

# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

STATE AND SOCIETY

THE RHETORICAL  
AND GENERATIONAL  
DIMENSION OF CHANGES  
IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL  
ACTIVITY OF POLES

edited by  
Marta du Vall, Marta Majorek

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Adres redakcji:  
ul. Gustawa Herlinga-Grudzińskiego 1  
30-705 Kraków  
tel. (12) 25 24 665, 25 24 608  
e-mail: [oficyna@afm.edu.pl](mailto:oficyna@afm.edu.pl)

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Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM  
ul. G. Herlinga-Grudzińskiego 1, bud. A, pok. 218; bud. B, pok. 120  
30-705 Kraków, e-mail: [oficyna@afm.edu.pl](mailto:oficyna@afm.edu.pl)

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Marta du Vall, Marta Majorek:</b> The rhetorical and generational dimension of changes in the socio-political activity of Poles. Introduction .....	5
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#### ARTICLES

<b>Joanna Radziach, Łukasz Scheffs:</b> The civic engagement of representatives of generation Z: an attempt to develop a research tool and the first pilot study.....	11
<b>Paweł Sarna, Ewelina Tyc:</b> A story tailored for every Pole. Strategies for presenting the protagonists in the media coverage surrounding the death of Paweł Adamowicz .....	43
<b>Marta du Vall:</b> Polish in the October of 2020. Evolution of forms of expressing civic dissatisfaction and indignation .....	59
<b>Dominika Popielec:</b> "This used to be your favourite show". Involvement of the media in the protest "Media without choice" and its public perception on the basis of selected examples .....	73

#### VARIA

<b>Marta Majorek:</b> Blockchain in digital administration as a strengthening element for the implementation of sustainable development goals .....	97
<b>Justyna Wojniak, Katarzyna Górka:</b> Profession or vocation: Teachers of preschool and early school on themselves and their occupation .....	113

#### CONFERENCE REPORTS

<b>Joanna Bierówka:</b> "We don't know where we'll be in a moment because we don't even know where we are now". Report from 5 <sup>th</sup> Media Education Congress "Media Education X.O: Crossing Borders", Warsaw 24 <sup>th</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 .....	131
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## THE RHETORICAL AND GENERATIONAL DIMENSION OF CHANGES IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF POLES. INTRODUCTION

**Marta du Vall**

PhD, Associate Professor, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University,  
Faculty of Management and Social Communication  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1245-730X>

**Marta Majorek**

PhD, Associate Professor, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University,  
Faculty of Management and Social Communication  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6541-5184>

This issue of the journal is devoted to the matter of socio-political activity as a factor proving the dynamic development of civil society and the political maturity of contemporary society. Research in this area is constantly topical in many scientific disciplines, although when we add the concerns of the changing rhetoric of the authorities and the rhetoric of protest, as well as generational changes, we obtain extremely interesting research threads and studies constituting a picture of dynamic changes in Polish society.

The years 2019–2021 were crucial for Polish society and politics due to several significant events, trends, and shifts that impacted the country's socio-political landscape. The ruling party's efforts to reform the judiciary continued to be a major point of contention both domestically and internationally.

In October 2020, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled to impose a near-total ban on abortion, sparking the largest protests in Poland since the 1989 fall of communism. The ruling fueled a massive social movement, with protests led by women and young people demanding more progressive policies. The above-mentioned facts contributed significantly to the change, which to a large extent concerned the rhetoric of protest, which was a response to the change in the way in which the essence of the rule of law was understood by the state authorities. The aim of contemporary rhetoric is to reach recipients and convince them to adopt an attitude towards the content presented to them. It is through appropriate rhetoric that representatives of the public sphere, both political and non-political, communicate with recipients.

The substantial opening article concerns the civic activity of generation Z. Joanna Radzioch and Łukasz Scheffs show the results of their pilot research conducted in June 2023. In their research, based on Karl Mannheim's theory on the existence of generations, they created a research tool (a questionnaire) intended to answer the question as to the extent to which this civic activity is prevalent among representatives of Generation Z, i.e. people born between 1995 and 2008. The results obtained prove that the young generation of Poles is interested in politics, although they do not necessarily comment on it, or even create political content. However, they themselves take part in political discussions at home, and they draw knowledge and information about politics from various sources.

Paweł Sarna and Ewelina Tyc adopt a different perspective and focus in their article on rhetorical strategies for presenting heroes in media narratives. In their narrative analysis of the reports, daily press and weekly opinion magazines surrounding the death of Paweł Adamowicz, they use concepts such as those of Robert Rowland. The authors prove that the media narratives about Paweł Adamowicz, over the course of several years, were based on the model of tragedy and were characterised by extraordinary evocativeness, which was revealed not only in the profiling of the topic, but also in the way the means were selected to influence recipients' emotions.

Marta du Vall and Dominika Popielec reflect on the rhetoric of "non-political" actors (NGOs, social movements, media), which can be described as a rhetoric of protest. The first author focuses on the events related to the announcement of the judgement of the Constitutional Tribunal of 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020 on the unconstitutionality of certain provisions of the so-called "abortion compromise". This caused a wave of protests in Polish society, and thanks to the involvement of young Poles, the creativity of slogans, and the associated radicalisation of language, these protests became much more visible and media-related. They have already permanently changed and enriched the repertoire of means previously used by demonstrators. Dominika Popielec, in turn, addresses the issue of media involvement in reporting on various demonstrations and social protests, which, thanks to the media's interest, gain the opportunity to reach a wider audience

with their demands. However the main subject of the analysis is the protest of the media environment itself “Media without choice” (February 2021) and its expression – the cessation of the publication of media content. The author analyses the reactions of the political, media and social environment to this organised event.

In the “Varia” part, the reader will find two interesting articles. The first one is devoted to the evolution of the public administration sphere in connection with the digitisation of public information and the use of advanced information and communication technologies. According to the author, Marta Majorek, the convergence of public administration, blockchain technology and contemporary initiatives and challenges should be at the forefront of intelligent management practices in the public sphere. The last paper, by Justyna Wojniak and Katarzyna Górka, present the results of research conducted on selected narrative axes around the teaching profession. The authors present the opinions of kindergarten and early school teachers on their professional work against the background of organisational and legal aspects combined with the social perspective.

The issue is supplemented by Joanna Bierówka’s report from the V Kongres Edukacji Medialnej “Edukacja medialna X.0: przekraczanie granic” (5<sup>th</sup> Media Education Congress “Media Education X.0: Crossing Borders”) – which took place in November 2023. During the Congress, panellists from fourteen academic centres discussed the dilemmas of media education in the era of rapid changes in both the media and reality. In this context, the keynote speakers talked about the post-pandemic world of post-truth, fake news, disinformation and excess information, clickbait and the manipulation of cultural memory by creating a sense of threat, uncertainty and loneliness.

We are convinced that reading this year’s first issue of the journal “State and Society” will prove to be extremely interesting for readers and will encourage additional reflections.



# ARTICLES



# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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## THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GENERATION Z: AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP A RESEARCH TOOL AND THE FIRST PILOT STUDY

**Joanna Radzioch**

PhD student, Adam Mickiewicz University, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4598-6841>

**Łukasz Scheffs**

PhD, Adam Mickiewicz University, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2696-5735>

### Abstract

Civic engagement and the civil society remain essential components of a democratic system. Using the theories of Karl Mannheim concerning the existence of generations, the authors of this text have undertaken to develop a research tool (a questionnaire), which will enable them to verify the extent to which civic engagement is prevalent among representatives of generation Z, that is, individuals born between 1995 and 2008. The text contains information about how the questionnaire was created, describing the process of selecting the questions in detail, and presents the results of pilot studies conducted in June 2023.

**Key words:** generation Z, generation, pilot study, civic engagement

## Introduction

It is difficult for us to admit it, but the basic reason why we undertook, firstly, to create our own Questionnaire on the Civic Engagement of Representatives of Generation Z, and subsequently, to write this text is the fear (undoubtedly somewhat exaggerated) that democracy in Poland may have reached crisis point. In our view, the reasons for this are both the decline in individual agency and civic engagement and an abandonment of moral responsibility for one's own fate, one's immediate surroundings and for the community (including the political community<sup>1</sup>). The many possible causes of this state of affairs include – and this has often been mentioned in the literature – a weakness in civil society, and this emerges from such factors as the lack of citizens who possess a high degree of civic political competence.<sup>2</sup> For the same reason, our attention is diverted towards that social group that is still in the process of forming civil attitudes, since it is on the formation of this group that very soon the fate of the whole community will depend. Our aim is to verify the thesis – which has already been tested many times – that young people's attitudes point to “a fall in interest, engagement, a growth in political cynicism as well as a change in forms of activity – from political to social.”<sup>3</sup> It turns out that, although young people are better educated, they have a lower level of knowledge of politics, typically participate less in political organisations and vote in elections less often.<sup>4</sup> Young people – particularly in Poland – do not have a particularly good opinion of their own civic engagement. In a 2019 study of their political preferences new fewer than 36.7% of respondents claimed that their involvement in social life was low (23.4%) or very low (13.3%). As the main reason why they do not engage in social life, young people stated a critical attitude towards politics, politicians and public debate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.J. Chmielewski, *Rola kompetencji poznawczych w demokratycznych systemach politycznych*, “Przegląd Politologiczny” 2019, nr 2, p. 113, <https://doi.org/10.14746/pp.2019.24.2.8>.

<sup>2</sup> D. Plecka, A. Turska-Kawa, W. Wojtasik, *Obywatelskie kompetencje polityczne*, “Kultura i Edukacja” 2013, nr 3, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> P. Pawełczyk, B. Jankowiak, *Studenci a polityka. Badanie komponentu emocjonalnego postaw*, “Studia Edukacyjne” 2013, nr 27, p. 326.

<sup>4</sup> E.M. Uslaner, *Social Capital, Television, and the “Mean Word”*: Trust, Optimism, and Civil Participation, “Political Psychology” 1998, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 441–467; E.S. Smith, *The effects of investment in the social capital in youth on political and civic behavior in young adulthood: A Longitudinal Analysis*, “Political Psychology” 1999, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 553–580; M.X. Delli Carpini, *Gen.com: Youth, Civic Engagement, and the New Informational Environment*, „Political Communication” 2000, vol. 17, issue 4, pp. 341–349; R.D. Putman, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York 2000; R. Marzęcki, *Depolityzacja jako element stylu życia młodzieży*, “Przegląd Politologiczny” 2015, nr 1, pp. 57–72; P. Pawełczyk, K. Churska-Nowak, B. Jankowiak, *Struktura i uwarunkowania efektywnego komponentu postaw politycznych studentów*, “Przegląd Politologiczny” 2012, nr 4, pp. 7–16.

<sup>5</sup> A. Kądziała, *Preferencje polityczne młodych Polaków w 2019 roku*, “Studia Politologiczne” 2020, vol. 55, pp. 328, 332, <https://doi.org/10.33896/SPolit.2020.55.15>; *idem*, *Polityczny portret*

Civic engagement – the topic of this text – will henceforth be understood by us as political involvement and political participation. Although they are similar and are close in meaning in political science and administration, these terms are treated as different forms of activity.<sup>6</sup> What they have in common is interest and activity in the public sphere: involvement in civil organisations, willingness to cooperate, a feeling of trust, doing voluntary work and, finally, participation in elections (passive or active).<sup>7</sup> Crucially, civic engagement does not suddenly appear when one reaches adulthood, rather it is a postponed effect of activities undertaken in earlier periods.<sup>8</sup> By the same token, we hold that the question about willingness or lack thereof to be publicly involved should be asked at the stage where attitudes are forming, when one can assume that we are dealing with the first civic inclinations. Confirmation of this includes the findings of psychologists who claim that “[...] the periods of youth and early childhood are critical times for activating the internal resources conducive to civic engagement.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore – aiming to verify anew the thesis stated previously – we have set ourselves the task of developing a research tool (a questionnaire) in order to subsequently attempt to answer the question as to whether, and if so how, civic engagement manifests among representatives of generation Z. However, right at the outset our intuition encourages us to doubt unambiguously negative opinions regarding the social engagement of this specific age group.

### Civic engagement as a theoretical construct

Reflecting on the issue of civic engagement is very strongly tied to the concept of social capital. This is treated as an essential factor that explains the variety in political attitudes and the ways in which people behave in the public sphere.

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*młodych Polaków 2023*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung–Centrum Badań Marketingowych Indicator, [https://opolityce.ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/06/VII\\_1-To-nam-sie-w-glowach-nie-miesci\\_material-pomocniczy-skrot-raportu-Portret-polityczny-Mlodych-Polakow-2023.pdf](https://opolityce.ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/06/VII_1-To-nam-sie-w-glowach-nie-miesci_material-pomocniczy-skrot-raportu-Portret-polityczny-Mlodych-Polakow-2023.pdf) [accessed: 25.02.2024].

<sup>6</sup> Ł. Scheffs, *Kolektywizm i indywidualizm. Zachowania wyborcze w Polsce w latach 2001–2011*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa UAM, Poznań 2016.

<sup>7</sup> P. Czakon, *Zaangażowani czy obojętni? Aktywność społeczna i polityczna młodych Polaków*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie” 2016, z. 95, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> D. Szaban, K. Lisowski, *Strategie zachowań politycznych młodzieży w dobie kryzysu (polskiej demokracji)*, “Rocznik Lubuski” 2014, t. 40, cz. 2a, p. 260; A. Kaniewska-Sęba, P. Pawełczyk, *Temperatura uczuć młodych Polaków wobec wybranych polskich polityków*, “Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne” 2020, nr 28, p. 91, <https://doi.org/10.19195/1643-0328.28.6>.

<sup>9</sup> B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, *Aktywność obywatelska jako zadanie i wyzwanie rozwojowe – znaczenie okresu dzieciństwa i adolescencji*, “Psychologia Rozwojowa” 2019, t. 24, nr 3, p. 10.

[...] social capital is grounded in interpersonal relationships and creates a ‘network of civic engagement’ which forms an axis for the development of societal trust, social values and cooperative norms, as well as a willingness to participate in social activities for the benefit of the community.<sup>10</sup>

And it is precisely in research on social capital that the topic of civic engagement among children, young people and relatively young adults is brought up. Here, it is most frequently considered in three dimensions. One “concerns the essence of citizenship – what it is, what it consists in and why it is important. Another considers its scope, which means the type of [...] civil activities that young people are willing to undertake in the domain of citizenship.”<sup>11</sup> In what follows, this dimension will be a particular focus of our investigations. The other dimension “relates to the opportunities that young people have to take part in civic actions, in terms of both formal and developmental aspects.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, our deliberations on the formation of participatory attitudes among young people will naturally be linked to other – extremely broad – concepts, such as political culture and political socialisation. However, we are clearly not in a position to address these perspectives in just one article. Researching the developmental processes that result in an individual acquiring a political identity, convictions, values, attitudes and models of behaviour would extend far beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, this is a crucial issue, as confirmed by the rich body of literature and extensive theoretical perspectives that have already been gathered.<sup>13</sup> We personally assume that civic engagement is one of the basic factors in shaping affirmative attitudes, which are especially desirable in democratic systems.

For our own explanatory purposes, we accept that

[...] public engagement is the realisation of activities that reflect interests and involvement in governance and democracy, such as membership of political parties and trade

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<sup>10</sup> D. Hildebrandt-Wypych, *Kapitał społeczny młodzieży jako podstawa socjalizacji politycznej oraz rozwoju społeczeństwa obywatelskiego – sprawozdanie z badań niemieckich*, “Studia Edukacyjne” 2012, nr 22, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, A.M. Zalewska, *Aktywność obywatelska polskiej młodzieży w relacji do innych Europejczyków i w zależności od fazy adolescencji*, “Psychologia Rozwojowa” 2015, t. 20, nr 4, p. 11, <https://doi.org/10.4467/20843879PR.15.019.4462>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> E. Rokicka, *Postawy polityczne młodzieży szkolnej i studenckiej*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica” 1991, nr 21, pp. 73–86; P. Pawełczyk, K. Churska-Nowak, B. Janowski, *Zachowania wyborcze młodych dorosłych w wyborach parlamentarnych i prezydenckich. Ocena wpływu podmiotów socjalizacji politycznej – na podstawie badań własnych*, “Studia Edukacyjne” 2012, nr 21, pp. 233–248; D. Hildebrandt-Wypych, *op. cit.*; G. Piwnicki, *Socjalizacja i edukacja polityczna jako ważne determinanty kultury politycznej*, “Cywilizacja i Polityka” 2018, nr 16, pp. 27–48, <https://doi.org/10.15804/cip201802>; L. Szczegółka, *Rodzina w perspektywie studiów nad socjalizacją polityczną*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 2021, t. 64, nr 4, pp. 3–18, <https://doi.org/10.31743/znkul.13212>.

unions (professional associations), holding a position in clubs and associations, contacting MPs and participating in meetings and public consultations.<sup>14</sup>

Civic engagement means not only political activity, but also extra-political activity.<sup>15</sup> The catalogue of such activity is extremely broad and difficult to define precisely. There exists both educational and emancipatory activity, for example in the domains of care for the environment, respecting animal rights, as well as tolerance for any differences from the norm (LGBT and feminist movements etc.), promotion of specific attitudes and beliefs (e.g. anarchist, nationalist, pro-life and pro-choice movements) and cultural activity (organising exhibitions, concerts, and non-commercial and integrational events). There are also activities undertaken within small neighbourhood communities, which may aim to improve the living conditions of residents, introduce changes in the surroundings and encourage residents to collaborate in various ways. Civic engagement may ultimately take on the form of protests, public discontent, and even disobedience.<sup>16</sup>

In an attempt to define civic engagement more precisely (what its components are) we use the ideas proposed by Ryszard Klamut. He claims that civic engagement can be defined as “the social activity of individuals (citizens) that results from individual motives or grassroots social initiatives, intended to serve the public interest [...]”<sup>17</sup> Presenting the ideas of other researchers, who either deal with the issues of social activity understood as collective conscious activity directed towards a particular group, address spontaneous and organised civil activity, or examine passive, semi-active and active forms of engagement, he comes to the conclusion that civic engagement can be operationalised on four levels. To this end he points out archetypes, such as commitment to the community, social participation, individual political activity and political participation.<sup>18</sup> A characteristic of commitment to the community is that a person provides others with help in the form of temporary activities (for example voluntary work in a hospice) or action-orientated activities, namely, helping people in need financially, offering to do some sort of work, or offering one’s time etc. Social participation is cooperation with others in helping in NGOs, associations, help groups and parish groups, etc. Individual political activity is

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<sup>14</sup> W. Stypułkowski, *Aktywność obywatelska – pojęcie, pomiar i jej wpływ na rozwój regionalny* “Zeszyty Naukowe WSEI. Seria: Ekonomia” 2012, t. 5, nr 2, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> B. Martela, *Aktywność obywatelska w ramach inicjatyw nieformalnych. Przyczynek do refleksji*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica” 2011, nr 38, pp. 105–120.

<sup>16</sup> H. Zboroń, *Aktywność obywatelska we współczesnych społeczeństwach demokratycznych*, “Sensus Historiae” 2017, t. 29, nr 4, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> R. Klamut, *Kwestionariusz aktywności obywatelskiej (KAO) – narzędzie do badania różnych rodzajów aktywności obywatelskiej*, “Psychologia Społeczna” 2015, t. 10, nr 1, p. 68, <https://doi.org/10.7366/1896180020153205>.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, *Aktywność obywatelska jako rodzaj aktywności społecznej – perspektywa psychologiczna*, “Studia Socjologiczne” 2013, nr 1, pp. 192–194.

both activity that raises the level of the conscious understanding of socio-political reality, and allows one to

influence what laws will be enacted and what democratic representation will govern the individual and the community (signing petitions, citizens' bills, participation in demonstrations, etc.), and political participation – influence on enacted laws and procedures by which the state functions [at the local, national or European level – J.R., Ł.S.] within the organisational structures of parties, associations and political organisations. [What is important about this idea is that the different – J.R., Ł.S.] [...] types of civic engagement are connected and activity in one area may influence activities undertaken elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, the boundaries between types of activity are somewhat blurred. At this juncture it should be added that Klamut's Civic Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)<sup>20</sup>, to which we shall return later, can be considered a summary of his theoretical considerations.

### The social profile of representatives of generation Z

Although it is difficult to believe, particularly from the perspective of the already established 'theory of generations', interest in young people as an autonomous socio-political category has actually only been observed since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The postwar economic boom in the United States and the process of the middle and working classes becoming wealthier gave rise to a situation where young people from these social classes began to possess their own capital, involuntarily becoming a target group. Firstly, industrial conglomerates began to show their interest in this group, and, ultimately, all the other social and political concerns did so as well. Science also observed and implemented this phenomenon, adapting it to its own research needs as early as the turn of the 1950s and introducing the term 'teenager' to describe the same group. At a later stage, this group became known as 'young adults.'<sup>21</sup>

Just as quickly as young people emerged as a separate group and a category appeared to describe them, professionals (academics) began to reflect on the meaning of this change. In particular, sociologists, who in order to explain it began to use the term 'theory of generations', believed that what is constitutive of a given group can be defined as a "particular event during a specified period of time."<sup>22</sup> This event is of a formative nature for the group and also concerns social

<sup>19</sup> J. Miluska, J. Kuświk, *Preferencje typów ładu państwowego a aktywność polityczna młodzieży szkół średnich*, "Przegląd Psychologiczny" 2020, t. 63, nr 1, p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, *Kwestionariusz...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>21</sup> M. Brylczak, *Szkola demokracji – młodzież w świecie społeczno-politycznym. Wykluczenie, czy zaniedbanie?*, "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne" 2012, nr 1, p. 322.

<sup>22</sup> N.D. Glenn, *Cohort Analysis*, Sage Publications, London 1977, p. 2.

and political issues. Different generations experience political socialisation in different contexts and enter into the political arena or the public sphere at different moments in history. Generational experiences can, and most often do, influence the characteristics of cohorts and generations.

