korzeniewska, the reviewed book

would be decisively less rich). Methodological issues are discussed only on a few pages of the introduction, thus, they do not comprise a separate chapter, which would be expected in this kind of work as a kind of standard. Unfortunately, it weakens the justification of the author's conclusion. Since the empirical basis of the work is not unified, it is not certain if it can be justified to conclude that in the areas of the former PGRs we are dealing with a process of formation of the underclass, whose members differ from the rest of society in their subculture, based on a separate axiological system. Even if it is true (and I tend to believe it), it seems at least disputable to acknowledge the suggested by Karwacki understanding of success in the area of limiting the intergeneration transmission of poverty. The emphasis, which he puts in the fragment quoted above, on the issue of the young returning to their family environment is in my understanding utopian. The revitalization of local communities still remains, of course, an important instrument in the policy of preventing social exclusion. However, it seems that actions directed at the prevention of inheriting poverty from generation to generation can be also considered successful when they assume the necessity for the young to leave their local environments in search for work and a better quality of life.

Tomasz Drabowicz

A Report from the Polish Conference "Active Social Policy from the Point of View of Social Europe".

On 21–22 September 2006, once again from the initiative of Krzysztof Piątek, there was a meeting in Toruń of representatives of vari-

ous disciplines linked with the issues of social policy and social service. The conference was an opportunity to exchange experiences and views and to analyze critically the current state of Polish social policy, which is facing not only the challenges imposed by the European Union, but also the ones that come into being with the dynamic development of the world.

The plenary session that opened the conference consisted of four presentations that prepared the background for the following discussions and speeches. Even though the titles of the plenary presentations seemed very promising, the speeches did not cross beyond providing the subject, theoretical, or even ideological scheme for the commencing debate. Julian Auleytner did not give an unequivocal answer (impossible, perhaps, in the present socio-political situation of Poland) to the question, "Is Poland a welfare State?," Katarzyna Głąbicka, describing "the future of European Social Space" presented theoretical visions of countries of wealth in Europe. Analogically, a slight interpretative lack was sensed in the presentation of Jolanta Grotowska-Leder, who showed in numbers and per cents the state of "unemployment of Polish youth from the point of view of the European Union". Krzysztof Frysztacki presented "the main dilemmas and directions of development in social America" in a less report-like manner, pointing at, among others, the possibilities resulting from finding space for social policy among such currents as "individualism" on the one hand and "solidarity" on the other; in addition, he underlined that defining America as "social", not "welfare" is not only a term, but a terminology trait.

For some time now, we have observed in the discourse of social policy the promotion of an idea to make use of the "benefits" of social