A war, an uprising, a repatriation, a significant societal shift, a political system change, the threat of hunger or unemployment, an economic crisis – all these events and processes can leave lasting traces in the social consciousness, contributing to the creation (or destruction) of the resources, predominantly cultural ones, which are essential for participation.<sup>23</sup>

Essentially seminal for the generation issue

was an essay by Karl Mannheim: *The problem of generations*. He considered the issue of generations as both a biological and cultural phenomenon. A generation is a group of people who come into the world in a particular generational location, that is, in a specific time and place. The succession of generations enables each new generation of young people to look at the world in a fresh light, which can (and [...] usually does) vary from how their predecessors saw it.<sup>24</sup>

Each generation is shaped by the configuration of social moods that are predominant in the particular socio-historical context.<sup>25</sup>

Since Mannheim's essay the generation issue has recurred in the work of other scholars. Here it would suffice to mention José Ortega y Gasset<sup>26</sup>, Maria Ossowska<sup>27</sup>, Jan Garewicz<sup>28</sup> and Barbara Fatyga.<sup>29</sup> These authors have claimed independently of each other that what creates a generation is a specific event, experience (positive or negative), and sometimes also the need to rebel, to resist, while at other times the need for continuity of the *status quo*.<sup>30</sup> A not insignificant role in shaping the image of individual generations is played by the system of values and beliefs, which at once pertains to the work environment, political and religious views and practices, as well as consumption patterns and notions

<sup>23</sup> M. Czeńnik, P. Zagórski, *Wiek a uczestnictwo wyborcze w Polsce: cykl życia, okres, kohorta*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2022, nr 4, p. 46, <https://doi.org/10.24425/sts.2022.143582>.

<sup>24</sup> M. Folta, X, Y, Z. *Teoria cykli pokoleniowych Straussa-Howe'a w świetle wcześniejszych teorii*, "Konteksty Społeczne" 2020, t. 8, nr 2, p. 24, <https://doi.org/10.17951/ks.2020.8.2.23-37>.

<sup>25</sup> K. Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations*, [in:] K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. P. Kecskemeti, Routledge & K. Paul, London 1952, pp. 292, 299, 319.

<sup>26</sup> J. Ortega y Gasset, *Zadanie naszych czasów*, [in:] J. Ortega y Gasset, *Po co wracamy do filozofii?*, wybór i wstęp S. Cichowicz, tłum. E. Burska, M. Iwańska, A. Jancewicz, Spacja, Warszawa 1992, pp. 17–28.

<sup>27</sup> M. Ossowska, *Koncepcja pokolenia*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 1963, nr 2, pp. 47–51.

<sup>28</sup> J. Garewicz, *Pokolenie jako kategoria socjofilozoficzna*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 1983, nr 1, pp. 75–87.

<sup>29</sup> B. Fatyga, *Pokolenie* [headword], [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii. Suplement*, red. H. Kubiak et al., Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2005, p. 195.

<sup>30</sup> M. Folta, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

of the family and collective life. In turn, these are connected to the economic and societal diversity of the conditions of existence, which translate into differences in life opportunities.<sup>31</sup>

Taking into account the problem of the succession of generations, the most cohesive theory is probably Strauss and Howe's theory of generational cycles. William Strauss and Neli Howe believe that

in relation to the shaping of generations there is a feedback loop: history shapes generations, and generations shape history – all of this is said to take place according to a model that repeats in cycles. The basis of this assumption is the secular cycle. [...] this term itself is taken from the Etruscan *saeculum*, which refers to the length of a human life. For Strauss and Howe, the secular cycle, which they estimate to be a period of eighty to a hundred years, is an ideal way of dividing history into periods. Every secular cycle begins and ends with a crisis, a great catastrophe. Then there are four fundamental phases: High, Awakening, Unravelling and Crisis. The authors term the transition between one phase and the next a Turning. The last, fourth Turning in the cycle is a shock, because after Crisis the old order collapses, out of the debris arises a new world, a new *saeculum* begins and the cycle repeats itself.<sup>32</sup>

According to Strauss and Howe, in each phase a key aspect is the predominant style of bringing up children, because this affects their behaviour and needs in adult life and drives the cycle: neglected children grow up to be overprotective parents, after which the pendulum swings in the opposite direction.<sup>33</sup>

Of the many attempts to describe different generations, one of the last is a suggestion that has found permanent anchorage in the theory of organisation and management, where a distinction is made between

1) the Silent Generation – those born between 1922 and 1944, the so-called builders of modern Europe; 2) Baby Boomers – those born between 1945 and 1964, the so-called generation of demographic and economic boom; 3) generation X – those born between 1965 and 1980 and who grew up during the economic crisis of the 1970s; generation Y [...], born after 1980s [between 1981 and 1994 – J.R., Ł.S.]” and who were brought up in an era of globalisation and widespread access to the internet<sup>34</sup>,

and generation Z, which is of interest to us: those born after 1995.<sup>35</sup> In the literature the upper limit for the birth of this cohort varies greatly; there are cases

<sup>31</sup> K. Messyasz, *Pokolenie Z na rynku pracy – strukturalne uwarunkowania i oczekiwania*, “Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Sociologica” 2021, nr 76, p. 103, <https://doi.org/10.18778/0208-600X.76.06>.

<sup>32</sup> M. Folta, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> W. Gzowska, S. Gęgotek, *Zarządzania współpracą międzygeneracyjną pracowników. Uwarunkowania współczesnego rynku pracy oraz zróżnicowanie pokoleń*, “Humanum. Międzynarodowe Studia Społeczno-Humanistyczne” 2017, t. 26, nr 3, p. 103.

<sup>35</sup> B. Hysa, *Zarządzanie różnorodnością pokoleniową*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie” 2016, z. 97, p. 387.

where the end date for this generation is the early years after the year 2000<sup>36</sup>, the year 2010<sup>37</sup>, or 2012.<sup>38</sup> As has been observed, “setting generational boundaries in terms of the year of birth is arbitrary – there are no precise scientific data or official consensus concerning the issue as to which year groups belong to which generation.”<sup>39</sup>

Representatives of the last age group are very often defined as generation C (i.e. Connected) – connected to the internet<sup>40</sup>, but also “the net generation”, and even generation M (i.e. Multitasking) or the internet generation.<sup>41</sup> For these individuals, “the virtual and real worlds are one and the same. They cannot function without the internet or electronic [social] media because for them they are commonplace and part of their everyday lives.”<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the world without the internet is an abstraction for them, while cyberspace is an example of reality.<sup>43</sup> However, as a consequence they experience difficulties in functioning without the internet.<sup>44</sup> Representatives of this cohort are more ethnoculturally diverse than previous generations, and more open to diversity and differences. Furthermore, they are characterised by being less materialistic and less trusting in people.<sup>45</sup>

According to studies of the work market (here researchers were the first to draw attention to generation Z)<sup>46</sup>, generation Z is made up of people who

want to embark on a dazzling career immediately, without any effort. For them, it is difficult to accept the idea of a professional career built over a long period by taking

<sup>36</sup> *Generation Z* [headword], Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Generation%20Z> [accessed: 17.11.2023].

<sup>37</sup> *Generation Z* [headword], Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/eng-lish/generation-z?q=generation+z> [accessed: 17.11.2023].

<sup>38</sup> J.M. Twenge, *iGen. Dlaczego dzieciaki dorastające w sieci są mniej zbudowane, bardziej tolerancyjne, mniej szczęśliwe i zupełnie nieprzygotowane do dorosłości – i co to oznacza dla nas wszystkich*, tłum. O. Dziedzic, Smak Słowa, Sopot 2019.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> B. Jamka, *Wyzwania związane z charakterystyką młodych na rynku pracy: potencjał interpretacyjny neuronauk*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Poznańskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie” 2019, nr 80, p. 104.

<sup>41</sup> J.M. Twenge, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> B. Hysa, *op. cit.*, pp. 389–390.

<sup>43</sup> M. Popiołek, *E-kompetencje cyfrowego pokolenia w świetle badań własnych. Eksploracja zagadnienia na przykładzie wybranych e-umiejętności*, “Zarządzanie Mediami” 2014, t. 2, nr 2, pp. 77–90, <https://doi.org/10.4467/23540214ZM.14.006.3568>; J.M. Twenge, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> J. Gajda, *Oczekiwania przedstawicieli pokolenia Z wobec pracy zawodowej i pracodawcy*, “Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu” 2017, nr 491, p. 161.

<sup>45</sup> V.-A. Mahéo, E. Bélanger, *Generation Z: Portrait of a New Generation of Young Canadians and How They Compare to Older Canadians*, Elections Canada 2021, p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> G.D. Stunża, *Edukacja wersja beta. Pokolenie Z i pokolenie Alfa a kompetencje uczestnictwa w kulturze*, “Kultura Popularna” 2017, nr 1, p. 89, <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.0046>; A. Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, B. Chomałowska, *Pokolenie „Z” na rynku pracy – wyzwania dla zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi*, “Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu” 2014, nr 350, pp. 407–409, <https://doi.org/10.15611/pn.2014.350.36>.

small steps. [...] typical of them is mobility and a knowledge of foreign languages. In addition, what poses a threat for older generations, for generation Z is an object of fascination and provides them with scope for experimentation. They are not interested in stability at work, they look for diversity and avoid routine. They enjoy communicating with other cultures, they want to go abroad for internships, constantly change and perfect established processes and try new work methods. They value group work more than working independently. They are capable of doing many things at once and it is difficult for them to concentrate on one activity.<sup>47</sup>

In the journal “Inżynieria & Utrzymanie Ruchu” (Engineering and Maintenance), Agnieszka Hyla states that

The computer, telephone and tablet are their third, fourth and fifth hand. When doing research they are more inclined to trust results found in Google than their university lecturer. They pour out their sorrows and regrets not on their Facebook page but on Snapchat and Instagram. Generation Z have no illusions. They are fed stories of superheroes that possess special powers and abilities, they look in the mirror and know that they will never be like them. Although the cinema and music give them support, they know professionally what hopeless situation they have found themselves in. After all, it is more and more difficult to find a good job which will allow them to combine making a living with real life – realising their passions, forming relationships, travelling around the world. And that is precisely what generation Z wants – to experience and see as much as possible.<sup>48</sup>

In questions of politics, generation Z differ from previous generations. In Canada a study was carried out that shows that young people there typically have greater trust in their government, less political cynicism, but at the same time identify much less with political parties, which the authors attempt to justify by referring to their having less experience with state authorities. Furthermore, they conclude that those who took part in the study were characterised by less involvement, interest in and knowledge of politics, that they watch world news less frequently and – like generation Y – that they are less sure of their own ability to understand the world of politics.<sup>49</sup> Similar results can be found in a report of research carried out in the United States. Generation Z describes itself as the most diverse and most educated of cohorts that have so far been identified, and also as having liberal views and being open to emerging social trends.<sup>50</sup> However, this trend is imperceptible in Europe, where the increase in

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<sup>47</sup> B. Hysa, *op. cit.*, p. 390; R. Muster, *Pokolenie „Z” na współczesnym rynku pracy w opiniach pracodawców*, “Humanizacja Pracy” 2020, nr 1, p. 133; K.M. Czyczerska, A.J. Ławnik, E. Szlenk-Czyczerska, *Współczesny rynek pracy w Polsce a generacja. Różnice między pokoleniami X, Y oraz Z*, “Rozprawy Społeczne” 2020, t. 14, nr 3, pp. 112–113.

<sup>48</sup> A. Hyla, *X, Y, Z. Alfabet zmian społecznych*, “Inżynieria & Utrzymanie Ruchu” 2017, p. 86, <https://utrzymanieruchu.pl/x-y-z-alfabet-zmian-spoecznych> [accessed: 17.10.2023].

<sup>49</sup> V.-A. Mahéco, E. Bélanger, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

the number of young people taking part in elections is accompanied by a growth in support for right-wing parties, and it is precisely young people who declare their support for these parties.<sup>51</sup>

The above suggestion for how the generations born at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be divided up is not a generally accepted paradigm and does not lack critics. Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more prominent in the literature. The number of studies that attempt to describe each of these generations in full is also increasing systematically.<sup>52</sup> What should not be surprising is that studies concerned specifically with generation Z are the fewest in number. However this generation – especially in the context of a socio-political description – is referred to as people who are currently reaching voting age. Significant for this generation is also the constant need not to miss anything, to take part in it, to watch it, to see it and, of course, to document it (for example with their smartphone).<sup>53</sup>

The first attempts to conceptualise the political activity of generation Z make reference to a conventional level (taking part in elections) and a non-conventional one (readiness to protest). Incidentally, it is assumed that a characteristic feature of the general activity of this generation is, for example in Poland, a “rejection” of the order established during the period of political transformation and the constant search for a new stability. This generation is more demanding of itself, other people and their institutional-organisational surroundings. However, at the same time they are characterised by courage in making decisions, individualism, and they place importance on creating their own identity. In general this generation is rather unpredictable. People from this generation often make decisions on the basis of their own emotions, which are often linked to information they have acquired online. In their choices, values such as family, love and friendship, money and work are almost equally important for generation Z. They are socially and ecologically engaged, but mostly online and on the basis of the desire to

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<sup>51</sup> *The 2019 European elections: A pro-European – and young – electorate with clear expectations*, European Parliament, 12.07.2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190710IPR56721/2019-eu-elections-a-pro-european-and-young-electorate-with-clear-expectations> [accessed: 17.11.2023].

<sup>52</sup> E. Bombiak, *Zarządzanie pokoleniami wyzwaniem dla współczesnych menadżerów*, [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo i wyzwania współczesnych organizacji w obliczu gospodarki XXI wieku*, red. J.T. Toruński, M. Chrzęścik, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo-Humanistycznego, Siedlce 2016, pp. 65–76; D. Kukla, M. Nowacka, *Charakterystyka podejścia do pracy przedstawicieli pokolenia Z – praca w systemie wartości młodych*. Cz. 1, “Polish Journal of Continuing Education” 2019, nr 3, pp. 120–130, <https://doi.org/10.34866/j3z5-5633>; A. Wasiluk, M. Bańkowska, *Przesłanki dotyczące wyboru miejsca pracy przez pracowników pokolenia X, Y, Z*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Polskiego Towarzystwa w Zielonej Górze” 2021, nr 14, pp. 138–159, <https://doi.org/10.26366/PTE.ZG.2021.197>.

<sup>53</sup> A. Kądziała, *Partycypacja wyborcza młodych Polaków – uwarunkowania i wyzwania*, “Prawo i Polityka” 2019, t. 9, pp. 107–108; *Od funu do zakochania. Sposób na dotarcie do pokolenia Z*, Agencja Twożywo, 2019, <https://nowymarketing.pl/i/fmfiles/od-funu-do-zakochania-sposob-na-dotarcie-do-pokolenia-z.pdf> [accessed: 17.10.2023].

participate, because their level of declared interest often does not translate into the real, low statistics concerning their actual involvement.<sup>54</sup>

In a more general – global – characterisation of generation Z it has been shown that representatives of this age group throughout the world want governments to treat economic stability, quality of education and access to jobs as priorities. 51% of generation Z are in favour of nationalist politics, while 32% prefer a global approach. For this generation, career priorities are a stable career path (89% believe that this is important or very important), a competitive salary and motivational incentives (87%) as well as a work/private life balance (84%). However, the least interest is shown in the chance to become a leader (64%), work abroad (63%) and influencing a business strategy (63%).<sup>55</sup>

### Theoretical assumptions and practical research tools

There is no lack of studies concerning e.g. issues linked to the experiences and aspirations of young Poles in various fields, namely, education, employment, participation in political life, attitudes and values. When these are reports of research, they contain responses to issues such as reasons for disillusionment with politics, possible areas of political involvement and even opinions regarding the structure of the state and the economic and social policies realised within it. In studies of this type there is also no lack of questions linked to political views, respondents' personal political preferences and trust in public institutions.<sup>56</sup> The Batory Foundation enquired about the attitude of young people to democracy. However, this question was directed towards activists, i.e. a particular group of people whom one can suspect *a priori* of being more willing to participate in socio-political processes, even if their activism concerns first and foremost general social issues, rather than involvement in institutions, associations and political parties.<sup>57</sup>

Special attention – in studies including national ones – is paid to the political beliefs of young people. Here an excellent example may be the attempt to describe their political beliefs with special reference to the left-wing right-wing

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<sup>54</sup> E. Dąbrowska-Prokopowska, G. Nowacki, *Młodzi, gniewni i zagubieni, czyli o aktywności politycznej pokolenia Z we współczesnej Polsce*, "Trzeci Sektor" 2020, nr 51–52(3–4), pp. 65–66, <https://doi.org/10.26368/17332265-51/52-3/4-2020-4>.

<sup>55</sup> *Zróbmy miejsce dla pokolenia Z: Co naprawdę ma znaczenie dla nowego pokolenia*, tłum. Stowarzyszenie Księgowych w Polsce, Międzynarodową Federację Księgowych 2018, [https://www.skwp.pl/files/zg/IFAC\\_Make\\_Way\\_for\\_Gen\\_Z.pdf](https://www.skwp.pl/files/zg/IFAC_Make_Way_for_Gen_Z.pdf) [accessed: 17.10.2023].

<sup>56</sup> *Młodzi ludzie w Polsce. Między rozczarowaniem państwem a nadzieją na lepsze życie 2020/2021*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn 2022, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/19433.pdf> [accessed: 17.10.2023].

<sup>57</sup> J. Kajta, S. Barakeh, P. Marczewski, P. Pustułka, *Demokratyczny paradoks w praktyce: Doświadczenia młodych aktywistów i aktywistek*, "Youth Working Papers" 2022, nr 1, <https://doi.org/10.23809/15>.

dimension, and also in relation to cultural and economic issues<sup>58</sup>, while another example is the directly formulated claims made above regarding right-wing leanings among the youngest voters.<sup>59</sup> There are also studies on the political knowledge of Poles<sup>60</sup>, as well as on the influence of social-media campaigns on young voters.<sup>61</sup> Even closer to our way of thinking about the social activity of young people is a study by Joanna Stepaniuk, in which the author enquires who school volunteers are. In this way she attempts to create a short description of generation Z in terms of their values, expectations, attitudes, character traits and motivation to do voluntary work.<sup>62</sup> And it is precisely this final topic that encouraged us to attempt to answer the question as to the scope of the social activity of young people, with special reference to generation Z.

We begin our investigations by defining what is and what essentially constitutes civic engagement. Our questionnaire is based on a theoretical suggestion as to what civic engagement is, formulated by the previously referred to Klamut.<sup>63</sup> Like Klamut, we assume that civic engagement is essentially activity within the community, social participation, individual political activity and political participation. In the first place we generated a pool of test questions pertaining to these four areas of activity. Then these questions were verified by competent judges in terms of face validity, i.e. in terms of how participants could perceive individual questions; whether – from the perspective of the participants – the questions are appropriate and have a specific aim, i.e. to obtain data essential for explaining an issue that interests us, and then whether they are comprehensible. The role of competent judges was played by four employees of the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, who otherwise study social influence, marketing analysis, social psychology and political communication, respectively. Having evaluated the questions, we rejected the controversial ones (those on which the judges could not agree), restocked the pool of test questions and again asked the judges to evaluate them. After the second round of evaluations, we again rejected the controversial questions (those regarding which the judges again could not reach a consensus),

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<sup>58</sup> G. Czarnek, P. Dragon, P. Szwed, B. Wojciszke, *Kwestionariusz przekonań politycznych: własności psychometryczne*, "Psychologia Społeczna" 2017, t. 12, nr 2, pp. 205–222, <https://doi.org/10.7366/1896180020174108>.

<sup>59</sup> K. Szafraniec, J. Grygieńć, *Prawicowość młodych Polaków. Kontekst wyborów parlamentarnych z 2015 roku*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2019, nr 2, pp. 5–35.

<sup>60</sup> M. Żerkowska-Balas, M. Cześniak, M. Zaremba, *Dynamika wiedzy politycznej Polaków*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2017, nr 3, pp. 7–31.

<sup>61</sup> A. Ceglińska, K. Kopeć-Ziemczyk, *Wpływ kampanii politycznej w mediach społecznościowych na zachowania wyborcze młodych Polaków*, "Studia Medioznawcze" 2016, t. 1, pp. 57–70, <https://doi.org/10.33077/uw.24511617.ms.2016.64.490>.

<sup>62</sup> J. Stepaniuk, *Kim są młodzi szkolni wolontariusze? Pokolenie Z – w obliczu wolontariatu szkolnego*, "Praca Socjalna" 2021, vol. 36, nr 4, pp. 177–192.

<sup>63</sup> R. Klamut, *Kwesionariusz...*, *op. cit.*; *idem*, *Aktywność...*, *op. cit.*

restocked the pool of test questions and once again had the competent judges evaluate them, only this time rejecting the controversial ones but not adding new items to the questionnaire. Furthermore, while developing the tool we decided to differentiate the test questions into those to which we expected potential respondents to give relatively unambiguous responses, for example regarding participation in social actions or membership of political organisations. Additionally, we included their assessment of prosocial and asocial behaviours from the perspective of participants' own approach to these problems, determining, for example, how sensitive they are to social issues or acts of vandalism. As a consequence, the questionnaire contained questions with a nominal response scale, balanced scales and unbalanced scales. However, taking the nature of the questions into account, we decided to abandon the originally planned Likert scale.

As a result of this procedure, we ultimately obtained a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four key questions, two entirely metric ones as well as four questions concerning the position of the respondents within society. The twenty-four key questions were arranged in a logical order, and included, in different configurations, references to commitment to the community, questions about social participation, individual political activity and ones linked to political participation. The metric questions (25–26) concerned only the sex and date of birth (within a specified range). This was to allow us to observe any tendencies within specific year groups of generation Z relating to responses given to specific questions. Questions 27 to 30 concerned participants' assessment of their own material situation, a description of the school the respondent goes to, any emigration plans and their current employment situation (if they have a job). The last stage of this complicated process was to carry out a pilot study. We treated it as an initial procedure, intended to test and assess the tool itself.<sup>64</sup>

## Pilot study

Building a good questionnaire is an art. Therefore a responsible researcher should not use this tool without first carrying out a pilot study on a small group of respondents, similar to those for whom the actual questionnaire is intended. The pilot study answers the question as to whether the survey is well formulated and understandable for the participants, and also gives us – the researchers – another chance to make some final improvements.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> K. Grzeszkiewicz-Radulska, *Metody badań pilotażowych*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica” 2012, nr 42, pp. 113–141.

<sup>65</sup> R. Bäcker, L. Czechowska, G. Gadomska, J. Gajda, K. Gawron-Tabor, M. Giedz, D. Kaspro-wicz, M. Mateja, B. Płotka, J. Rak, A. Seklecka, W. Szewczak, M. Winclawska, J. Wojciechowska, *Metodologia badań politologicznych*, Polskie Towarzystwo Nauk Politycznych, Warszawa 2016, p. 122.

Following these guidelines, we decided that it would be necessary to carry out a pilot study as early as the stage of planning our research. The aim of the pilot study was to obtain answers to the following questions:

1. Are the questions in the questionnaire formulated in a way that is comprehensible for recipients?
2. Are there any mistakes in the questionnaire, e.g. grammatical or orthographical ones, that were not previously noticed?
3. Are the questions in the questionnaire formulated appropriately, allowing the truth of the hypotheses to be verified?
4. Do the answers obtained from the questionnaire allow the research problem to be solved and the research questions to be answered?

The pilot study was comprehensive and was conducted as follows: the respondents, who were in the same room as the person conducting the study, received a link to the questionnaire. While filling in the questionnaire, they had the opportunity to ask questions or report anything they did not understand. Then the group had the opportunity to make a comment or indicate whether some elements of the questionnaire remained unclear to them or needed to be explained in greater depth. It should be mentioned that only representatives of generation Z were selected to participate in the pilot study (like the target group).

### **Our own research methodology**

The research was conducted between 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023, and 135 people took part in it, who were students of the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and WSB Merito University in Poznań. The sample selection was deliberate. A questionnaire, which was available online, was used in the research. The respondents answered 20 or 22 research questions (the additional two questions depended on their answer to a previous question), two metric questions and four questions concerning their position within society. Since the research was aimed at representatives of generation Z, 16 of the 135 questionnaires received were removed, since they had been filled in by representatives of other generations.

### **The results of the pilot study**

119 questionnaires completed by representatives of generation Z were analysed. The first demographic variable that the participants stated was their age. This question allowed us to distinguish between forms that had been filled in by people who were older or younger than the generation under investigation. These answers were not analysed further. For the question about the year of birth, the

categories 1995–1998, 1999–2004 and 2005–2008 were used. These categories made it possible to replicate, albeit imprecisely, the educational stages of the participants. The youngest year groups (2005–2008) were studying at higher education institutions, while the next ones (1999–2004) were students or individuals of higher education age who were assumed to have begun their studies at the age of 19. Finally, there were higher education graduates (1995–1998) or people who would finish their studies at the age of 25 (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants (119 questionnaires)

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
Year of birth	1995–1998	28	23.5%
	1999–2004	83	69.7%
	2005–2008	8	6.7%
Sex	Female	95	79.9%
	Male	24	20.1%
	Other	0	-
Financial situation	Poor	2	1.7%
	Average	31	26.1%
	Good	59	49.6%
	Very good	24	20.2%
	I prefer not to answer	3	2.5%
Current stage of education	Primary school	0	-
	Secondary school	7	5.9%
	University/college	106	89.1%
	I've already graduated	6	5%
	I'm not in education	0	-
If you are still studying or have finished your studies, do you intend to leave Poland: permanently and/or to work?	I'm no longer studying	0	-
	Probably not	33	27.7%
	Probably	22	18.5%
	It's difficult to say	42	35.3%
	Definitely not	17	14.3%
	Definitely	5	4.2%
Do you work or earn money? (You may choose more than one answer.)	From time to time (when I need to, when I feel like it)	4	3.4%
	From time to time (when I need to, when I feel like it), job contract (full or part time)	2	1.7%
	I don't work at all	9	7.6%
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays)	9	7.6%
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays), from time to time (when I need to, when I feel like it)	1	0.8%
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays), from time to time (when I need to, when I feel like it), I don't work at all	1	0.8%

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays from time to time (when I need to, when I feel like it), freelance/service contract	2	1.7%
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays), I don't work at all	2	1.7%
	Seasonally (e.g. during the holidays), freelance/service contract	2	1.7%
	Job contract (full or part time)	41	34.5%
	Freelance/service contract	43	36.1%
	Freelance/service contract, job contract (full or part time)	3	2.5%

Source: self-developed questionnaire.

The largest number of respondents were born between 1999 and 2004. This was the response of 83 participants. 28 people who filled in the questionnaire were born between 1995 and 1998. Only eight answered that they had been born between 2005 and 2008.

The question about the respondents' sex was accompanied by three possible answers: "woman", "man" or "other". No one chose the last option. Women made up 79.9% of those surveyed, 20.01% were men.

The respondents were also asked to describe the financial situation of the household in which they live. 59 (49.6%) people said the situation was "good", 31 (26.1%) chose the answer "average", and 24 (20.2%) "very good". Two people (1.7%) described the financial situation of their households as poor, while three people (2.5%) chose not to answer this question.

The largest proportion of participants were students. This answer was selected 106 times, which made up 89.1%. Seven individuals (5.9%) said they were at secondary school, while the least frequent response (5%) was "I've already graduated". Only six people chose this answer. No respondent said they were at primary school or that they were not in education at all.

The next question that intended to characterise the respondents concerned whether they planned to emigrate after finishing their studies. The most frequently selected response was "it's difficult to say" (42 times), then "probably not" (33 times) and "probably" (22 times). The option "definitely not" was chosen by 17 respondents. The smallest number of respondents answered "definitely" (five times) – Table 1.

Table 2. Attitudes towards civic engagement and participation of the respondents

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
Do you help others by contributing money to collections, and supporting foundations, associations and charities financially?	Very often	7	5.9%
	Often	18	15.1%
	Sometimes	84	70.6%
	Never	10	8.4%
Are you a member of a foundation, association or charity?	Yes	22	18.5%
	No	97	81.5%
What prompted you to become a member of this organisation? (You may choose more than one answer.)	The aim of the organisation	5	22.7%
	The aim of the organisation, my views and beliefs	10	45.5%
	The aim of the organisation, my views and beliefs, my friends are members and encouraged me	1	4.5%
	My views and convictions	5	22.7%
	My views and beliefs, my friends are members and encouraged me	1	4.5%
What sort of organisation are you involved with? (You may choose more than one answer.)	An animal shelter	1	4.5%
	A foundation, an association	15	68.2%
	A foundation, an association as an altar server/in a church choir	1	4.5%
	A foundation, an association, a school/student council	4	18.2%
	A humanitarian organisation	1	4.5%
You go for a walk, or are on your way home from school or university, and you see litter thrown all over the park, the street or in a roadside ditch etc. What do you do?	I ignore it, it's the council's job to remove it	8	6.7%
	I feel sorry, but I just walk on	42	35.3%
	I think disapprovingly about who did this	39	32.8%
	I try to pick it up, especially if there isn't very much and if it's safe	29	24.4%
	I call the relevant people and inform them about what's happened because there's a special application for this etc.	1	0.8%
You walk past a vandalised bus shelter, or the wall of a building that has been scribbled on (definitely not graffiti), an overturned rubbish bin, or see some other act of vandalism. What do you do?	I take part in occasional community initiatives to paint over acts of vandalism, do repairs etc.	1	0.8%
	I ignore it, it's the council's job to repair such damage	13	10.9%
	I feel sorry, but I just walk on	43	36.1%
	I think disapprovingly about who did this	52	43.7%
	I call the relevant people and inform them about what's happened because there's a special application for this etc.	10	8.4%

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
Do you think that we should help war refugees, e.g. from Ukraine and Syria, give them shelter, a roof over their heads, allow them access to schools, colleges, and give them jobs?	I don't know	17	14.3%
	Probably not	4	3.4%
	Probably	51	42.9%
	Definitely not	3	2.5%
	Definitely	44	37%
Do you think that climate change is a serious problem of our times?	I don't know	1	0.8%
	Probably not	4	3.4%
	Probably	39	32.8%
	Definitely not	2	1.7%
	Definitely	73	61.3%
Do you follow the social media profiles of associations, foundations and other social organisations?	No	37	31.1%
	Yes	82	69%

Source: self-developed questionnaire.

Table 2 presents the answers to individual questions in the research tool we prepared. A positive answer to question 2 was the condition for answering questions 2a and 2b, while a negative answer meant that questions 2a and 2b were skipped; the online questionnaire immediately switched to question 3.

On the basis of the data presented in Table 2 it is possible to conclude that, as far as social activity is concerned, those who took part in the research try to support different types of organisations and charitable initiatives financially (“very often – seven people; “often” – 18 people, “sometimes” – 84 people). A significant proportion of respondents are not members of any association, foundation or charity (97 people), while individuals involved in such organisations (22 people) most frequently work with foundations and associations (15 people) with both the aim of the organisation and their own views in mind (10 people).

In terms of the sensitivity of representatives of generation Z towards damage to property and vandalism in public places, they most frequently claim that they feel sorry or that they think disapprovingly about those who do this. Empathy was also shown towards Syrian refugees. When answering the question as to whether war refugees from Ukraine and Syria should be offered help, most respondents answered “definitely” (44 times) and “probably” (51 times). They were even more decisive in their responses to the question about climate change as a serious problem of our times: “definitely” – 73 people; “probably” – 39 people.

Regarding the question “Do you follow the social media profiles of associations, foundations and other social organisations?”, the most frequent response was “yes” (82 times), while 37 people answered “no”.

Table 3. Individual political attitudes and political participation of the respondents

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
Define your interest in politics:	I'm not interested at all	7	5.9%
	I'm rarely interested	15	12.6%
	I'm averagely interested	44	37%
	I'm interested sometimes	27	22.7%
	I'm always interested	26	21.8%
Where do you obtain information about politics? (You may choose more than one answer.)	Social media	15	12.6%
	Traditional media (television, print media, radio)	2	1.7%
	Traditional media (television, print media, radio), social media	25	21%
	Family	2	1.7%
	Family, social media	4	3.4%
	Family, traditional media (television, print media, radio)	3	2.5%
	Family, traditional media (television, print media, radio), social media	12	10.1%
	Family and friends	1	0.8%
	Family and friends, social media	6	5%
	Family, friends, church, traditional media (television, print media, radio), social media	1	0.8%
	Family, friends, traditional media (television, print media, radio)	2	1.7%
	Family, friends, traditional media (television, print media, radio), social media	24	20.2%
	Friends, social media	14	11.8%
	Friends, traditional media (television, print media, radio)	1	0.8%
	Friends, traditional media (television, print media, radio), social media	7	5.9%
Do you follow social media in which you comment on political events?	Never	6	5%
	Rarely (from time to time)	75	63%
	Always	38	32%
Do you comment on political events in social media?	Never	79	66.4%
	Rarely (from time to time)	34	28.6%
	Always	6	5%
Do you create memes or other materials of a political nature?	Never	98	82.4%
	Rarely (from time to time)	16	13.4%
	Always	5	4.2%

You are at a family gathering, with friends, or in a different social situation and someone suddenly starts a discussion about politics. An argument breaks out about views on a particular issue. Does this annoy you?	At family gatherings or meetings with friends we don't talk about politics	8	6.7%
	Probably not	16	13.4%
	Probably	35	29.4%
	It's difficult to say	22	18.5%
	Definitely not	6	5%
	Definitely	32	26.9%
You are at a family gathering, with friends, or in a different social situation and someone suddenly starts a discussion about politics. Do you take part in such political arguments yourself?	At family gatherings or meetings with friends we don't talk about politics	5	4.2%
	Probably not	36	30.3%
	Probably	31	26.1%
	It's difficult to say	11	9.2%
	Definitely not	19	16%
	Definitely	17	14.3%
You are watching, intentionally or completely by chance, a programme featuring politicians. Suddenly an argument about politics breaks out. Do arguments among politicians of different factions annoy you?	Probably not	28	23.5%
	Probably	28	23.5%
	It's difficult to say	23	19.3%
	Definitely not	11	9.2%
	Definitely	29	24.4%
Are you a member of a political party (the youth wing of a political party)?	No	104	87.4%
	Yes	11	9.2%
	I don't want to answer	4	3.4%
You are in church and during the sermon you hear the priest referring to current political affairs/ You don't go to church but someone tells you about such an incident. Should the church involve itself in political issues?	Probably not	17	14.3%
	Probably	3	2.5%
	It's difficult to say	6	5%
	Definitely not	93	78.2%
	Definitely	0	-
In the media you hear about the official position of bishops on the issue of abortion and euthanasia legislation, etc. Should the church involve itself in political issues?	Probably not	9	7.6%
	Probably	1	0.8%
	It's difficult to say	6	5%
	Definitely not	103	86.6%
	Definitely	0	-

Source: self-developed questionnaire.

Table 3 presents the answers to the questions concerning the political attitudes of the participants. Most of them stated that they were averagely interested in politics (44), are sometimes interested (27) or always (26). At the same time,

the most common answer to the question concerning where the respondents obtained information about politics was traditional media and social media (25). For 24 respondents, apart from these sources, the family, friends, traditional media is also important. Then for 15 participants the only source of such information is social media, and for 14 people it comes from both friends and social media. 12 answers concerned the family, traditional media and social media as the basis for obtaining information about politics. The remaining answers were selected considerably less often.

When it comes to the next question, which concerned social media in which users can comment on political events, 75 people stated that they do this “rarely (from time to time)”, 38 that they “always” write comments and just six that they “never” do this. The next question was about commenting on political events in social media. Here the respondents could select from the same options as before. 79 answered “never”, 34 “rarely (from time to time)”, and just six answered “always”. In the case of the question about memes and other materials of a political nature, the majority (98 people) answered “never” and “rarely (from time to time)” – 16 people. The least common answer was “always” – just five people.

In the case of the next question, respondents were asked to choose an answer which would describe their emotions when they are at a family gathering or meeting with friends or another social situation and somebody suddenly starts a political discussion. As a consequence an argument breaks out about views on various issues. The participants had to decide if such a situation would annoy them. Most people (35) selected the answer “probably” or “definitely” (32). 22 answered “it’s difficult to say”, 16 “probably not” and six “definitely not”. The answer “At family gatherings or meetings with friends we don’t talk about politics” was ticked eight times. The following question was formulated in a similar way, although it concerned a different social situation: “You are at a family gathering, with friends, or in a different social situation and someone suddenly starts a discussion about politics. Do you take part in such political arguments yourself?” Here the range of answers was as follows: “At family gatherings or meetings with friends we don’t talk about politics” – five people, “probably not” – 36 people, “probably” – 31 people, “it’s difficult to say” – 11 people, “definitely not” – 19 people and “definitely” – 17 people.

The next question asked about participants’ emotions when they are watching television: “You are watching, intentionally or completely by chance, a programme featuring politicians. Suddenly an argument about politics breaks out. Do arguments among politicians of different factions annoy you?” The answer to this question most frequently selected was “definitely”, which was chosen 29 times, although the answers “probably not” and “probably” were only selected one time fewer. “It is difficult to say” was chosen 23 times, while the answer that respondents chose least frequently was “definitely not” (11 people).

Participants in the pilot study were also asked about their involvement in political parties. No fewer than 104 stated that they were not members of such an organisation, 11 selected the contrary answer, while on four occasions respondents chose not to answer this question.

In the last questions of this part of the questionnaire participants answered questions on the relationship between the church and political power. Here there were two questions, of which the first was: “You are in church and during the sermon you hear the priest referring to current political affairs/You don’t go to church but someone tells you about such an incident. Should the church involve itself in political issues?” The most commonly selected answer was “definitely not”, which was chosen 93 times. “Probably not” was chosen 17 times, “it’s difficult to say”, six times, “probably”, three times and “definitely” was selected by no-one. The second question was formulated as follows: “In the media you hear about the official position of bishops on the issue of abortion and euthanasia legislation, etc. Should the church involve itself in political issues?” The answers were similar to those of the previous question. “Definitely not” was selected 103 times, “probably not”, nine times, “it’s difficult to say”, six times, and “probably”, once. Here, too, no-one answered “definitely”.

Table 4. Opinions and views of the participants

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
Do you want Poland to continue its membership of the European Union?	Probably not	3	2.5%
	Probably	28	23.5%
	It’s difficult to say	8	6.7%
	Definitely not	0	-
	Definitely	80	67%
Will you take part in the next elections?	If elections take place in 2023 I will be under 18 years old and will be unable to take part in them	5	4.2%
	Probably not	6	5%
	Probably	9	7.6%
	It’s difficult to say	2	1.7%
	Definitely not	1	0.8%
	Definitely	96	80.6%
Describe your views on a simple scale: left-wing – centre – right-wing:	Left-wing	42	35.3%
	Centre	22	18.5%
	Right-wing	8	6.7%
	This classification doesn’t take my views/beliefs into account	47	39.5%

Question	Answer	Number of instances	Percentage
How would you describe your level of religious commitment?	I don't believe	43	36.1%
	I believe and go to church rarely	19	16%
	I believe and don't go to church	36	30.3%
	I believe and go to church regularly	10	8.4%
	I don't want to answer	11	9.2%

Source: self-developed questionnaire.

The information in Table 4 allows us to conclude that the representatives of generation Z that took part in this study are in favour of Poland remaining in the European Union. To this question, no fewer than 80 people answered “definitely” and 28 people “probably”. Just three people selected the answer “probably not”. However, nobody answered “definitely not”. “It’s difficult to say” was ticked by eight people.

The people who took part in this study declared that they will “definitely” (96 responses) or “probably” (9 responses) take part in the next elections. Just a few people answered “probably not” (six times) or “definitely not” (once). Of the 119 questionnaires analysed, in just two cases were the participants not sure if they would vote in the elections.

The representatives of generation Z who took part in the study most frequently stated that the left-centre-right axis did not take their views/beliefs into account (47 responses). However, when “forced” to choose in the next question, they identified their views as left-wing (42 responses). Many fewer people positioned their views in the centre of this axis (22 responses), and out of all the respondents the smallest number defined their views as right-wing. Only eight people described them as such.

As far as religious commitment is concerned, the largest number described themselves as non-believers (43) or believers who do not go to church (36). 19 of the respondents said that they were believers but rarely go to church. However, ten people admitted that they believe and regularly go to church. In 11 cases the respondents elected not to answer this question.

### **An initial characterisation of generation Z**

In no way does the group we studied constitute a representative sample of the generation that we are interested in. Nevertheless, on the basis of the data we gathered we can assert that of the 119 representatives of generation Z, most were born between 1999 and 2004, and in the same sample women are overrepresented. The participants’ own assessment of their financial situation ranged from very good (20.2%), through good (49.6%) to average (26.1%), which

allows us to claim that in general this assessment is rather optimistic. Unlike previous generations, generation Z surveyed by us do not have their hearts set on emigration. Very interesting is the fact that the majority of them study and work at the same time, either on the basis of a freelance or service contract, or a job contract (the study was carried out among both day students and weekend students).

The social attitudes that are essential for a study of generation Z are as follows. A general commitment to helping others, whether in the form of collections or charitable actions, prompts us to claim that occasional involvement is declared by 70.6% of participants. However, only 18.5% of our respondents declared that they were members of a foundation, association or charity, which is nevertheless a good result, taking into account the general level of social engagement of Polish society.<sup>66</sup> It is comforting that if such participation is already taking place, as many as 90.5% of respondents cite the purpose of the organisation and/or their own beliefs as reasons for their activity. The entities with which the respondents prefer to work are foundations and associations, as well as school and student councils. The sensitivity of the participants is encouraging, both with regard to neglected urban spaces (litter) and acts of vandalism. They not only think disapprovingly about such actions, but even declare their willingness to clean up and intervene in the matter (by making a call to the relevant bodies). Willingness to help war refugees is also high, regardless of their country of origin. Sensitivity to deepening climate changes is also on an unusually high level (“definitely” – 61.3%, “probably” – 32.8%).

From a cognitive point of view, the individual political and participatory attitudes of the respondents are interesting too. Interest in politics itself spans a similar range, from rarely interested to always interested. A total lack of interest in politics was declared by only 5.9% of our respondents. The answers to the question regarding the source of information about politics is intriguing because for our participants this was not only traditional media and social media, but also other forms of political influence, including family and friends. Research has also considered politicians and their activity on social media, but they themselves are not necessarily active, particularly as they mostly do not comment on events online, and do not create materials of a political nature. The respondents’ declarations regarding emotions felt towards politics and political events, especially if they are the subject of family conversations and arguments, are also varied. Decidedly negative is the respondents’ attitude towards membership of political parties and the involvement of the Church in matters of a political nature.

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<sup>66</sup> M. Feliksiak, *Aktywność w organizacjach obywatelskich*, “Komunikat z Badań CBOS” 2022, nr 41, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K\\_041\\_22.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_041_22.PDF) [accessed: 17.10.2023].

## Conclusion

The reasons why we not only undertook a theoretical attempt to conceptualise the category of civic engagement and generation Z, but also attempted to create a tool intended to measure this variable in this section of society, arose from fears about the state of democracy, or rather the condition of civil society in Poland. However, the pilot study and trial-run of the questionnaire itself do not entitle us to formulate any far-reaching conclusions at all in this regard. Certainly, however, the assumption of a decline in subjectivity and civic engagement, or a moral resignation from responsibility for one's own fate, is not a particular feature of the representatives of generation Z that we studied. Even the claim that interest in politics and political involvement have fallen in favour of purely social activities does not find unequivocal confirmation. It is true that in this group the majority declared that they did not belong to any formal political entities (parties, associations), although the question of an interest in politics is not so straightforward. At least initially, we know that young people declare occasional social activity (collections, charity events), as well as involvement, motivated by their world view, in the activities of third sector organisations. Typical of our participants is sensitivity to social issues, both on a purely emotional level (disapproval for harmful activities and acts of vandalism), and in their readiness to get involved and counteract them (the willingness to clean up or intervene). The representatives of generation Z surveyed by us pay attention to their external surroundings, as well as issues concerning both the climate and help for the victims of armed conflict. Paradoxically, as opposed to previous findings, they are interested in politics, they follow political news, but they do not necessarily comment on it, let alone create materials of a political nature. They take part in political discussions at home, but their attitude to ongoing disputes is not straightforward (ranging from approval, through partial approval to disapproval). It is surprising that they draw their knowledge and news about politics from various sources, from traditional media, through social media, to primary and secondary socialisation agents. Generation Z are moderately religious and very sceptical about the political involvement of the Church.

However, with reference to the issue of the research tool itself, it must be pointed out that at the stage of conducting our pilot study we did not encounter difficulties connected with its use. Neither the questions themselves, nor the technical aspects, raised any doubts among our respondents. We did not notice linguistic and grammatical errors, let alone orthographic ones. The answers we obtained also suggest – initially of course – that if we increase and professionalise our sample selection we will be able to obtain satisfactory data that will allow us to answer our basic research questions, thus bringing us closer to solving the research problem at hand. This, however, will require us to repeat the study, this time with a substantially larger sample obtained in a standardised manner.

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# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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### A STORY TAILORED FOR EVERY POLE. STRATEGIES FOR PRESENTING THE PROTAGONISTS IN THE MEDIA COVERAGE SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF PAWEŁ ADAMOWICZ

**Paweł Sarna**

PhD, Associate Professor, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Social Sciences  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4211-2310>

**Ewelina Tyc**

PhD, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Humanities  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1191-0347>

#### Abstract

The murder of the mayor of Gdańsk Paweł Adamowicz in 2019 and its circumstances formed the topic of many media reports. These events released strong emotions and reactions. The image of Adamowicz constructed by the media immediately following his death was virtually irreproachable, these positive reports being connected with the so-called taboo of death. Over the following years, one of the main topics of the discourse became the question of the moral responsibility for the mayor's death. The authors of this article concentrate on rhetorical strategies of portraying the protagonists in the media coverage, utilising concepts including those of Robert Rowland. The daily press ("Gazeta Wyborcza", "Rzeczpospolita" and "Dziennik Zachodni") and socio-political weekly publications ("Wprost", "Newsweek", "Polityka", "Sieci" and "Do Rzeczy") are analysed.

**Key words:** Paweł Adamowicz, rhetoric, media narrative, narrative strategy, persuasion

## Introduction

Due to polarisation and politicisation, the media in Poland, as pointed out by researchers such as Beata Klimkiewicz and Marta Żerkowska-Balas, are at present not a source of objective information. They provide one-sided coverage, which is adapted to the political preferences of their recipients, directed towards strengthening their sense of identity, and also intensifies the hostility between the supporters of individual parties.<sup>1</sup> A clear example of this is reactions to the murder of Paweł Adamowicz in 2019. Despite a media appeal not to use hate speech, different media camps attributed to each other the moral responsibility that led to this tragedy. In the popular consciousness, the death of Paweł Adamowicz is still correlated with the language of hate and brutalisation. It is a specific symbol to which public figures make reference.

Jacek Warchala stresses that in social communication an essential role is played by emotions, which can be considered on both a micro scale (on the level of the individual) or a macro one (on the institutional level)<sup>2</sup>, although it is worth pointing out that in media discourse both of these levels frequently co-occur. More and more attention is being paid in the media – especially digital – to the effects of disinformation, which is intended to introduce “turmoil” into the information environment. Anna Mierzyńska observes that in the case of disinformation, “As a rule the most important thing is to exercise control [...]: power over people and their decisions. You can have control not only thanks to winning elections, not only because you won a war, but also by bringing about fear, generating chaos, allowing aggression, violence and hate.”<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the contemporary media constitute a distinctive platform where other mechanisms that strongly shape the message, such as competition, commercialisation, tabloidisation and convergence, both coexist and clash.

On the other hand, there is the audience, which has experienced a polarised society for many years, thus fitting into the metaphor of tribalism: “A whole range of reactions can be seen, which can be called tribal – in terms of bias based

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<sup>1</sup> M. Żerkowska-Balas, *Konsumpcja mediów a negatywna identyfikacja partyjna w Polsce w 2015 i 2019 roku*, “Studia Socjologiczne” 2022, nr 4, p. 71; B. Klimkiewicz, *The Public Sphere and the Changing News Media Environment in Poland: Towards Structural Polarisation*, “Javnost – The Public” 2021, vol. 28, issue 1, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> J. Warchala, *Emocjonalizacja informacji*, [in:] *Współczesne media – gatunki w mediach*, t. 1: *Zagadnienia teoretyczne. Gatunki w mediach drukowanych. Prace dedykowane Profesor Marii Wojtak*, red. I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2017, pp. 107–108.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mierzyńska, *Efekt niszczący. Jak dezinformacja wpływa na nasze życie*, Wydawnictwo Agora, Warszawa 2022, p. 5.

on uncritical loyalty towards some group.”<sup>4</sup> This audience expects a clearly defined position that aligns with the views of the group that they identify with.

This extremely brief and necessarily simplified sketch of contemporary practices that shape media reports points to patterns of operation as well as constructed visions of a (contrasting) world.

The main aim of this article is to answer the question as to the rhetorical strategies used for presenting Paweł Adamowicz as the protagonist of media narratives.

### **A narrative analysis of media coverage surrounding the death of Paweł Adamowicz: theoretical and methodological assumptions**

At present, narrative analysis methods are popular not only in the humanities, but also in the social sciences. Researchers have observed the significant position of narrative structures in human communication and social interactions because they shape the way the world is understood.<sup>5</sup> Jerzy Trzebiński notices that in the stream of events that surround us we tend to see narratives that shape “reality as a stage on which actors with specific intentions [...]” and problems perform, and those ideas inscribed in culture usually take the form of stories.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth remembering that in western culture research on narrative has its origins in ancient rhetoric and poetics.<sup>7</sup> Narratology, which grew out of poetics, has become interdisciplinary in terms of the usefulness of its categories in the analysis of all types of text.<sup>8</sup> In the mid-1960s narratologists – as Anna Burzyńska vividly puts it –

paid [...] attention to the general properties of narratives, which had been well known since Aristotle, if not always well remembered: to its constructive function *vis-à-vis* the events described, to its dynamics, to its temporal course, and finally, to its creative and often indeed causal power in relation to the events.<sup>9</sup>

The immense interest in narratives among researchers from various disciplines contributed to the emergence of a distinct intellectual current (the so-called

<sup>4</sup> J. Piekutowski, *Cyber kontra real. Cywilizacja w techno-pułapce*, rozmowa z Andrzejem Zybortowiczem, Fundacja Nowa Rzeczpospolita, Warszawa 2022, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> K. Wyrwas, *Opowiadania potoczne w świetle genologii lingwistycznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2014, pp. 14–15.

<sup>6</sup> J. Trzebiński, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*, red. J. Trzebiński, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk–Sopot 2002, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1990, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> M. Głowiński, *Narracje literackie i nieliterackie*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych “Universitas”, Kraków 1997, p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> A. Burzyńska, *Kariera narracji. O zwrocie narratologicznym w humanistyce*, “Teksty Drugie” 2004, nr 1–2, p. 44.

narrative turn), which in the 1970s led to the appearance and flourishing of trans-disciplinary narratology.<sup>10</sup>

It is possible to point to three main sources of contemporary narratology: Russian formalism (Vladimir Propp), American New Criticism (Northrop Frye), French structuralism (Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss) and German hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer).<sup>11</sup> Researchers on communication also used narratology to search for their own universal model that would explain human communicative behaviour. A strong influence on the development of the understanding of narrative within the discipline of communication was exerted by the reflections of Walter R. Fisher, who in the 1980s described the concept of the narrative paradigm.<sup>12</sup> According to this paradigm, the audience participates in the construction and evaluation of communicative messages through assessing the “narrative fidelity” (the extent to which they seem true) and “narrative probability” (the extent to which they seem coherent). In the opinion of Robert Rowland, stories belong to the most powerful forms of persuasion, because on their basis humans make diverse choices.<sup>13</sup>

Narrative analysis, developed by rhetorical criticism, is an approach that focuses on the persuasive aspects of storytelling. It is to this tradition that we shall particularly refer in this article. The first step in narrative analysis is to identify the protagonists and the roles they play, the scenes in which the action takes place, as well as the narrative schema present in the discourse.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately the aim is to determine the effectiveness of narrative strategies and functions.<sup>15</sup>

This approximate method of analysis seems very useful in relation to the communication of information, which often takes the form of micro stories centred around protagonists, their motives, their aims and methods of operation. For typical of contemporary media is the combination of the informational and entertaining functions (infotainment). This is characteristic not only of television, but also information portals, which manifests in the ludic nature

<sup>10</sup> J. Tabaszewska, „Wędrujące pojęcia”. *Koncepcja Mieke Bal — przykład inter- czy transdyscyplinarności?*, “*Studia Europaea Gnesnensia*” 2013, nr 8, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> P. Pawliszak, *Analiza narracyjna dyskursu publicznego. W poszukiwaniu struktur kulturowych i procesów narzucania znaczeń formujących politykę ekologiczną*, [in:] *Analiza dyskursu publicznego. Przegląd metod i perspektyw badawczych*, red. M. Czyżewski, M. Otrocki, T. Piekot, J. Stachowiak, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Sedno, Warszawa 2017, p. 70; B. Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research*, SAGE Publications, London 2004, pp. 1–3.

<sup>12</sup> S.K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Waveland Press, Long Grove, IL 2018, p. 322.

<sup>13</sup> R. Rowland, *The Narrative Perspective*, [in:] *Rhetorical Criticism. Perspectives in Action*, ed. J.A. Kuypers, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD 2009, pp. 139–140.

<sup>14</sup> K.C. Haspel, *Communication Studies And Narrative*, [in:] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. D. Herman, M. Jahn, M.-L. Ryan, reprinted, Routledge, London–New York 2010, p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> R. Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

of the coverage and the emphasis on spectacle and sensationalism. Often reports about trivial matters are reported in a dramatic manner, making use of typical narrative schemata.<sup>16</sup> Although media stories may take on a wide range of forms, the majority of them are characterised by such basic narrative frameworks. Frye distinguishes four conventional forms of narrative, namely romance, comedy, tragedy and satire.<sup>17</sup>

These dramatic conventions, which require elaboration, are associated with tropes, with metaphors playing a significant role. Metaphors consist in a basic semantic transformation, which is canonical in classical rhetoric, and are essential in contemporary discourse analysis because according to cognitivists (George Lakoff, Mark Johnson), metaphor constitutes the fundamental material of everyday knowledge. Tropes are also the building blocks of the structure of myths.

In a romance, the hero fulfils a task from which he emerges victorious and gains spiritual strength, undergoing a change. Thus, this is a tale about identity, and its main trope is metaphor. The hero is presented as a knight, for example, which symbolises order, while his enemies are the forces of evil. A tragedy is built around metonymy, which consists in the juxtaposition of phenomena or objects, which are close to each other in time or space. This schema reveals a crisis situation, which becomes the focal point of the narrative. Comedy tells the story of two opposite forces reaching an agreement, and the rhetorical figure that corresponds to this scheme is synecdoche. Irony, however – “the trope of scepticism” – is a specific rhetorical figure of satire, in which illusions are uncovered. The mood of comedy and romance is optimistic, while tragedy and satire are pessimistic.<sup>18</sup>

The initial stage of this analysis covered identifying the main actants and their characteristics, and a description of the relations between the main protagonist and other objects, as well as the actions they undertook and effects they brought about. At the next stage typical plots were reconstructed, with the actants involved, as well as the corresponding narrative schemata.<sup>19</sup>

The subject of this research was newspapers and magazine, which were taken from digital archives. The analysis covered the nationally circulated daily press (“Gazeta Wyborcza”, “Rzeczpospolita”, “Dziennik Zachodni”) and socio-political weekly publications (“Wprost”, “Newsweek”, “Polityka”, “Sieci” and

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<sup>16</sup> A. Naruszewicz-Duchlińska, *Inforozrywka (infotainment) w portalach informacyjnych tvn24.pl i tvp.info*, “Prace Językoznawcze” 2013, z. 15/3, pp. 65–71; J. Wasilewski, *Dramaturgia języka mediów*, [in:] *Nowe zjawiska w języku, tekście i komunikacji*, red. M. Rutkowski, K. Zawilska, t. II, Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn 2008, pp. 215–216.

<sup>17</sup> S.K. Foss, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*; B. Czarniawska, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>19</sup> More about the mentioned categories in: P. Pawliszak, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

“Do Rzeczy”). The selection of the titles was determined by the number of copies printed and their position in individual segments of the press. The authors of this paper were thus guided by the principle of variety in terms of world view. At the same time it should be mentioned that the first two weeks following the murder of Paweł Adamowicz were a period when this topic was never out of the headlines. The material analysed covers the period 13<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January between the years 2019 and 2023.<sup>20</sup> In the case of daily publications, the research material was made up of over 200 articles, where half of them were published in 2019 and were more or less equally divided between the three newspapers. The vast majority of articles from the next few years came from “Gazeta Wyborcza”. However, in the weekly publications there were considerably fewer articles on this topic (less than 100). As in the case of daily newspapers, the great majority of them were published in 2019.

### Instrumentalisation of the victim in the media

In narratives on the murder of Paweł Adamowicz, both in daily and weekly publications, there appeared numerous actants that were assessed both positively and negatively: 1) the victim and the killer, 2) many named public figures, 3) collective ones – political parties and the media. These examples first provided a profile of Paweł Adamowicz – his public achievements and elements of this private life. Secondly, attention was paid to the context of the murder, a portrait of the killer and the problem of the politicisation of these events. With time media reports, above all in “Gazeta Wyborcza”, which explored the topic the most intensively, focused primarily on two issues: responsibility for the murder and the sluggishness of the state authorities after the perpetrator was apprehended.

The ethos of the protagonist was elaborated, and his image was constructed in various ways. This included both his private and public life. In the first case, the reader’s attention was drawn “to the motif of the death of a loved person, the father of a family. A drama was created around the event, which destroyed an individual family’s ideal of happiness and tore people who loved each other, a happy family, apart”. In the case of his public life, the “narrative focused on the violation of the prototype of a happy society – a person had died, who was a true leader, [...] [was known for his commitment to social issues – P.S., E.T.], served the citizens and democracy”<sup>21</sup>, supported culture and promoted international collaboration.

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<sup>20</sup> The detailed analysis covers the time period indicated in the text, but also examines material from a broader period. This allows for context to be outlined.

<sup>21</sup> P. Sarna, E. Tyc, *Śmierć prezydenta Gdańska Pawła Adamowicza w nagłówkach polskich dzienników i tygodników*, “Res Rhetorica” 2020, nr 1, p. 12.

Thus, categories were emphasised that were linked to such spheres as:

- competencies – both character attributes and experience as the town’s leader – “A good person, an experienced councillor”<sup>22</sup>, courage in his activities, for example personal involvement in helping victims of the war in Syria<sup>23</sup>; a patriotic attitude which promotes local values, including those linked to Gdańsk’s European heritage – “He loved Gdańsk, he was a Polish, and at the same time European patriot in his heart and soul”<sup>24</sup>, “Of himself he said that he was a Catholic, a resident of Gdańsk, a Pole, a European, a husband and a father”<sup>25</sup>, “Gdańsk was his mission and his passion.”<sup>26</sup>
- trust – he represented the “spirit of solidarity”, “openness to other people, he understood and supported them”<sup>27</sup>, “A great leader who cares about the inhabitants of Gdańsk”<sup>28</sup>, he was presented as a person who was open and tolerant: “[...] as a politician he went beyond conservative boundaries: he supported in vitro programmes, and he pursued immigrant-friendly urban policies [...]”<sup>29</sup>;

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<sup>22</sup> UJ, *Trzecia rocznica śmierci Pawła Adamowicza. Prezydent Wrocławia złożył kwiaty: „To mógł być każdy z nas”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 13.01.2022, <https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,27997953,trzecia-rocznica-smierci-pawla-adamowicza-prezydent-wroclawia.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>23</sup> D. Karaś, *Msza w rocznicę śmierci Pawła Adamowicza. „Nie bał się tego, co nowe”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2020, <https://trojmiasto.wyborcza.pl/trojmiasto/7,35612,25599631,msza-w-rocznicze-smierci-pawla-adamowicza-nie-bal-sie-tego.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>24</sup> wyb. kaf., *Donald Tusk wspomina śmierć Pawła Adamowicza: „Zaczynam ryczeć jak dziecko”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 13.01.2020, <https://trojmiasto.wyborcza.pl/trojmiasto/7,35612,25574441,tt-niegotowe-tusk-wspomina-smierc-adamowicza-zaczynam.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>25</sup> M. Sandecki, *Msza ekumeniczna w intencji Adamowicza. „Jego śmierć to wezwanie do wyrugowania języka pogardy”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2022, <https://trojmiasto.wyborcza.pl/trojmiasto/7,35612,28003784,msza-ekumeniczna-w-intencji-adamowicza-jego-smierc-to-wezwanie.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>26</sup> Polityka.pl, *Gdańsk był jego misją i życiową pasją*, “Polityka”, 14.01.2019, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1778466,1,gdansk-byl-jego-misja-i-zyciowa-pasja.read> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>27</sup> A. Dobiegała, *Druga rocznica zamachu na Pawła Adamowicza. Adam Bodnar: „Nienawiść, nowe cele i kolejne polowania z nagonką”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 13.01.2021, <https://trojmiasto.wyborcza.pl/trojmiasto/7,35612,26681132,druga-rocznica-zamachu-na-prezydenta-gdanska.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>28</sup> *Timmermans: Jestem wstrząśnięty brutalnym atakiem na Pawła Adamowicza*, “Wprost”, 13.01.2019, <https://www.wprost.pl/polityka/10183396/timmermans-jestem-wstrzasniety-brutalnym-atakiem-na-pawla-adamowicza.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>29</sup> Polityka.pl, *Gdańsk był jego misją i życiową pasją, op. cit.*

- sympathy – he was presented as a person who easily connects with people – “He was a democrat through and through, but above all he loved people, he knew how to talk to them and fulfil their needs”<sup>30</sup>, “[...] a person with a heart of gold.”<sup>31</sup>

As a result, Adamowicz came across as a competent person, trustworthy and at the same time warm, genuinely friendly and highly empathetic.

Adam Michnik<sup>32</sup>, sketching the profile of Paweł Adamowicz as a hero that brought people together, reached deep into the history of Gdańsk and, describing his pedigree, made use of numerous analogies important for the ethos of “solidarity” – in both the revolutionary and intellectual senses. It is worth quoting a passage from his article at length:

Hate has stabbed freedom in the heart. Paweł was an outstanding figure in Polish democratic and local government circles. He continued the best traditions of Gdańsk, a city for which he did a lot. To this tradition belong the myths of heroic Westerplatte, the magnificent rebuilding of the city from the ruins of war, the memory of the revolt of December 1970, the traditions of negotiations between the strike committee and the government delegation in August 1980, which finished with the signing of an agreement and the founding of “Solidarity” led by Lech Wałęsa. There are also the strikes of 1988, which paved the way for the Round Table Talks and the elections on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989. Paweł embodied Gdańsk and Polish patriotism, the patriotism of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski and Lech Wałęsa.<sup>33</sup>

In narratives about crime it is important how the victim is presented. It was emphasised that the mayor of Gdańsk was an innocent victim and that the violence was totally unprovoked, for example: “[...] he suffered death, while spreading good.”<sup>34</sup>

As far as the question of responsibility for the murder is concerned, daily newspapers concentrated only initially on the murderer himself, while later the focus shifted to supposed indirect perpetrators. In the second case, such terms

<sup>30</sup> M. Chołodowski, *Prezydent Białegostoku w rocznicę śmierci prezydenta Gdańska: Paweł Adamowicz przede wszystkim kochał ludzi*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2022, <https://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/7,35241,28001349,bialystok-prezydent-tadeusz-truskolaski-pawel-adamowicz-przede.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>31</sup> P. Nodzyńska, „*To był człowiek o złotym sercu*”. *Tak gdańszczanie żegnali Pawła Adamowicza 3 lata temu*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 13.01.2022, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,82983,27996149,to-był-człowiek-o-złotym-sercu-tak-gdańszczanie-żegnali.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>32</sup> The editor-in-chief of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, one of the main opposition activists during the period of the Polish People’s Republic.

<sup>33</sup> A. Michnik, *Michnik o Adamowiczu: Żegnaj, drogi Pawle*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2019, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,24362800,żegnaj-drogi-pawle.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>34</sup> rd, *Aleja Pawła Adamowicza w Łodzi? Jest wnioszek radnych*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 16.01.2020, <https://lodz.wyborcza.pl/lodz/7,35136,25606853,aleja-pawla-adamowicza-w-lodzi-jest-wnioszek-radnych.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

as “political terrorism” were used, which are difficult to define unambiguously<sup>35</sup>, but at the same time they arouse emotions: “Paweł experienced hate speech and physically became the victim of political terrorism.”<sup>36</sup> As early as January 2019, the front page of “Gazeta Wyborcza”<sup>37</sup> carried a lengthy text “Adamowicz as the target”, which was built around the part played by Telewizja Polska (TVP, the Polish public broadcaster) in a smear campaign against Adamowicz.<sup>38</sup> Many titles contained the word “hate”, which was used in various collocations: “Stop hate speech”<sup>39</sup> or “Stop hate.”<sup>40</sup> Whereas in material from 2019 one notices that the label “hate” was employed primarily to accuse public media, and this was done mostly in an allusive manner, in the subsequent years public media and the ruling coalition without doubt became the main negative protagonist. A frequent tactic was to quote, without editorial comment, the opinion of a person or a representative of a group of people, such as in an article by the organisers of a meeting in Szczecin, who wrote “In Częstochowa the memory of the mayor of Gdańsk has been honoured. ‘Stop hate!’ ‘Hate kills’: ‘We are convinced that it is hate from these media that killed the Mayor.’”<sup>41</sup> In numerous articles the theme of the various forms of injustice that Adamowicz experienced was developed. In “Gazeta Wyborcza”, the topic of the Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polish Youth) was brought up several times. In 2017 this organisation issued political death certificates to city mayors who had decided to help refugees. The article reminded readers that this was not regular criticism, it was hate speech<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> T. Wałek, *Pojęcie, geneza i klasyfikacja zjawisk terrorystycznych*, “Securitologia” 2018, nr 2, pp. 110–124.

<sup>36</sup> R. Robaszewski, *Rocznica śmierci Pawła Adamowicza. „Tak jak on wierzę w symfonię szacunku Polaków do Polaków”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2022, <https://olsztyn.wyborcza.pl/olsztyn/7,48726,28003651,rocznica-smierci-pawla-adamowicza-tak-jak-on-wierze-w-symfonie.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>37</sup> A. Kublik, K. Katka, *Adamowicz na celowniku TVP*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 22.01.2019, <https://www.press.pl/jedynki/pokaz/3/2019-01-22> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>38</sup> P. Sarna, E. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> B. Chrabota, *Stop mowie nienawiści*, “Rzeczpospolita” – archiwum, 16.01.2019, <https://archiwum.rp.pl/2019/01/16> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>40</sup> M. Warszawski, „*Stop nienawiści*”. *Czerwona kartka dla Telewizji publicznej*, zdjęcia: M. Kosiński, montaż: M. Szyszka, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 16.01.2019, <https://wyborcza.pl/10,82983,24371719,stop-nienawisci-czerwona-kartka-dla-telewizji-publicznej.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023]; TK, *Dominikanin o. Ludwik Wiśniewski na pogrzebie prezydenta Adamowicza: Trzeba skończyć z nienawistnym językiem! Nie będziemy dłużej obojętni!*, “Dziennik Zachodni”, 19.01.2019, <https://dziennikzachodni.pl/dominikanin-o-ludwik-wisniewski-na-pogrzebie-prezydenta-adamowicza-trzeba-skonczy-c-z-nienawistnym-jezykiem-nie-bedziemy-dluzej/ar/13820956> [accessed: 3.05.2023]; P. Sarna, E. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> M. Mamoń, *W Częstochowie uczczono pamięć prezydenta Gdańska Pawła Adamowicza. „Stop hejt! Nienawiść zabija”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2023, <https://czestochowa.wyborcza.pl/czestochowa/7,48725,29359147,w-czestochowie-uczczono-pamiec-prezydenta-gdanska-pawla-adamowicza.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>42</sup> az, „*TVP atakowała go średnio pięć razy dziennie*”. *Manifestacja w rocznicę zabójstwa Pawła Adamowicza*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 14.01.2023, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczeci>

In a similar way, the theme of responsibility for the death of Paweł Adamowicz was covered by some weekly magazines.<sup>43</sup> In January 2019, the topic on the covers was hate, presented as the main motif behind the perpetrator's actions. "Do Rzeczy" asked the question: "Who is spreading hate? What will politics be like after the murder of Paweł Adamowicz?"<sup>44</sup> "Wprost" appealed for the hate to stop<sup>45</sup>, and a strong link was made between hate and politics that generates negative social attitudes: "Hate. It won't stop itself."<sup>46</sup>

With time, the attention of some weekly magazines shifted strongly towards accusing TVP and TVP president Jacek Kurski, e.g.: "Beating around the bush: TVP on Paweł Adamowicz."<sup>47</sup> About public television journalists they wrote "The innocent ones from TVP, i.e. propagandists, celebrate the anniversary of Adamowicz's death"<sup>48</sup>, while about Jacek Kurski: "Kurski's cynicism: watching TVP could have saved Adamowicz."<sup>49</sup>

Attention should also be paid to an article, whose very headline "Back off from Paweł"<sup>50</sup> strongly signalled the irritation and anger brought about by TVP's documentary about Paweł Adamowicz ("You are a destructive mechanism"). Accusations against the government were formulated explicitly:

the goal is to vilify, and as a consequence to achieve permission from society to destroy once and for all not only political opposition to PiS, but also circles that oppose

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n/7,34939,29358933,ttp-atakowala-go-srednio-piec-razy-dziennie-manifestacja.html [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>43</sup> It is worth pointing out that the weekly magazine "Sieci" was the only one to publish an edition devoted to Paweł Adamowicz's murder. This was edition 3/2019. Subsequently the magazine did not handle this topic directly.

<sup>44</sup> „Do Rzeczy” nr 4: *Kto sieje nienawiść? Jaka będzie polityka po zabójstwie Pawła Adamowicza?*, "Do Rzeczy", 20.01.2019, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/90766/do-rzeczy-nr-4-kto-sieje-nienawisc.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>45</sup> *Przyjaciele wspominają Pawła Adamowicza. Artyści chcą przerwać nienawiść. Co w nowym „Wprost”?*, "Wprost", 19.01.2019, <https://www.wprost.pl/tylko-u-nas/10184667/o-czym-piszemy-w-nowym-numerze-tygodnika-wprost-zapowiedz.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>46</sup> E. Wanat, *Nienawiść. To się samo nie zatrzyma*, Wprost.Info, 11.08.2019, <https://info.wprost.pl/okiem-wprost/10241093/nienawisc-to-sie-samo-nie-zatrzyma.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>47</sup> R. Socha, *Odwracanie kota ogonem. TVP o Pawle Adamowiczu*, "Polityka", 22.01.2022, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/2151828,1,odwracanie-kota-ogonem-tvp-o-pawle-adamowiczu.read> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>48</sup> M. Kowalczyk, *Niewiniątka z TVP, czyli propagandyści obchodzą rocznicę śmierci Adamowicza*, "Newsweek", 15.01.2021, <https://www.newsweek.pl/opinie/w-tvp-rocznica-smierci-pawla-adamowicza/d7e3q4c> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>49</sup> *Idem, Cynizm Kurskiego: oglądanie TVP mogło uratować Adamowicza*, "Newsweek", 25.02.2021, <https://www.newsweek.pl/opinie/kurski-o-adamowiczu-ogladanie-tvp-moglo-uratowac-adamowicza/ek5ys99> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>50</sup> T. Lis, *Odpiętrzcie się od Pawła*, "Newsweek", 21.01.2022, <https://www.newsweek.pl/opinie/dokument-o-pawle-adamowiczu-w-tvp-komentarz-tomasza-lisa/x2e5pms> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

the authorities or those not controlled by the government, such as the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity [an annual charity event, much criticised by PiS – translator’s note].<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned previously, an important topic that focused the attention of columnists was the claim, which started to appear in 2020, that the state authorities had been sluggish at every stage after the perpetrator was apprehended. Various types of expert were cited in this context. In January 2020 “Gazeta Wyborcza” directly accused the prosecutor’s office of deliberate delays to the investigations because of political motives before the parliamentary elections: “We have revealed [...], that the investigation into Stefan W., the murderer of the mayor of Gdańsk, is being drawn out deliberately.”<sup>52</sup>

Two weekly magazines also concentrated on this topic, “Newsweek” and “Wprost”. In the first, the question “Why is there still no indictment for the killer of Mayor Adamowicz?”<sup>53</sup> was asked more than once. However, in “Wprost” the course of the proceedings and the frequent interviews with Piotr Adamowicz (brother) and Magdalena Adamowicz (wife) were monitored meticulously. They wrote about this case, showing impatience: “Two years have passed since the death of the mayor of Gdańsk Paweł Adamowicz, who died from knife wounds inflicted by Stefan W. The investigation has been dragging on and there is no indictment against the perpetrator [...]”<sup>54</sup>

Over the whole period and in all the press headlines that form the subject of this paper, the theme of tragedy dominated. Its prototype was myths about the sacrifice of a hero, a violent death and human isolation. This was most noticeable during the period after 2020, when the theme of the investigation that was dragging on emerged. Normally doubt as to whether the crime would be judged fairly was emphasised. This theme was also present in articles in which the focus was on responsibility for the crime. The tale was woven around metonymy, which manifested, for example, in the construction of the stage where

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<sup>51</sup> C. Michalski, *Telewizja Polska, czyli fabryka nienawiści*, “Newsweek”, 22.01.2019, <https://www.newsweek.pl/szukaj?q=celem%20jest%20zohydzenie,%20odcz%C5%82owieczenie,%20a%20w%20konsekwencji%20uzyskanie%20spo%C5%82ecznego%20przyzwolenia%20na%20ostateczne%20zniszczenie%20nie%20tylko%20politycznej%20opozycji%20wobec%20PiS> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>52</sup> K. Włodkowska, *Dziesiątki świadków, którzy nic nie wniosą. Prokuratura spowalnia śledztwo w sprawie śmierci Adamowicza*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 15.01.2020, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,25599603,dziesiatki-swiadkow-ktorzy-nic-nie-wniossa-prokuratura-spowalnia.html#S.related-K.C-B.1-L.1.zw> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>53</sup> M. Świąchowicz, „*Gołym okiem widać, że się przygotował*”. *Dlaczego wciąż nie ma aktu oskarżenia dla zabójcy prezydenta Adamowicza?*, “Newsweek”, 4.10.2020, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/zabojstwo-pawla-adamowicza-dlaczego-stefan-w-zabil-kiedy-trafido-wiezienia/70sklh8> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>54</sup> E. Olczyk, *Piotr Adamowicz: Rządzący przeciągają śledztwo. Nie na rękę im zeznania zabójcy Pawła*, “Wprost”, 14.01.2021, <https://www.wprost.pl/tylko-u-nas/10408114/piotr-adamowicz-o-zabojstwie-brata.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

the events took place. Numerous names of towns where Adamowicz had been remembered were listed. Among other techniques metonymies and analogies were used in headlines in order to emphasise the elegiac convention of paying tribute: “Gdańsk showed it goodness, Gdańsk showed its class”<sup>55</sup>, “Paweł Adamowicz. He was rebellious, just like Gdańsk [...]”<sup>56</sup> or “Let Gdańsk show us how to live.”<sup>57</sup>

The epic theme was visible in articles mostly from 2019, which appeared straight after the murder. Their prototype was myths about the birth of a hero, his resurrection, about defeating evil. In stories that follow this schema, it is the figure of Adamowicz that is idealised most strongly, and it is also predicted that the crime will be judged fairly and his legacy will endure. The most important trope of the stories was metaphor: the warrior who conquered evil.

## Conclusions

For daily newspapers, above all “Gazeta Wyborcza”, the biography of Paweł Adamowicz was a combination of two distinct archetypes of “Solidarity”. As Anna Peck stresses, the narrative on the topic of “Solidarity” that is widespread in western studies presents the figures of Lech Wałęsa and Adam Michnik as dichotomous opposites, whose only common denominator is the principle of not using violence. Wałęsa is an example of a folk hero, a person suffering for his cause and democracy. Michnik, on the other hand, represents the type of the detached intellectual.<sup>58</sup> In the narrative of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, Adamowicz embodies both these traditions of “Solidarity”. The weekly magazines also approached the topic in various ways. “Do Rzeczy” focused on the “correct” course of the proceedings. “Wprost”, “Newsweek” and “Polityka”, however, in almost the same number of articles accused the government of politicising the crime. Aside from occasional mentions, “Sieci” did not address this topic directly.

The narratives surrounding the death of Paweł Adamowicz in this paper are characterised by remarkable evocativeness, which shows itself not so much in how the topic is portrayed as in the way that devices are selected that are

<sup>55</sup> G. Kubicki, *Gdańsk podzielił się dobrem, Gdańsk pokazał klasę*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 17.01.2020, <https://trojmiasto.wyborcza.pl/trojmiasto/7,35612,25608423,gdansk-podzielil-sie-dobrem-gdansk-pokazal-klase.html> [accessed: 3.05.2023].

<sup>56</sup> R. Grochal, *Wizjoner i lider. Był niepokorny tak jak Gdańsk, którym rządził dwadzieścia lat*, “Newsweek”, nr 4/2019, p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> K. Skrzydłowska-Kalukin, *Niech Gdańsk pokaże, jak żyć*, “Wprost”, 19.01.2019, <https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/10184614/niech-gdansk-pokaze-jak-zyc.html> [accessed: 15.04.2023].

<sup>58</sup> A. Peck, *Konstruowanie historii. Prezentacja i percepcja Polski w amerykańskich podręcznikach akademickich i szkolnych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2010, pp. 154–158.

intended to influence the audience's emotions. In the articles that appeared throughout the years and in all the press headlines under discussion, the model for the narrative was tragedy. The murder of the president of Gdańsk contributed to the construction of a narrative about crisis. The media created an image of the world in which the blame lies on one side and this is not open to debate. This was highlighted at strategic points of the texts through expressive headlines, evocative titles and straightforward conclusions. The concept of communication demonstrated in the moralistic and agitational approach of the authors of the texts is also significant; this concept was intended to shape in the reader the need to take a specific position with regard to the views presented. In such an antagonistic view of the world, there is a strong reinforcement of the audience's sense of bonding with the group with which they identify. This a far cry from aiming at objectivity, reliability and maintaining journalistic neutrality.

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# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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## POLISH IN THE OCTOBER OF 2020. EVOLUTION OF FORMS OF EXPRESSING CIVIC DISSATISFACTION AND INDIGNATION

**Marta du Vall**

PhD, Associate Professor, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University,  
Faculty of Management and Social Communication  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0008-1245-730X>

### Abstract

The topic of socio-political activity as a factor that proves the dynamic development of civil society and the political maturity of society is an issue that is always topical in research. When we add the issue of changing the forms of expression and rhetoric of protest in connection with the political involvement of subsequent generations, we see that it enriches and forever changes the narrative about the actions of those in power. This article focuses on events related to the announcement of the Constitutional Tribunal's judgement of 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020, regarding the unconstitutionality of some provisions of the so-called "abortion compromise". This led to a wave of protests by Polish society. Thanks to the involvement of young Poles, the radicalisation of language, but also the creativity of slogans, the protests became much more visible and media-related. They permanently changed and enriched the repertoire previously used by demonstrators.

**Key words:** protest, demonstration, Constitutional Tribunal, Women's Strike, slogans, civic indignation

### Introduction

For years Polish younger generations were accused of selfishness and political passivity. Although the contemporary political crisis in Poland began in 2015,

when Poland's constitutional order was violated, only a small percentage of young people could be seen among the protesters in the following years. Many Poles believed that the Constitutional Tribunal was far from the everyday life of ordinary citizens. This article draws attention to the causes of the sudden outbreak of civic activity among younger Poles and the evolution of forms of expression of dissatisfaction.

“The Constitutional Tribunal is a [Polish – M.V.] judicial authority whose main function is to examine the constitutionality of normative acts and international agreements. Its activities do not constitute the administration of justice – it is an institution whose importance lies in the closest possible connection with politics, political relations and the political system.”<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal and the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, this body rules on the following matters:

- 1) compliance of international laws and agreements with the Constitution,
  - 2) compliance of acts with ratified international agreements, the ratification of which requires prior consent expressed in the act,
  - 3) compliance of legal provisions issued by central state bodies with the Constitution, ratified international agreements and laws,
  - 4) constitutional complaints,
  - 5) disputes over competences between the central constitutional bodies of the state,
  - 6) compliance with the Constitution of the goals or activities of political parties.
2. The Tribunal, at the request of the President of the Republic of Poland, determines the conformity of an act with the Constitution before its signing and an international agreement before its ratification.
3. The Tribunal, at the request of the Marshal of the Lower Chamber of Parliament, decides on whether an impediment exists to the exercise of office by the President of the Republic of Poland when the President is unable to notify the Marshal of the Lower Chamber of his or her inability to hold the office. If it is recognised that the President is temporarily unable to hold the office, the Tribunal shall entrust the Marshal of the Lower Chamber with the temporary performance of the duties of the President of the Republic of Poland<sup>2</sup>;

considers legal questions submitted by the courts<sup>3</sup>.

Since its establishment, the Constitutional Tribunal has served as one of the key state bodies. The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Tribunal significantly contributed to the development of the democratic state of law in Poland. We owe it to the Constitutional Tribunal for describing a number of constitutional principles arising from the values enshrined in the Constitution. Finally, the Polish Constitutional Tribunal was

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<sup>1</sup> M. Banaś, *Rola Trybunału Konstytucyjnego w funkcjonowaniu polskiego reżimu politycznego w świetle Konstytucji z 1997 r.*, “Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego” 2015, nr 1, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ustawa z dnia 1 sierpnia 1997 r. o Trybunale Konstytucyjnym, Dz.U. 1997 nr 102 poz. 643 ze zm. [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 1997, no. 102, item 643 with changes], article 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, article 3.

one of the model constitutional courts taken as an example by other European and non-European countries.<sup>4</sup>

## Constitutional crisis

[...] in the autumn of 2015, the new parliamentary majority initiated a chain of events leading to the subordination of the Tribunal to the will of the ruling party. [...] The pacification of the Tribunal led to the degeneration of the legislative process in Poland, manifested in the fact that Parliament ceased to play the role of the legislator and its deliberative character was completely distorted.<sup>5</sup> [...] [It can be stated that – M.V.] the impairment of the functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal essentially resulted in the suspension of the validity of the Polish Constitution.<sup>6</sup>

All changes [...] regarding the system and functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal were introduced [by the political forces ruling in Poland – M.V.], despite the opinions of many [national and – M.V.] international organisations which, acting in order to protect the rule of law in Poland, the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal and the independence of its judges, expressed concerns about the legislator.<sup>7</sup>

The Parliamentary Team for constitutional order and the rule of law distinguished four main phases of the constitutional crisis.

The first took place at the turn of the seventh and eighth terms of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland [autumn 2015 – M.V.] and concerned a dispute over the composition of the judges of the Constitutional Tribunal (this included such events as the refusal to swear in the Constitutional Tribunal judges duly elected by the Parliament of the seventh term, the election of “understudy judges” and their swearing in at night by the President). The second phase concerned an open attack of the legislative and executive powers on the Constitutional Tribunal, which took place at the beginning of the eighth term of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland [winter 2015 and 2016 – M.V.] (this phase included numerous amendments to the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal which came into force on the day of its announcement and the refusal to recognise and publish the judgements of the Constitutional Tribunal that declared the unconstitutionality of these amendments). The third phase, starting on the last day of the term of office of the then President of the Constitutional Tribunal, Professor Andrzej Rzepliński [on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 – M.V.], included taking control of the Constitutional Tribunal by judges elected by the Lower Chamber of the eighth term and ‘double judges’, as well as – raising legal doubts – the election of a new president

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<sup>4</sup> *Kryzys wokół Trybunału Konstytucyjnego w latach 2015–2018. Raport przygotowany na potrzeby Parlamentarnego zespołu do spraw ładu konstytucyjnego i praworządności*, oprac. i red. M. Małdziński, Warszawa 2019, p. 6, [https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/401\\_20190402/\\$file/401\\_20190402.pdf](https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/401_20190402/$file/401_20190402.pdf) [accessed: 8.06.2023].

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

of the Constitutional Tribunal. [...] The fourth [...] phase of the crisis began after judges Julia Przyłębska and Mariusz Muszyński took over the leadership of the Constitutional Tribunal. During this period, persons elected to judicial positions contrary to the Constitution were included in judicial activity, the then vice-president Stanisław Biernat was deprived of any real influence on the activities of the Constitutional Tribunal, and – as a result of the request of the Prosecutor General – three judges elected by the Lower Chamber of Parliament of the previous term were removed from the judicial activity.<sup>8</sup>

The decline in the credibility of the Constitutional Tribunal is illustrated by a clear reduction in the number of inquiries submitted by common courts to the Tribunal, which in 2015 numbered 135, and in the following year only 21.<sup>9</sup>

It should be emphasised that the fight to maintain the democratic state of law in Poland did not end with the ruling party taking over the Constitutional Tribunal. The will of the ruling party was not obeyed by the courts, which began to issue judgements, directly applying the provisions of the Constitution and submitting a number of preliminary questions to the Court of Justice of the European Union.<sup>10</sup> The fight to restore the rule of law in Poland was supported by a wide range of citizens, but unfortunately not younger Poles.

From November 2015 to December 2016, a wave of protests and pickets spread across Poland in defence of the constitution, the rule of law and judges. The nature of these protests was mass, but their dynamics and language were very balanced, the slogans chanted calling for specific actions, e.g. “publish the verdict”, “let’s save the constitutions”. Candles were lit and Polish hits from the Polish People’s Republic were sung, calling for fighting to defend freedom (including a song by the band Chłopcy z Placu Broni from 1990 entitled *Kocham wolność* (I love freedom), where we hear the words “I love and understand freedom, I cannot give up freedom.” In the spring of 2016, foreign correspondents reported that even ‘respectable gentlemen’ who did not feel like chanting slogans

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>9</sup> M. Kryszkiewicz, *Temida radzi sobie bez TK*, “Dziennik Gazeta Prawna”, 27.06.2017, p. B6.

<sup>10</sup> “The preliminary reference procedure, provided for in Article 267 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), is an institutionalised mechanism of dialogue between the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and national courts. This dialogue serves three principal purposes. First of all, to provide national courts with assistance on questions regarding the interpretation of EU law. Secondly, to contribute to a uniform application of EU law across the Union. Thirdly, to create an additional mechanism – on top of the action for annulment of an EU act (set out in Article 263 TFEU) – for an *ex post* verification of the conformity of acts of the EU institutions with primary EU law (the Treaties and general principles of EU law). The scope of the preliminary reference procedure covers the entire body of EU law with the exclusion of acts under common foreign and security policy and certain limitations in the area of judicial and police cooperation in criminal matters”, R. Mańko, *Preliminary reference procedure*, European Parliament: European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), June 2017, p. 1, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608628/EPRS\\_BRI\(2017\)608628\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608628/EPRS_BRI(2017)608628_EN.pdf) [accessed: 9.06.2023].

and blaring trumpets had no choice: they had to take to the streets. They described the atmosphere of the protests using phrases such as

They are walking calmly from the building of the Constitutional Tribunal to the Presidential Palace. Many people have Polish and European Union flags in their hands. Sometimes you can also see the flag of Ukraine, and the banners say: publish the verdict! [Paul Flückiger, “Der Tagesspiegel”]<sup>11</sup>

or

The liberal opposition in Warsaw is the complete opposite of what Kaczyński’s national-conservative camp understands by the term “patriots”, [...] a collective hero cult full of myth – as opposed [...] – to loose, individual patriotism [Konrad Schuller, “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”].<sup>12</sup>

### Polish “October” 2020

For several years, the mass protests were mainly attended by older people (“respectable” men and women) and people who understood the importance of the role of the Constitutional Tribunal and the independence of the judiciary (during this period, Komitet Obrony Demokracji [KOD, the Committee for the Defence of Democracy]<sup>13</sup> began its activities). Younger Poles did not see the connection between the role and the decisions of the Constitutional Tribunal and the rights and freedoms of individuals. However, years of dismantling state institutions finally brought a sobering and painful realisation that the authorities can freely invade every area of life.

In October 2020, the Tribunal issued a ruling which concerned a very private, intimate matter that directly concerned life and death. It can be said that in the autumn of 2020, the Polish government crossed a thin red line and attacked, like never before, a heterogeneous group with no common denominator of interests, but with a common problem, a group which had so far been ignored. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020, the Polish Constitutional Tribunal ruled that a provision of the Anti-Abortion Act of 1993, allowing abortion in the event of severe and

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<sup>11</sup> M. Gwóźdź, *Masowe protesty w obronie konstytucji*, DW, 14.03.2016, <https://www.dw.com/pl/masowe-protesty-w-obronie-konstytucji/a-19114683> [accessed: 15.06.2023].

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> “The KOD was created to fight against violations of the law by those in power in our country, to remind all citizens that we live in a democratic country and that we should defend democracy with all our strength. We want to live in a society that is neutral in terms of worldviews, counteract violations of the rule of law, abuses of the authorities, and the authorities’ exceeding their powers and competences. Our goal is to promote attitudes conducive to the development of a democratic state of law. We want to disseminate and protect human freedoms and civil liberties, work to popularise knowledge about the democratic system of the rule of law, and build a civil society”, KOD, *o KOD – kim jesteśmy*, <https://ruchkod.pl/o-kod-zie> [accessed: 10.06.2023].

irreversible foetal impairment or an incurable disease that threatens its life, was unconstitutional.<sup>14</sup>

This was the moment when young people from larger and smaller cities began to take to the streets every day to protest against the Tribunal's decision. The protests began to have a completely different character than the previous ones. They had radical slogans, radical forms of expression and sharply criticised the role of the Church in Polish politics. The main driving force of the protests was Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (OSK, the National Women's Strike), a mass protest movement that had emerged in 2016.

The source of the creation of the OSK was the so-called 'black protests', which were a reaction to the announcement that the Lower House of the Polish Parliament was working on a draft bill to completely ban abortion<sup>15</sup> and the simultaneous rejection of the so-called public initiative relaxing anti-abortion law.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it was a mass, grass-roots and social protest that was a voice of opposition to the real prospect of the law being tightened in this area. At the end of September 2016, mass demonstrations organised by the Razem (Together) party took place in nine Polish cities under the slogan 'black protest' (#czarnyprotest). They

started with an online protest on a social networking site. Its main concept was that "all you had to do was take a black and white photo and send it to the appropriate social media page. Thousands of women of all ages, [...] from all over the world, posted photos of themselves with notes about the 'black protest' online." After online mobilisation, the black protests quickly spread to the streets of many cities in Poland.<sup>17</sup>

"The main mass protest, which was a kind of 'beginning' of the movement, took place on [Monday – M.V.] 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2016 [...], (so-called 'Black Monday'). Approximately 200,000 people took part in mass protests and marches in 150 Polish cities. An additional element of the protest was its symbolic side, i.e.

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<sup>14</sup> Pursuant to Art. 4a section 1 point 2 of the Act on family planning, protection of the human foetus and conditions for the admissibility of termination: The termination of pregnancy may only be performed by a doctor if prenatal tests or other medical conditions indicate a high probability of severe and irreversible impairment of the foetus or an incurable disease that threatens its life. The provision became invalid with the publication of the Tribunal's judgement in the Journal of Laws – January 27, 2021; Wyrok Trybunału Konstytucyjnego z dnia 22 października 2020 r., sygn. akt K 1/20, Dz.U. 2021, poz. 175.

<sup>15</sup> This bill was submitted to the Lower Chamber of Parliament of the Republic of Poland in autumn 2016 by the Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture.

<sup>16</sup> The draft bill of the "Let's Save Women" committee allowed the termination of pregnancy up to the twelfth week without additional conditions, and after that date – in the same cases as before (when the pregnancy poses a threat to the woman's life or health, there is a high probability of severe and irreversible foetal impairment or an incurable disease that threatens its life or if the pregnancy was the result of a prohibited act). Rejected September 23, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> A. Ostaszewska, *Czarne protesty. Doświadczenie społeczne jako podstawa communitas kobiet*, "Pedagogika Społeczna" 2017, nr 4, p. 121.

wearing black clothes and/or absenteeism from work (strike).”<sup>18</sup> The nationwide wave of protests resulted in the cessation of work on the proposal to tighten the anti-abortion law, as well as the formation of the OSK. This was a “[...] mass, social, [...] informal grassroots movement whose main goal was to manifest and defend fundamental social rights. The idea was therefore to demonstrate emancipatory support for specific values [...], ([such as – M.V.] freedom of choice, right to self-determination), as well as the right to insist that the demands submitted be taken into account.”<sup>19</sup>

After the announcement of the Constitutional Tribunal’s ruling declaring unconstitutional the provisions regarding the possibility of terminating a pregnancy if prenatal tests or other medical conditions indicate a high probability of severe and irreversible impairment of the foetus or an incurable disease that threatens its life (22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020), which had been in force since 1993, people took to the streets in droves, many of them young Poles. Marta Lempart, the leader of the OSK, said in an interview for “Polityka” weekly (October 28, 2020): “[...] This war has been going on for several years. Its victims are women who are denied access to prenatal tests, and women who suffer because perinatal care has been abolished. Young people whose lives have been broken because contraception and sex education are becoming less and less available.”<sup>20</sup>

It should be emphasised that as early as the black protests in October 2016 and the women’s strike in March 2017, which were mentioned earlier in this article, Polish women took up protest activity on a large scale for the first time. However, October 2020 brought awareness to a much wider group of citizens, women and men, who took to the streets on the day Julia Przyłębska (President of the Constitutional Tribunal) announced her “declaration.”<sup>21</sup> Protests previously treated as “women’s demonstrations” began to be combined with protests of many, sometimes distant groups, e.g. students, entrepreneurs, doctors, grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters.

It needs to be highlighted that the protests discussed in the article clearly exemplified civil disobedience and were pacified (sometimes brutally) by the forces of order on the orders of the state authorities. “It should be recognised that the primary purpose of public participation in a democratic country is the ability to

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<sup>18</sup> Modelled on the so called Women’s Day Off, Icelandic women protest which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1975, A. Ziętek, *Ruchy protestu jako przykład asertywnej kultury obywatelskiej. Przypadek ogólnopolskiego strajku kobiet*, “Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne” 2020, vol. 65, p. 166.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> M. Witeczak, *Marta Lempart: Nie rozejdziemy się, będziemy walczyć do skutku*, rozmowa z Martą Lempart, “Polityka”, 28.10.2020, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1976712,1,marta-lempart-nie-rozejdziemy-sie-bedziemy-walczyc-do-skutku.read> [accessed: 10.06.2023].

<sup>21</sup> People involved in the fight for restoring the rule of law described the Tribunal’s rulings this way after it subordinated its decisions to the will of the ruling party.

control policy and its main actors. Civil engagement in social and political life is a kind of barrier for the degeneration of modern systems of governance that do not seek social approval or understanding.”<sup>22</sup> Taking for granted the thesis that in a civilised society obedience is the norm and disobedience is the exception, it should be remembered that in a democratic system of government a situation of civil disobedience is permissible. Civil disobedience has a long tradition, and its main goal is to oppose the government’s policies and express dissatisfaction. The constitutive feature of civil disobedience is violating the law, or refraining from taking action ordered by a legal provision, or rejecting the government’s policy and submitting to the penalty resulting from the violated provision.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it should be recalled that the Constitutional Tribunal’s judgements are generally applicable from the moment of their announcement (violation of the law by protesters), and additionally, during the largest wave of protests in 2020, epidemic regulations were in force in connection with the Covid pandemic (violation of the law by protesters). At that time, the Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and prohibitions in connection with the occurrence of an epidemic<sup>24</sup> was in force (replaced by a new regulation on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2020). The most important provisions relating to the topic discussed in the article were in chapter 4 entitled *Prohibition of organising gatherings, events, meetings or gatherings; obligations of participants in special events* in § 28<sup>25</sup>, the provisions of which almost completely prevented mass protest actions:

1. Until further notice, it is prohibited to organise meetings within the meaning of Art. 3 of the Act of July 24, 2015 – Law on Meetings (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 631), excluding meetings organised on the basis of the notification referred to in Art. 7 section 1, art. 22 section 1 or the decision referred to in Art. 26b section 1 of this Act, whereby:

- 1) the maximum number of participants cannot exceed 150;
- 2) the distance between gatherings cannot be less than 100 m.

2. Participants of the meeting referred to in section 1 are obliged to maintain a distance of at least 1.5 m between themselves and to cover their mouth and nose [...].

However, we must also remember that the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in Article 57 states: “Everyone shall have freedom to organise and to participate in peaceful assemblies. Limitations of this freedom may be determined

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<sup>22</sup> M. du Vall, *Nieposłuszeństwo obywatelskie w XXI wieku*, [in:] *Dylematy polskiej demokracji*, red. Ł. Danel, J. Kornaś, Fundacja Gospodarki i Administracji Publicznej, Kraków 2012, p. 203.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>24</sup> Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 9 października 2020 r. w sprawie ustanowienia określonych ograniczeń, nakazów i zakazów w związku z wystąpieniem stanu epidemii, Dz.U. 2020 poz. 1758 [repealed].

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

by legislative act.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, during the pandemic, many constitutionalists questioned the validity of the provisions contained in government regulations.

### Evolution of forms of expressing civic indignation

Polish citizens decided *en masse* that in the face of a threat to their freedoms and rights, they would be disobedient and express their outrage. Over time, protests took on a different character: blockades of streets and entire cities, large gatherings, marches, pickets etc. The tools of resistance increasingly included symbolic objects (e.g. coat hangers, which had also appeared earlier), humour and the sounds and volume of the organised events, and the language of protest, which on the one hand, became radicalised, but also became a tool of artistic and literary expression of dissatisfaction. Expanding the ways in which people participated with new forms opens the way for groups previously marginalised or excluded to participate in political life.

After many years of rather polite protests in defence of the rule of law, the protests that began in October 2020 sought a form of activism that was supposed to be, above all, visible, according to the principle “the more visible it is, the better”. The effectiveness of a protest depends on whether it is noticed by the authorities, media, supporters and opponents.<sup>27</sup>

It can be said that the protests were a series of quite specific demonstrations. Firstly, as already mentioned, they took place during the pandemic. Hence,

one version of the protest logo: the profile of a woman with a red lightning bolt, without a mask, or a view [...] with a mask [on her face – M.V.] – black with a red lightning bolt or red with a black lightning bolt. Secondly, the strategy of the demonstrators was based largely on the fact that movement around the city was not determined in advance, as it depended to a large extent on the actions of the police, initially relatively mild, but over time more and more aggressive. [...] Their specificity also consisted in the fact that there was no specific “centre”, neither spatially anchored nor decision-making. Demonstrations took place in many cities, where the course of the demonstration was not determined from above or imposed by the “headquarters.”<sup>28</sup>

What was new in October 2020 was that the use of profanity became common in statements as well as displaying such words in the form of slogans on banners. Although the crowds also chanted other slogans, it was the vulgar ones that were shouted most often and with the greatest enthusiasm. The phrase “fuck off” became the motto of the protests against the tightening of abortion regulations at that time. You could also hear slogans such as “We’re pissed off!” and a slogan

<sup>26</sup> Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r., Dz.U. 1997, nr 78, poz. 483.

<sup>27</sup> Z. Kloch, *Hasła strajku kobiet i języki wernakularne*, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 2022, nr 1, pp. 117–118.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 119–120.

that has become part of the language of all anti-government demonstrations taking place since then: “fuck PiS”<sup>29</sup>, which over time began to be symbolised by the stars “\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*”. It is worth noting that from that moment on, eight stars began to appear not only on protest posters, but also on cars, in shop and restaurant windows, etc., of those who wanted to express their opposition to government policy. Polish streets became “starry”. It was a symbolic version of the protest, but clearly shows support for the actions of citizens fighting for the rule of law and freedom.

The use of vulgar words outraged some people, even among people opposed to the ruling party. There were claims that this form of protest makes many of them uncomfortable, being among crowds shouting slogans that they consider too vulgar and with which they do not agree. The language of the protests was also a huge source of criticism for the authorities who discredited the protest participants and the media supporting them. Despite this, a Kantar poll conducted in the second half of November 2020 indicated that 70% of respondents supported the protests against the Constitutional Tribunal’s ruling on abortion. Importantly, respondents from younger age groups more often declare support for demonstrations.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in a report on a survey involving 3,389 people, the Centre for Social Cognitive Studies Kraków indicated that as many as 92% of respondents opposed the Constitutional Tribunal’s judgement (3,050 people). They also expressed considerable motivation to be active (even long-term) and aimed to stop the newly introduced changes by the Constitutional Tribunal. The dissatisfaction caused by the change proposed by the Constitutional Tribunal can also be seen from the fact that 27% of respondents had not previously participated in protests regarding the tightening of the abortion law, and 17% had not previously been involved in any other protests.<sup>31</sup>

Some journalists, columnists and scientists were among the defenders of the use of profanity. People who distanced themselves from the protests because they used “bad words” were accused of thinking the same way as those in power: they expect women to be polite and obedient. Attention is drawn to the fact that precise expression is the key to communication. It is about transparency and the power of the message; the protesters did not want the ruling party to “leave” or “leave it alone”, but to “fuck off”.

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<sup>29</sup> For using this slogan at a protest on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, on the day the Constitutional Tribunal’s judgement was published in the Journal of Laws, a medical student from Gdańsk was brought to court. She was accused of violating Article 141 of the Petty Offences Code, which refers to the use of obscene words in a public place. This slogan had been chanted throughout Poland for several months earlier.

<sup>30</sup> js/kab, *70 procent badanych popiera protesty Strajku Kobiet*, TVN24, 20.11.2020, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/protesty-po-orzeczeniu-tk-w-sprawie-aborcji-sondaz-70-procent-badanych-popiera-demonstracje-4755987> [accessed: 10.06.2023].

<sup>31</sup> K. Jaśko, J. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, M. Maj, M. Tańska, J. Pyrkosz-Pacyna, M. Szastok, *Strajk Kobiet raport z badań*, Instytut Psychologii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2020.

On the other hand, the use of profanity inspired others, mainly participants, to further modify existing conventions related to expressing social dissatisfaction. Of course, there were banners that deliberately and with humour showed the absurdity of politely asking the government to leave, i.e. “President, the Sovereign tells you to go away”, “I express my dissatisfaction with the inelegant actions of the government”, “The people of Krakow politely ask, go away, roaches.”<sup>32</sup>

There were plenty of quotes and allusions on the placards that referred to well-known maxims, literature, pop culture and even the Bible. As for classic foreign authors, it is worth highlighting the excellent use of a quote from *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. The slogan “Annushka poured oil” sounds ominous because it announces that someone is about to be beheaded by a tram. There were also references to the works of George Orwell, his *Animal Farm* and *1984*, which were best expressed in the slogan “Orwell didn’t write self-help books”. In turn, the slogan “I was already prudent and romantic. Now I’m pissed off” referred to the works of Jane Austen. When it comes to Polish literature, following Michał Rusinek, one can point out references to authors such as Adam Mickiewicz: “Listen, girl! She doesn’t listen” (*Romantyczność*), “Where is the amber weed and the buckwheat as white as snow, you, Jarosław Miserably, get the f\*\*\* out!” (*Pan Tadeusz*); Juliusz Słowacki: “Like Balladyna for all crimes, red lightning will f\*\*\* you today” (*Balladyna*), “They are worthy of a curse” (*Balladyna*); Henryk Sienkiewicz: “I haven’t been to Lubicz yet, I was just rushing here to f\*\*\* you out gentlemen!” (*Potop*); Władysław Reymont: “They will take you away like Jagna!” (*Chłopi*); and Bolesław Prus: “Too many Hail Marys are harmful to health and life. Rozalka” (*Antek*).<sup>33</sup>

Examples of slogans with their sources both in literature and pop culture include banner slogans referring to the work of J.K. Rowling (author of the Harry Potter series) or J.R.R. Tolkien (author of, among other works, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*). A title for the next book in the Harry Potter series was suggested: “Harry Potter and the Hell of Women”, others cast spells: “Avada Kadavra PiS” or “We’ll put you in Azkaban”, “Jarek, only a dementor wants to kiss you”, “Harry Protest and fucking You-Know-Who”, “Expecto Patronum, you bastard”. Others wrung their hands, saying: “Like country, like Voldemort”. Among Tolkien’s themes, it is worth mentioning examples such as “The Orcs of Mordor are a bit pissed off too” and “Where is Gondor when PiS is persecuting us?.” There were also references to *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood

<sup>32</sup> References to the slogans mentioned in this article, and much more, can be found in places such as Instagram on the profile @transparenty\_z\_protestów, [https://www.instagram.com/transparenty\\_z\\_protestow](https://www.instagram.com/transparenty_z_protestow) [accessed: 1.06.2023].

<sup>33</sup> M. Rusinek, „Jarku, daj, ać ja pobruszę, a ty wyp\*\*\*”. *Jak autorzy transparentów sięgają do literatury*, “Wysokie Obcasy”, 1.11.2020, <https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,100865,26466977,jarku-daj-ac-ja-pobrusze-a-ty-wyp-jak-autorzy-transparentow.html?disable-Redirects=true> [accessed: 10.06.2023].

and the series based on it. There were banners with slogans: “Gilead” or “Jarek thinks ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ is a tutorial.”<sup>34</sup>

There were also references to cult and popular films, e.g. *Forrest Gump*: “Run, Jarek, run!” and to the title of the American comedy: “I love you, and you from PiS!”<sup>35</sup> Animated films also became an inspiration, e.g. *Penguins of Madagascar* and the slogan “Gentlemen, we have a government to overthrow”, *Smurfs* and the words “Smurf is outraged that there is a bigger idiot than him”, or *Shrek*: “Even Shrek wouldn’t want to live in such a swamp”, as well as popular entertainment programs, such as Kitchen Revolutions and the words of the program hosts “today we will stew duck” or Master Chef and the slogan “Julia, give me your apron”. From a visual point of view, the president of the ruling party was imagined not only as Voldemort (the villain of the Harry Potter series), but also as Sith Lord Palpatine from the Star Wars saga, Dobby from the Harry Potter series and “Badman”, a reference to the Batman comics and films. Princess Leia, from the Star Wars universe and Wonderwoman also appeared as symbols of the resistance.

When it comes to references to the Bible, again following Michał Rusinek, we can point out, for example, a parody of a phrase from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: “Conquer evil with the beaver”, the Gospel according to St. Matthew: “Whoever lives by the sword dies by the sheath” or Psalm 23: “Even though I walk along Nowogrodzka Street, I will fear no evil”. There was also a literal quote from the Gospel, but in a completely different context: “This is MY body.”<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusions

October 2020 was a kind of breath of youthful fresh air for Poles, tired of many years of ineffective opposition to the destruction of the Polish state by the government. Democracy has become an even more profoundly lived experience, and towns and cities have become a place where people take matters into their own hands, rather than waiting for centralised institutions. Earlier protests were an expression of citizens’ indignation and anger, but due to the weak involvement of the young people, they were calm and not very dynamic. The protesters, whether in the mistaken belief of the need to become decent or out of “intellectual superiority”, contented themselves with the slogans “Freedom, equality, democracy”, “Constitution”, lighted candles, and carried flowers and flags. Without a doubt, these were important and beautiful events, but there was no controversy or directly expressed opposition to the authorities.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem.*

Certainly, the involvement of the young generation in defending rights and freedoms has significantly influenced the rhetoric and form of expression used in the protests. According to the previously mentioned Kantar survey on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, “it was people aged 18–24 who most often declared that they had taken part in the protests. Of this group, 29% admitted that they had taken to the streets. The older the Poles, the more often they did not support the street demonstrations related to the Women’s Strike.”<sup>37</sup> It cannot be forgotten that the protests took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which on the one hand certainly resulted in greater participation by young Poles (who wanted the freedom to leave their places of residence, move around, organise meetings, have fun etc.) and the limited presence of older Poles who were more at risk of falling ill. It is also worth mentioning parenthetically that the event required the involvement of a larger number of law enforcement services, which resulted in an increased number of interventions.

Observing the protesters in October 2020 (and months later), it was noticeable that the participants were not walking, but running, dancing to music, which was sometimes completely inappropriate and rude, and the slogans on the banners (but also in shop windows, cafes, etc.) were an extraordinary manifestation of creativity and the fact that younger Poles do not care what others think about them. Although initially the main attention was paid to the vulgarisation of the language of the protests, over time, older protesters accepted and understood that the current level of public outrage had already exceeded the limits of “polite” demonstrations.

Thanks both to the radicalisation of language, but also to the creativity of slogans described earlier in the article, references to literature, pop culture and humour, the protests have become much more visible and media-related. The protesters were appreciated for their intelligence, interesting and humorous use of literary and film themes, and for the artistry of many banners and costumes. There is no doubt that it has enriched and forever changed the narrative regarding the current actions of those in power.

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<sup>37</sup> js/kab, *op. cit.*

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# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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### **“THIS USED TO BE YOUR FAVOURITE SHOW”. INVOLVEMENT OF THE MEDIA IN THE PROTEST “MEDIA WITHOUT CHOICE” AND ITS PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON THE BASIS OF SELECTED EXAMPLES**

**Dominika Popielec**

PhD, The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9583-0861

#### **Abstract**

In a democratic system we are used to the media reporting on various demonstrations and social protests. Thanks to the media's interest protesters have the opportunity to express their position regarding actions that they consider to be unjust. On one occasion, Polish media took advantage of this situation when they expressed their own opposition to a state of affairs by ceasing to publish media content. Instead of the scheduled programmes there appeared the messages: "This used to be your favourite show" and "Media without choice". In view of this, the aim of this article is to describe this one-day protest by part of the media on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021, which was motivated by a proposed bill that would introduce a tax on advertisements. The reactions of the political sphere, the media and society, which constitute how the protest was perceived, are analysed with reference to how the reception of the media protest was portrayed. Use is made of an analysis of the content of selected media in relation to these analytical categories, a comparative method and a case study.

**Key words:** journalism, media protest, media without choice, Polish media system, politics

## Introduction

It may seem that we have already grown used to the visibility of varied social protests, since they are intrinsically linked to the essence of democracy. However, one must not forget that society has also expressed its opinion in this way in undemocratic societies, often in difficult circumstances and against the disapproval of the authorities. Andrzej Paczkowski draws attention to such examples in his analysis of “[...] case where group, spontaneous and public forms of social resistance/protest/dissent were manifested [...]”<sup>1</sup> in Polish society in the times of the Polish People’s Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL). Piotr Matczak points out that protests, which may take on many forms, including petitions, strikes and demonstrations, appeared on a broad scale in Poland after 1989.<sup>2</sup> Over more than thirty years of democracy in Poland, there have been many protests that drew the attention of the media and, consequently, society. Almost everyone has protested – professional groups, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, miners, farmers, businessmen and women, as well as various social groups, including parents and the carers of disabled people, opponents of judicial changes, supporters and opponents of abortion, individuals who identify with the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji, KOD), opponents of pandemic restrictions, Swiss bank mortgage holders and listeners of the radio station “Trójka”. Of course, these protests have been accompanied by various slogans, symbols and other forms of communicative-polemical expression appropriate to the object of the protest which, on the one hand, build the identity of the protesters and, on the other, express clearly – often in an unconventional form – their values, beliefs and expectations with ready-made solutions intended to bring about the desired changes. According to Zbigniew Kloch, this arises from the nature of the protest treated as a social practice that aims for visibility, and thus clarity through the use of forms of expression<sup>3</sup> present in the public space and through the media.

Taking into account that protests and demonstrations are extremely varied, one thing is clear: society takes full advantage of the opportunity to publicly express its opinion and defend its reasoning. Although it is impossible to list all the initiatives by citizens intended to contest the *status quo* and demand changes, it is worth giving a few examples from recent years that have stirred up considerable interest and emotions in society. One of these is the farmers’ protest, which society associates with tractors blocking the roads, grain being poured on

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<sup>1</sup> A. Paczkowski, *Strajki, bunty, manifestacje jako „polska droga przez socjalizm”*, Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, Poznań 2003, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> P. Matczak, *Protest lokalny w Polsce*, “Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny” 2000, R. LXII, z. 3, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Kloch, *Hasła strajku kobiet i języki wernakularne*, “Pamiętniki Literacki” 2022, nr 1, p. 118.

to the streets and with the protest leaders, Andrzej Lepper and Michał Kołodziejczak.<sup>4</sup> Researchers' observations suggest that the origin of the farmers' protests since 1989 should be sought primarily in the economic rationales and those of the political transformations, in the context of which expectations were formulated concerning the protection of the agricultural market accompanied by a large amount of support from the state. Farmers made use of various types of protest action, sometimes radical, which secured society's perception of them.<sup>5</sup> One can consider the Black Protests, which have been organised in many Polish cities by Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (OSK, the All-Poland Women's Strike)<sup>6</sup> since 2016, to be an equally striking form of protest. These protests oppose planned changes in the Act that concerns family planning, the protection of human foetuses and the conditions in which pregnancies may be terminated.<sup>7</sup> The catalyst for this activity was the rejection in 2016 of a bill proposed by the committee "Save Women", which concerned the liberalisation of the abortion law and was accompanied by a heated debate in parliament, fragments of which were published in the media.<sup>8</sup> This relatively quickly created the need for opponents to show their dissent, for which they used the model of the 1975 women's strike in Iceland.<sup>9</sup> This initiative, which was also promoted on social

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<sup>4</sup> J. Ceglarz, *Protest na A2. „Nowy Lepper” przywódcą rolników*, Wp.pl, 13.12.2018, <https://finanse.wp.pl/protest-na-a2-nowy-lepper-przywodca-rolnikow-6327032934782593a> [accessed: 29.05.2023]. It should be pointed out that the farmers' discontent is a quick response to the political, economic and social situation and is of a permanent nature. Evidence for this is the numerous protests over a long period of time depending on the circumstances, for example the fertiliser crisis and issue of surplus Ukrainian grain, reported by the media; K. Doros-Stachoń, *Protest rolników w Opolu. „Magazyny są pełne zboża i jest problem, żeby to sprzedać”*, Radio Opole, 25.04.2023, <https://radio.opole.pl/100,697526,protest-rolnikow-w-opolu-magazyny-sa-pelne-zboza> [accessed: 29.05.2023].

<sup>5</sup> It is worth highlighting that the researchers Krzysztof Górlach and Grzegorz Foryś have described the types of agriculture protest from a historical perspective, taking into account the specific characteristics of agricultural dissent in Poland since 1989, including waves of protests (Solidarity and post-Solidarity), the interests of agricultural producers, and the repertoire of actions, such as blocking the roads, destroying crops, strikes, strike alerts and occupying buildings. K. Górlach, G. Foryś, *Ruchy społeczne jako instrument walki o sprawiedliwość społeczną. Kilka refleksji na przykładzie protestów (nie tylko) polskich rolników*, "Wieś i Rolnictwo" 2023, nr 1(198), pp. 66–68.

<sup>6</sup> OSK is an organisation founded in 2016 in response to the government's rejection of a pro-choice bill "Save Women", mentioned later.

<sup>7</sup> G. Piechota, "Strajk Kobiet". *Zmiany społeczno-kulturowe jako efekt protestów w Polsce*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2022, R. 20, z. 3, pp. 98–99.

<sup>8</sup> Zob. *Sejm odrzucił projekt komitetu „Ratujmy kobiety” liberalizujący przepisy aborcyjne*, RMF FM, 23.09.2016, [https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/polska/news-sejm-odrzucil-projekt-komitetu-ratujmy-kobiety-liberalizujac,nId,2279607#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/polska/news-sejm-odrzucil-projekt-komitetu-ratujmy-kobiety-liberalizujac,nId,2279607#crp_state=1) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>9</sup> This reference, which comes from the website Gals4Gals, appeared in the description of the event on Facebook, which said "Like the fearless women of Iceland who paralysed the country 41 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 women all over Poland will come out on to the streets to fight for their basic rights" in: J. Gunnarsson Payne, *Kobiety jako „lud”*. *Czarne Protesty jako sprzeciw wobec autorytarnego populizmu w perspektywie międzynarodowej*, [in:] *Bunt kobiet. Czarne*

media<sup>10</sup>, generated a lot of support as well as declarations of intent to take part. This turned out not be a one-off event because similar initiatives took place in subsequent years, for example the protests during the 2020 pandemic after the Constitutional Tribunal's verdict regarding abortion<sup>11</sup> and protests following the deaths of pregnant women.<sup>12</sup> These demonstrations were accompanied by slogans, symbols and placards<sup>13</sup>, which became inseparable elements of them, while at the same time communicating extremely forcefully their opposition to the political decision of the Constitutional Tribunal and the opponents of abortion.

To this rich catalogue of social protests of various natures and motives one should add those who not only drew society's attention to dissenting voices, but also reported on them, namely, the media. Therefore the aim of this article is to describe this unprecedented media protest in Poland in terms of its genesis, motives, slogans and symbols, as well as how it was received by various groups, including the media industry itself, the political sphere and public opinion. In connection with this, the following research questions were posed: Why did the

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*protesty i Strajki Kobiet*, red. E. Korolczuk, B. Kowalska, J. Ramme, C. Snochowska-Gonzalez, Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk 2018, p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> M. Drozdek, *Jednego dnia kobiety sparaliżowały cały kraj. Teraz powtórzy się to w Polsce?*, Wp.pl, 26.09.2016, <https://kobieta.wp.pl/jednego-dnia-kobiety-sparalizowaly-caly-kraj-teraz-powtorzy-sie-to-w-polsce-6041161842828417a> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>11</sup> J. Suchomska, D. Urzędowska, *Działania protestacyjne Strajku Kobiet w ujęciu teorii nowych ruchów społecznych*, "Dyskurs & Dialog" 2021, nr 1, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Zob. D. Flis, *Ani jednej więcej. Dziesiątki tysięcy w Warszawie, kolejne protesty w całej Polsce*, OKO.press, 6.11.2021, <https://oko.press/ani-jednej-wiecej-protesty-po-smierci-izabeli-z-pszczyzny-aktualizowany> [accessed: 30.05.2023]; *Protesty po śmierci 30-latki z Pszczyny. „Ani jednej więcej. Marsz dla Izzy” [RELACJA NA ŻYWO]*, Onet.pl, 6.11.2021, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/protesty-po-smierci-30-latki-z-pszczyzny-relacja-na-zywo/m1ngtx1> [accessed: 30.05.2023]; KP, *Nie przeprowadzono aborcji, kobieta zmarła. W całej Polsce milczące protesty pod hasłem „Ani jednej więcej”*, "Newsweek", 2.11.2021, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/smierc-kobiety-w-pszczyynie-protest-pod-tk-w-warszawie-ani-jednej-wiecej/mB0d95k> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>13</sup> Adrianna Krzywik lists the slogans of the protesters, which make reference to cultural, historical and political contexts. However, while it would be preferable to provide some examples, these mostly rely on Polish puns and as such are untranslatable without cumbersome and space-consuming explanations. She also lists the symbols used, namely, the umbrella, coat hanger and bolt of lightning. Furthermore the protesters made use of the logotype of the Solidarity movement, the *kotwica* ("anchor") which was the symbol of the Polish Underground State used during WWII, as well as Margaret Atwood's book *The Handmaid's Tale*. A. Krzywik, *Dekodowanie komunikatów wizualnych sztuki protestów przeciwko zastrzeżeniu praw aborcyjnych w Polsce*, "Dyskurs & Dialog" 2021, nr 1, pp. 114–117. In Sławomir Doległo's opinion, the use of symbols and specific language (including vulgar expressions) situates these protests within the tradition of the anti-government carnival akin to the Orange Alternative movement of the 1980. S. Doległo, *Pokolenie Netflix. Skarnawalizowany gniew młodych Polaków i jego medialne (re)prezentacje*, [w:] *Media-język-społeczeństwo. Stan badań i aktualne problemy*, red. D. Popielec, K. Marcinkiewicz, Polskie Towarzystwo Komunikacji Społecznej–Instytut Dziennikarstwa, Mediów i Komunikacji Społecznej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków–Wrocław 2021, pp. 138–144.

media decide to protest? How did they express their arguments? How was the media protest received? In the context of the last question, since we wanted to sketch society's perception, which was just forming, the analytical categories "solidarity with the protesting media" and "criticism of the media protest" were used. In order to show the spectrum of these categories, reports written by the chosen media were analysed and use was made of a comparative method along with a case study.

### **The genesis, course and significance of the "Media without choice" protests**

Above we noted, using selected examples, that protests can have various reasons, messages, locations, forms and reach. What these protests have in common is how they were reported by the media, as well as the progressive mediatisation of civic activism through the use of social media. It is precisely thanks to the media that consumers have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the message of the protesters, which influences the social reception of a specific event. The images that we most frequently see in the media are groups of protesters, their chants and placards, which point to the protesters' desire to articulate their own opinion according to the idea "nothing about us, without us". Since so many social groups decide to protest, it should come as no surprise that people in the media take advantage of the opportunity to express their dissent, for example, in the form of open letters, petitions and media reports aimed at a broad group of consumers. As an example, one could cite the most recent defence of media independence against government pressure which took the form of a declaration that was signed by many editors-in-chief of various media outlets<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The chief editors declare their total opposition to any pressure placed on the independence of the media, which has already been exerted on the editors of outlets including Onet and Wirtualna Polska. The case of lex TVN (a law, vetoed by the president, that was intended to prevent companies from outside the European Economic Area from having more than a 49% stake in Polish radio and television stations – translator's note), legal action against journalists as well as the activity of the National Broadcasting Council have also not been forgotten. The editors declare publicly that they will defend fundamental journalistic values and will fulfil the role of the media (provide society with access to information, perform the function of an overseer), because this has special significance for a democratic society. The full list of editors for Redakcja Wiadomości WP, *Deklaracja redaktorek i redaktorów naczelnych*, Wp.pl, 28.06.2023, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/deklaracja-redaktorek-i-redaktorow-naczelnych-6913597122914976a> [accessed: 28.06.2023]. This declaration, given the opportunity, is also supported by journalists, including the editor of TVN Anita Werner, who, on her Instagram profile, took the side of "[...] free and independent media [...]. Dear Viewers, you have the right to know", MOS, „*Macie prawo wiedzieć*”. *Anita Werner popiera deklarację mediów*, Wp.pl, 28.06.2023, <https://teleshov.wp.pl/macie-prawo-wiedziec-anita-werner-popiera-deklaracje-mediow-6913846253738720a> [accessed: 28.06.2023].

after the publication of texts on the portals Onet and Wirtualna Polska concerning attempts to influence editorial offices.<sup>15</sup>

Without doubt, these declarations and open letters can be considered a form of protest because they express collective, spontaneous and public opposition/resistance, which, according to Paczkowski, quoted above, takes place in the media, instead of on streets and in squares, which other social groups use.<sup>16</sup> Citing Magdalena Tendera, a protest is “not only a situation where the expectations and demands of social actors confront each other and resources are created and transformed, but also a tool for the transformation of axiological systems, which takes place in relation to the legitimised apparatus of power. It serves as a response to a situation where the social order is disturbed.”<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the genesis of the protests, it should be explained that at the beginning of 2021 prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced a draft bill to introduce a levy on traditional and online media. In practice, this was another tax that was intended to finance Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia (the National Health Fund; 50% of the revenues) in the battle with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, Narodowy Fundusz Ochrony Zabytków (the National Fund for the Protection of Monuments; 15% of revenues) as well as the establishment of a Fundusz Wsparcia Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego w Obszarze Mediów (Fund for the Support of Culture and National Heritage in the Media Sector; 35% of the revenues).<sup>18</sup> It was established that the levy on internet advertising would amount to 5% of the base<sup>19</sup>, which would generate revenues of 800

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<sup>15</sup> Journalists spoke directly about government pressure that appeared after the publication of articles, mostly investigative ones, that unmasked the activity of MP Łukasz Mejza, who is linked to the Republicans and held the position of secretary in the ministries within Zjednoczona Prawica (the United Right) coalition government, as well as pressure to dismiss particular journalists, such as Andrzeja Stankiewicz from TVP in 2007. M. Bojanowska, *Wicenaczelnym Onetu: Żona Ziobry, próbowała mnie zwolnić z każdej redakcji, w której pracowałem*, *Gazeta.pl*, 28.06.2023, <https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,29916132,wicenaczelnym-onetu-zona-ziobry-probowala-mnie-zwolnic-z-kazdej.html> [accessed: 28.06.2023].

<sup>16</sup> J. Chodak, *Okupacja przestrzeni publicznej jako taktyka współczesnych ruchów protestu*, “Przestrzeń Społeczna” 2016, nr 1, pp. 75–77.

<sup>17</sup> M. Tendera, *Protest jako mechanizm równoważenia nierówności społecznych*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2013, nr 2, p. 112.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Ministry of Finance, the proposed bill was based on ideas implemented in France, Austria, Greece and Italy. *Podatek od reklamy. Morawiecki: Składki w mediach nie są niczym nowym w UE*, “Dziennik Gazeta Prawna”, 3.02.2021, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8084884.podatek-od-reklamy-morawiecki-obajtek.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>19</sup> According to the draft bill, “The basic rate for the press shall be 2% for revenues that do not exceed 30 million zł and 6% for revenues above this amount – after deducting the tax-free allowance and if the subject of the advertisement is goods that meet the qualifying criteria, these rates shall be 4% and 12% respectively. In the case of media other than the press the basic rate shall be 7.5% on revenues that do not exceed 50 million zł and 10% if revenues exceed this amount – after deducting the tax-free allowance and if the subject of the advertisement is goods that meet the qualifying criteria, these rates shall be 4% and 12% respectively.” Furthermore, it is worth drawing

million zł in 2022. Comments on the draft bill could be submitted until 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021.<sup>20</sup> The government's plans did not pass unnoticed, since the media immediately became interested in the topic, as attested by publications that raised this issue, such as "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna"<sup>21</sup>, the portal Business Insider Polska<sup>22</sup> and Onet.pl.<sup>23</sup> In addition to articles of an informative nature, on the day before the planned protest the editor-in-chief of the weekly "Polityka", Jerzy Baczyński, spoke up, expressing, in the name of the media and advertising industries, his opposition to the planned advertising levy and announced, somewhat enigmatically, "protests of a form and scale, the likes of which Poland, and even the European Union, have never seen". Baczyński described exhaustively the negative effect of the levy on the financial situation of many parts of these industries operating in the conditions of a frozen economy due to the epidemic restrictions, which translated into serious financial difficulties, for example for the press market and the events industry.<sup>24</sup>

In Baczyński's opinion, these were conscious political actions by the government intended to "bring order to the media market" in line with the Hungarian model, which through this bill would financially weaken so-called opposition media, while strengthening so-called national and patriotic media as a result of creating a special Media Fund.<sup>25</sup> Baczyński

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attention to the regulations concerning the Fund for the Support of Culture and National Heritage in the Media Sector, which thanks to this tax would be able to realise such aims as "building a platform for distributing information and analysing material that appears in the media, particularly digital, establishing and developing channels and news platforms (radio and news programmes, internet portals) aimed at people with varying digital capabilities, supporting the development of the media, promoting national heritage, Polish cultural and sporting achievements as well as the development of radio and cinematography.", *Projekt ustawy o dodatkowych przychodach Narodowego Funduszu Zdrowia, Narodowego Funduszu Ochrony Zabytków oraz utworzeniu Funduszu Wsparcia Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego w Obszarze Mediów*, gov.pl, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/projekt-ustawy-o-dodatkowych-przychodach-narodowego-funduszu-zdrowia-narodowego-funduszu-ochrony-zabytkow-oraz-utworzeniu-funduszu-wsparcia-kultury-i-dziedzictwa-narodowego-w-obszarze-mediow2> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>20</sup> P. Huczko, *Podatek (składka) od reklamy internetowej – projekt*, Infor.pl, 5.02.2021, <https://ksiegowosc.infor.pl/wiadomosci/5190610,Podatek-skladka-od-reklamy-internetowej-projekt.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>21</sup> *Podatek od mediów nabiera kształtu. Projekt trafił do wykazu prac rządu*, "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna", 2.02.2021, <https://serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl/media/artykuly/8082939,podatek-od-mediow-zalozenia-cto-zaplaci.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>22</sup> *Podatek od reklamy. Znamy założenia projektu ustawy*, Business Insider, 2.02.2021, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/biznes/media/podatek-od-reklamy-zalozenia-projektu-ustawy/s0wfw3q> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>23</sup> *Nowy podatek od reklam. Pieniądze trafią do mediów publicznych?*, Onet.pl, 3.02.2021, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/nowy-podatek-od-reklam-pieniadze-trafia-do-mediow-publicznych/752g5bz> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>24</sup> J. Baczyński, *Protest mediów*, "Polityka", 9.02.2021, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/komentarzejerzegobaczynskiego/2103115,1,protest-mediow.read> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

placed his hopes in the protest, which would deter the government from the proposed law.

On this basis it can be inferred that the economic factor, so significant during the difficult time of the coronavirus pandemic, proved to be the impetus for the media protest, leaving its mark on the overall financial condition of the media and advertising markets in Poland. This economic factor is of great significance to the functioning of the media, ensuring independence from any form of pressure or political influence. Furthermore, it allows high quality material to be produced that is important from the point of view of the interests of society. In view of this, the “Media without choice” protest, which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021, was conducted through the media and lasted 24 hours, stands out against the backdrop of other media activity. On this day, media consumers were able to experience – speaking somewhat dramatically and apocalyptically – “a world without media”, since instead of well-known news programmes on radio or television, familiar front pages in the press and on online portals, one saw a black background or heard the messages “This used to be your favourite show”, “This should be your favourite news programme. Today we are showing a special version of the programme in view of the ‘Media without choice’ protest. We apologise to our viewers and trade partners. Thank you for your understanding and support” (message shown on Polsat).<sup>26</sup> One can see how the protest appeared from a visual point of view thanks to a gallery of 32 photographs published by Onet that show the front pages of the press, online portals and television stations. In all cases we see black with the slogan “Media without choice”, a short description of the protest and an invitation to read a letter.<sup>27</sup> Dissent was expressed in various ways, beginning with not publishing/broadcasting material in media that had signed a letter to the Polish government and political groups, through cases where other media – often local – joined them for the duration of the protest, to informing consumers about the protest action. Every form of support and solidarity confirmed the need for those who work in media to speak in one voice.

In social media the slogan of the protest was circulated as #mediabezwyboru (#mediawithoutchoice) or #protestmediów (#mediaprottest). A tweet by Mateusz Sosnowski from the television channel TVN will serve as an example, since, on the one hand, it drew attention to consumers’ familiarity with the media and the fact that they take media reports for granted, and, on the other, to the looming threat which became the trigger of the protest of some parts of the media: “8531 editions of @FaktyTVN, non-stop, every day. Today the 8532<sup>nd</sup> edition didn’t

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<sup>26</sup> *Czarne tło, brak sygnału telewizyjnego. Trwa protest „Media bez wyboru”, “Wprost”, 10.02.2021, <https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10420190/czarne-tlo-brak-sygnału-telewizyjnego-trwa-protest-media-bez-wyboru.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].*

<sup>27</sup> Analysis based on the article “*Media bez wyboru*”. *Czarna środa w sieci, telewizji, radiu i prasie [ZDJĘCIA]*, Onet.pl, 11.02.2021, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/media-bez-wyboru-protest-mediow-i-czarne-ekrany-galeria-zdjec/g1mw617> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

take place. Because the government wants to bring in extortion money, which may ruin free, independent media. And without free, independent media there's no democracy. Without diverse media there's no choice. #MEDIABEZWYBORU."<sup>28</sup> The reach of the protest is evidenced by statistics, which show that the hashtag #MEDIABEZWYBORU was used 441 million times, which is unprecedented for the Polish digital landscape.<sup>29</sup> This is because the media protest dominated both traditional and the online media space.

In the case of such press publications as "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Fakt", "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna" and "Rzeczpospolita", it was decided either to make the front page of the edition black or to publish a letter to the government of the Republic of Poland and leaders of political groups that supported the so-called advertising levy.<sup>30</sup> At this juncture it would be worth quoting some passages from this letter which suggest that the proposed tax on advertising is "simply extortion money that targets Polish viewers, listeners, readers and internet users, as well as Polish productions, culture, leisure, sport and media."<sup>31</sup> It was also explained in detail that this would disturb pluralism in the media due to the deteriorating financial position of the media, which could disappear from the market, cause a fall in the quality of reports, and, finally, increase the advantage of public media, which is subsidised by the tax payer, over private media. At the same time it was pointed out that at present the media fulfil their current tax obligations and conduct charitable activities.<sup>32</sup> The letter was signed by many broadcasters and publishers from the industry<sup>33</sup>, but not public media, the foundation Lux Veritatis (Radio Maryja, Telewizja Trwam) and the media group Fratria, which publishes such titles as "Sieci", wPolityce.pl and wPolsce.pl; these outlets supported the ruling camp to a greater or lesser extent.

The media protest was visible beyond Poland's borders because foreign publications reported on it, particularly what the essence of the protest was, the slogan as a means of communication, who had joined it, what its origin was, and

<sup>28</sup> M. Sosnowski, tweet from the day 10.02.2021, [https://twitter.com/mat\\_sosnowski/status/1359568150929547264?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwtterm%5E1359568150929547264%7Ctwgr%5Ef9b48289f98e8cf85f1015cdf0695ca96538ff26%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2F](https://twitter.com/mat_sosnowski/status/1359568150929547264?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwtterm%5E1359568150929547264%7Ctwgr%5Ef9b48289f98e8cf85f1015cdf0695ca96538ff26%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2F) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>29</sup> *Akcja Media bez wyboru z rekordowym zasięgiem w sieci*, Onet.pl, 11.02.2021, <https://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetwiadomosci/media-bez-wyboru-akcja-polskich-mediow-z-rekordowym-zasięgiem-w-sieci/yp1cm01,79cfc278> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>30</sup> T. Mincer, *Media bez wyboru. Portale, telewizje, rozgłośnie i prasę pokryła czerń*, "Forbes", 11.02.2021, <https://www.forbes.pl/gospodarka/media-bez-wyboru-o-co-chodzi-w-protestie-mediow-przeciwko-podatki-od-reklamy/nyknmhg> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>31</sup> Redakcja Gazety Wyborczej i Wysokich Obcasów, *Protestujemy, bo władza wypowiedziała wojnę wolnej opinii publicznej*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 10.02.2021, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,26771136,protestujemy-bo-wladza-wypowiedziala-wojne-wolnej-opinii-publicznej.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> List of broadcasters and publishers see: *ibidem*.

the main provisions of the draft bill. These publications include Politico<sup>34</sup>, “The Guardian”<sup>35</sup> and Deutsche Welle.<sup>36</sup> Thus the editor of “Polityka” Baczyński predicted accurately that foreign editorial offices would take an interest in the protest of the Polish media.

### **The media protests and reactions of the media and political spheres: from solidarity to criticism**

Politicians of the ruling camp argued in favour of the draft bill, while those of opposition parties opposed it. Voices of support and dissent among the political class were quoted both by media that identified with the protest<sup>37</sup> and those that criticised the action taken.<sup>38</sup> The noticeably polarised political sphere was written about by editors such as Monika Olejnik, who compared statements made by such Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS, Law and Justice) politicians as Deputy Marshal of the Sejm Ryszard Terlecki, who said that this is “a special protest because media who support the opposition are protesting”, as well as president Andrzej Duda, who claimed that “this is not a question of freedom of speech, but of money.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For example the article: W. Kość, *Polish media suspend reporting to protest planned tax on advertising*, Politico, 10.02.2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/polish-media-suspend-reporting-to-protest-a-planned-tax-on-advertising> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>35</sup> “The Guardian” article on the protests quoted Polish media, for example “Gazeta Wyborcza”, and illustrated the text with a photograph of the black front page of this newspaper and the Polish slogan “Media without choice”. J. Henley, *‘This used to be your favourite show’: Polish media stage blackout protest*, “The Guardian” 10.02.2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/10/polish-media-hold-blackout-in-protest-at-tax-threat> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>36</sup> To illustrate the article a black banner was used that could be seen on the website of “Gazeta Wyborcza” along with the slogan “Media without choice” and a small amount of text warning the reader of a possible scenario where the publication could disappear because of the introduction of the advertising levy. Readers were also encouraged to familiarise themselves with a letter to the Polish government (in Polish). In addition, a screenshot of a Tweet by Fakt.pl was displayed in Polish. kmm/dj, *Poland: Media offline for 24 hours in protest*, DW, 10.02.2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/poland-media-goes-offline-for-24-hours-to-protest-ad-tax/a-56524758> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>37</sup> Editor Michał Wróblewski collected statements by the PiS party that opposed the protest, as well as unclear messages of their coalition partners, i.e. Jarosław Gowin’s Porozumienie (Agreement) party and Solidarna Polska (United Poland). A statement made by Waldemar Buda from the PiS party will serve as an example. He stated that “in Poland on the day on which independent media protested there was ultimately... peace and quiet”, which was in line with the communication strategy of this group. M. Wróblewski, *Podatek od mediów. PiS pod presją uderza w dziennikarzy, koalicjanci się dystansują*, Wp.pl, 11.02.2021, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/podatek-od-mediow-pis-pod-presja-koalicjanci-dystansuja-sie-od-premiera-6606708799470272a> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>38</sup> PiS politicians critical of the media protest expressed their opinions in media that did not support the protest action. This was public media and media that supported the ruling camp.

<sup>39</sup> M. Olejnik, *Panie prezesie, białe jest białe, a czarne jest czarne*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11.02.2021, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,26778149,panie-prezesie-biale-jest-biale-a-czarne-jest-czarne.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

Besides critical voices and ones that distanced themselves from the media protest, politicians were quoted who supported the rationale of some editorial offices and spoke in unison with them. As examples one can mention statements made by politicians such as Borys Budka from Platforma Obywatelska (PO, Civic Platform) who said that "Anyone who tries to gag free media is afraid of scrutiny. Taxing the media is an attempt to muzzle it and strikes at the very heart of democracy."<sup>40</sup> Another example is Michał Kobosko from Polska 2050, who expressed his support for the protest as follows: "Total solidarity with the protest of Polish media. Their audiences must understand that it is they who stand to lose the most from the transformation of television, newspapers and portals into clones of TVP and Orlen media."<sup>41</sup> It should be emphasised that to a large extent politicians of different persuasions expressed their opinion using social media, because, due to the form of the media protest, it was precisely the internet, and more specifically the social media Twitter and Facebook, that became the only means of communication. Support for the media protest did not escape the attention of foreign politicians. One of them was Madeleine Albright who wrote on Twitter that this is "an attack on democracy and the rule of law."<sup>42</sup>

Making reference to a report of the Institute of Media Monitoring, it should be observed that this protest action enjoyed a great deal of interest and was dubbed "the unification of editorial offices from across Poland"<sup>43</sup>, although there were a few exceptions. The absence of specific signatures from the letter of 40 Polish broadcasters and publishers prompts us to highlight that public media and those affiliated with the ruling camp were critical of the "Media without choice" protest. To illustrate the stance of the media that did not join the protest, a few examples have been selected to show their attitude towards it. Public media devoted a lot of attention to this undertaking, for example in one text that appeared on the portal TVPInfo.pl the journalist compared the protests to a disinformation campaign and criticised them for the comparisons to "a new period of martial law" that were being made. In his opinion, this action should be understood as an attack on the proposed law using emotions, a suitable message and the interests of foreign media. He reminded readers that the advertising levy would enhance

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<sup>40</sup> I. Szpala, J. Dobrosz-Oracz, *Opozycja chce, by Sejm przyjął uchwałę broniącą wolne media*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 11.02.2021, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,26775238,opozycja-nie-dla-haraczu-na-media.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*. The state broadcaster and media owned by energy giant Orlen were well known for reporting biased towards in favour the ruling PiS party.

<sup>42</sup> M. Albright's Tweet: "As someone who cares deeply about Poland, I am alarmed at this latest effort by the Polish government to stifle free media. We must call this out for what it is – an attack on democracy and the rule of law", tweet from the day 10.02.2021, <https://x.com/madeleine/status/1359280569050406915?lang=en> [accessed: 19.06.2024].

<sup>43</sup> Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, *Akcja „Media bez wyboru” jednoczy redakcje z całej Polski*, 11.02.2021, <https://www.imm.com.pl/akcja-media-bez-wyboru-jednoczy-redakcje-z-calej-polski> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

the cultural activities of organisations.<sup>44</sup> An analysis of reports by public media prompt us to claim, using TVP Info as an example, that the dominant element was criticism of the media protests which was built around the following argumentation: an advertising levy needs to be introduced in order to combat the effects of the pandemic, support digitalisation and worthwhile journalistic projects, political action, the battle between large corporations and the fight for cash.<sup>45</sup> Public media invited to the studio, or shared the opinions of, individuals who criticised the media protest, such as Adam Andruszkiewicz, who said that “this is unnecessary hysteria from the media that yesterday started to display black panels on their websites and screens”<sup>46</sup>, or Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność” chairman Piotr Duda, who called the protest “a festival of hypocrisy.”<sup>47</sup> These examples are an expression of the unambiguous criticism of the protest undertaken by part of the media and which, in Duda’s opinion, has insufficient justification, hence the comparison to “hysteria” and “hypocrisy”.

It was not only public media that pursued a discourse about the protest with a decidedly negative tone, since a similar narrative and argumentation appeared in media that were sympathetic towards the ruling camp. For example, in an article on the portal wPolityce.pl the columnist Stanisław Janecki, who writes for “Sieci”, described the protest as “aggro” caused by, in his opinion, “free media”, a term he used mockingly, which clearly shows his negative attitude towards the protest. To strengthen his message, Janecki suggested that the protesting media’s identifying themselves with freedom aligns with the standards adopted by the Russian newspapers “Pravda” and “Komsomol’skaya Pravda”, which carries extremely negative connotations. He criticised the use of black as a symbol of the protest and also claimed that the protesting media were deceiving their audience, which he expressed with the words “[...] they’re pulling the wool over viewers’, listeners’, users’ and readers’ eyes, they’re turning their brains to mush”. In Janecki’s opinion, the lack of substance in the protesting media was to be viewed positively due to the content they offered, which he compared to mediocrity “in terms of its appearance and everything else. Turning off this junk acted like a balm, like a filter and a sedative.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> K. Karnkowski, *Media bez wyboru – czyli akcja dezinformacja*, TVP Info, 12.02.2023, <https://www.tvp.info/52267732/krzysztof-karnkowski-media-bez-wyboru-czyli-akcja-dezinformacja> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>45</sup> FA, MNIE, *Walka o „kasę potężnych koncernów”*. „Sieci” o kulisach akcji #MediaBezWyboru, TVP Info, 15.02.2021, <https://www.tvp.info/52301482/media-bez-wyboru-kulisach-akcji-i-walki-o-kase-potecznych-koncernow-kto-zorganizowal-akcje-i-o-co-w-niej-chodzi> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>46</sup> MK, MNIE, *„Nikt nie zamierza cenzurować mediów. To fake news i dezinformacja”* [WIDEO], TVP Info, 11.02.2021, <https://www.tvp.info/52246333/podatek-zagraza-wolnosc-mediow-adam-andruszkiewicz-nikt-nie-zamierza-cenzurowac-to-fake-news> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>47</sup> TM, KF, *Przewodniczący „S” oburzony protestem mediów. „Festiwal hipokryzji i obłudy”*, TVP Info, 11.02.2021, <https://www.tvp.info/52249152/protest-mediow-przewodniczacy-solidarnosci-piotr-duda-wydal-oswiadczenie> [accessed: 30.05.2021].

<sup>48</sup> S. Janecki, *op. cit.*

The opponents of the media protest and the fact that they did not identify with its message were written about by the media portal Wirtualnemedial.pl, which gathered the opinions of individuals linked to such media as the weekly "Sieci", "Gazeta Polska", "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", public media, Dorzeczy.pl and Weszło. This group included people who unambiguously criticised the protest as well as people with a neutral attitude towards it. For example, in the first group one could place a statement made by Marzena Nykiel on the portal wPolityce.pl: "What if the media lie about their own affairs and manipulate facts to protect their own interests? This protest has nothing to do with freedom of speech!"<sup>49</sup>, and one by Jacek Karnowski (the founder of wPolityce.pl): "We do not know if this is basically ridiculous nonsense of the former owners of the Third Polish Republic, whose pride has been hurt and who feel threatened by the need to pay a relatively low solidarity fee, or a serious attempt, a desire to break a government weakened by the pandemic and internal divisions."<sup>50</sup> Both remarks denied the motives of the protests.

### The media protest and types of social reactions: selected examples

The media protest also met with the support of different social groups, among whom one can find both well-known public figures and "ordinary citizens", who have in common that they are consumers of the media. An analysis of publications such as "Gazeta Wyborcza" in February 2021 allows one to claim that they are sympathetic towards the media's demands, in particular the wish to defend themselves against the negative consequences of the proposed fee, which would contribute to a lack of financial stability affecting independence from forms of pressure. Articles in the newspaper included voices of support, for example that of journalist and social activist Jerzy Owsiak, who wrote on Facebook that "There is no free country without independent media. There is no freedom without freedom to choose. That's why we're fighting for plurality and diversity of media in Poland. And above all – for the right to choose for you – our listeners."<sup>51</sup> Gestures

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<sup>49</sup> S. Kucharski, „Sieci”, „Gazeta Polska” i „Do Rzeczy” przeciw „Mediom bez wyboru”. *Sakiewicz: od dziś popieram dwa razy większy podatek*, Wirtualne Media, 11.02.2021, <https://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/wpolicyce-pl-sieci-gazeta-polska-do-rzeczy-przeciw-mediom-bez-wyboru-sakiewicz-od-dzis-popieram-dwa-razy-wiekszy-podatek> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> Owsiak displayed this message during a live broadcast on Facebook. M. Wojtuczuk, *Media bez wyboru. Trzaskowski, Anja Rubik, Owsiak, Pałac Kultury. Kto poparł protest niezależnych mediów?*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 11.02.2021, [https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,26774309,policy-mo-delki-youtuberzy-erzy-owski-wielki-protest.html?\\_ga=2.178590180.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&\\_gl=1\\*1xzl28\\*\\_gl\\_au\\*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5](https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,26774309,policy-mo-delki-youtuberzy-erzy-owski-wielki-protest.html?_ga=2.178590180.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&_gl=1*1xzl28*_gl_au*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

of solidarity were also shown by the model Anja Rubik, the youtuber Rafał Gębu-  
ra, the cabaret artist Michał Pałubski, as well as an institution, the Palace of Cul-  
ture and Science in Warsaw, which extinguished its lights as a sign of solidarity  
with the protesting media.<sup>52</sup> Of course, these are only a few examples of the types  
of support shown in various forms by public figures.

Support for the “Media without choice” protests was expressed by the read-  
ers of publications including “Gazeta Wyborcza” and people who associated  
themselves with the OSK. It is also worth mentioning that this particular type  
of protest, which used media space, moved thanks to media consumers to the  
public sphere, and an example of this was a demonstration on 11<sup>th</sup> February  
2021 (the day after the protest) which numbered over 100 people and took place  
in front of the headquarters of public television at 19:30, that is, while the news  
programme Wiadomości was being aired. The crowd expressed their solidarity  
with the protesting media and also opposition to public television, using the  
slogans “TVP lies” and “TVP, gives us back our 2 billion.”<sup>53</sup> Similar protests  
took place in cities such as Wrocław,<sup>54</sup> and a similar event was organised by  
the Women’s Strike in Szczecin outside the offices of “Gazeta Wyborcza” as  
a follow-up to the media protest. One of the initiators of the protests argued that  
the OSK were on the side of free media, like the time when it was the media  
that supported their demands. The slogans on the placards and the cries that  
accompanied the protesters were: “Free media”, “If there are no free media then  
there is no democracy and freedom!” and “The Chief Office for the Control of  
the Press, Publications and Performances. President: Jarosław Kaczyński.”<sup>55</sup>  
This last slogan is all the more telling as it alludes to the central state censor-  
ship office of the previous undemocratic political system that was the Polish  
People’s Republic. Therefore, it was an example of a bidirectional solidarity

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> W. Karpieszuk, *Media bez wyboru a „TVP łże». Protest przed telewizją narodową w obronie niezależnych mediów*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11.02.2021, [https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,26776524,protest-przed-tvp-w-obronie-niezaleznych-mediow-siedziba-telewizji.html?\\_ga=2.212743636.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&\\_gl=1\\*p07wqi\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5](https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,26776524,protest-przed-tvp-w-obronie-niezaleznych-mediow-siedziba-telewizji.html?_ga=2.212743636.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&_gl=1*p07wqi*_gcl_au*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>54</sup> A participant in the Wrocław protest in defence of the media said, “We’re here at this silent protest to show our solidarity with those silent media which are inconvenient for the authorities. We’re fighting for citizens’ rights because each of us has the right to choose and to access information”, UJ, MAG, *Media bez wyboru. Wrocławianie protestowali w obronie niezależnych mediów, policjanci legitymowali manifestantów*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 13.02.2021, [https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,26786185,media-bez-wyboru-protest-wroclawian-w-obronie-niezaleznych.html?\\_ga=2.251491398.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&\\_gl=1\\*x8etbi\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5](https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,26786185,media-bez-wyboru-protest-wroclawian-w-obronie-niezaleznych.html?_ga=2.251491398.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&_gl=1*x8etbi*_gcl_au*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>55</sup> A. Stanuch, *Media bez wyboru. Strajk Kobiet w Szczecinie wspiera walkę o wolną prasę. „Są z nami i przedstawiają fakty”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11.02.2021, [https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/7,34939,26776854,strajk-kobiet-wspiera-walke-o-wolne-media-sa-z-nami-i-przedstawiaja.html?\\_ga=2.240991555.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&\\_gl=1\\*pvlr-dq\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5](https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/7,34939,26776854,strajk-kobiet-wspiera-walke-o-wolne-media-sa-z-nami-i-przedstawiaja.html?_ga=2.240991555.1518318071.1688045589-2040606062.1688045589&_gl=1*pvlr-dq*_gcl_au*NTI5MjYzNy4xNjg4MDQ1NTg5) [accessed: 30.05.2023].

protest. It should also be observed that the protesters created their own slogans which were used during the gatherings. They made reference to the fundamental values of the democratic system, which corresponds to how Tendera understands the concept of protest. Specifically, this led to a confrontation between the expectations and demands of citizens who supported the "Media without a choice" protest and the government's proposal to impose an advertising levy. Furthermore, the protest was meant as a tool, as editor Baczyński rightly observes, intended to transform the attitude of the ruling camp towards the media.

There was also no lack of articles devoted to the opinions of the readers of "Gazeta Wyborcza". On the basis of these 22 reader comments one can conclude that they supported the media protest, for example "I support the protest. Seeing how the press could look without free media gives everyone food for thought. Well done all free media for taking action together" (nataliajazon); they felt the lack of material that was usually published every day, for example. "It is difficult for me to manage without you from early morning, but I understand" (asso12), and they assumed that such a situation could become real, for example "To all of those who are rebelling because other articles are blocked: this is how things will look in a few months when there aren't any free media anymore" (Portos). As one of the symbols of the protests, the black front pages made a significant impression on readers, which the tone of the following comments attests to: "Media without choice and everything became quiet, dark and empty. Things I take for granted, such as reading my horoscope, looking for new sports news – everything, doused in black paint, disappeared. And we were left alone" (Kasia); "Today we hung up a poster supporting your protest in the window of our flat. Since we're ordinary citizens that's all we can do. You are our last resort"<sup>56</sup> (Maria and Andrzej Musielak).

Support for and solidarity with the protesting media was also expressed in the form of internet memes. There appeared altered versions, with political connotations, of one of the slogans, "This used to be your favourite country" on a black background inside the outline of Poland. There were references to martial law: "And so on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 the younger generation found out how things were when Jaruzelski announced martial law in 1981. They also have a demo version of the world where all the media belong to the government. Do you like it?". There were even allusions to Polish cinematography, using the example of the famous 1981 film "Miś" (Teddy Bear) – "There is no TVN or Polsat. There is TVP and TVP Info."<sup>57</sup> Naturally, this does not exhaust the forms

<sup>56</sup> A. Gąsiorowska, Ż. Gotowska, B. Salonek, *Tak mogą wyglądać strony gazet, jeśli tego nie zatrzymamy. Walczmy o wolne media dla nas i naszych dzieci*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 11.02.2021, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,162657,26775542,tak-moga-wygladac-strony-gazet-jesli-tego-nie-zatrzymamy-walczmy.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

<sup>57</sup> *Media bez wyboru: tym razem komentarze nie do śmiechu [MEMY]*, Onet.pl, 11.02.2021, <https://www.onet.pl/styl-zycia/onetfacet/media-bez-wyboru-internauci-komentuja-memy/ys1e-n9,86cd1308> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

of support for the protests and solidarity shown by consumers, since it serves only to exemplify reactions and aspects such as freedom of the media, citizens' right to information, media pluralism and the role of the media in democracy.

For balance, it is also worth quoting the reactions, which were in the minority, of the consumers of those media who did not identify with the message of the protest. For example, users of the portal wPolityce.pl (51 comments) were critical of both the protest itself and of the media that supported it. There were comments in which the main slogan of the protest was modified, e.g. "media without honour" (edmund); satisfaction because of the lack of a broadcast schedule, for example "This really was a nice day. Without 'Divorce. The battle for everything', 'Hidden Truth', 'Ugly Betty', episode 5342, 'Pawn Shop. Life under Pledge'. This is the menu. Fodder for Poles. Take it once and for all and get lost" (veto). Among those comments that blatantly criticised the "Media without choice" protest, there were also those that condemned editor Janecki for his article since he was unsympathetic towards the protest, e.g. "Drivel, tovarishch Janecki. If you want to destroy freedom you must try harder" (BratBartosza), and there was also media polarisation "So there is a division between us, the good ones from TVP and them, the bad ones, who are in the service of other states. So-called free media. The situation really seems to be heading towards one where all media expect state media will be abolished. It smells very bad"<sup>58</sup> (Mirek). On this basis, it can be claimed that media consumers critical of the protest identified with the argumentation presented by editors.

## Conclusions

Editor Jerzy Baczyński was right in his claim that the media protest provoked wide social interest due to its unconventional form, which relied on not publishing material other than the slogan "Media without choice", the messages "This used to be your favourite show", "This should be your favourite news programme", a black background on the front pages of the press and television, not broadcasting radio programmes, publishing a letter to the government of the Republic of Poland and political groups, and hashtags in social media. Using media space by limiting it solely to slogans and messages concerning the protest turned out to be an extremely effective solution compared to marches and protests reported on in the media, which are well known to us and predictable to a certain extent. On the one hand, such an unconventional form of

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<sup>58</sup> S. Janecki, *Sześć lekcji z protestu pod hasłem „Media bez wyboru”, czyli o robieniu w bambuko, chlampie oraz walce z logiką i semantyką*, "wPolityce", 11.02.2021, <https://wpolityce.pl/forum/polityka/128-dyskusje-pod-publicacjami-dzialu-polityka/tematy/1467735-szesc-lekcji-z-protestu-pod-haslem-media-bez-wyboru-czyli-o-robieniu-w-bambuko-chlampie-oraz-walce-z-logika-i-semantyka-komentarze-publicacji> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

communication achieved reached a very broad audience, which was important to the protesting media, while on the other society experienced "a world without media". It is also worth highlighting that society organised its own protests as a gesture of solidarity with the media, using their own slogans and placards, which strengthened the message. The protest was also noticed and commented on by those media that did not support it, but criticised it unequivocally. With reference to Zbigniew Kloch it should be stated that the visibility of the protest in the media was on a high level due to its distinctiveness and the well thought out way in which it communicated its message to society.

Significant support for the "Media without choice" protest – although there was no lack of critical voices, mostly from public media and those that sympathised with the government – as well as solidarity which extended beyond the borders of Poland, resulted in work on the bill being abandoned. At the same time a tense situation was eased, attested to by a statement that the Ministry of Finance published on their website, "Free and independent media are the cornerstone of democracy. This remains beyond any debate. Their freedom is guaranteed by existing legislation. No regulations concerning this have been modified", while at the same time making the criticism that "the reaction of some media outlets and media conglomerates is inappropriate."<sup>59</sup> This can be interpreted as an attempt to improve the image of the government due to international interest in the media in Poland, although it has been clearly stated that this form of expressing opposition to legislative proposals was not adequately foreseen by the ruling camp, which distinctly downplayed the arguments of the protesting media.

In conclusion, the "Media without choice" protest can be considered an unprecedented event due to the fact that it initially took place exclusively in media space, supported by the large majority of media thanks to its scope and the way in which it reached its audience. The protesters' arguments and demands met with the considerable support of the majority of editorial offices in Poland, politicians from opposition parties in relation to the ruling PiS party, as well as society. With reference to the reflections of Magdalena Tendersa, it should be stated that the protest clearly aligned with the confrontation of expectations and demands of some media that arose from their opposition to the advertising levy. Furthermore, the protest was intended to be a tool for transforming the plans of political decision-makers, and in practice turned out to be effective action because further processing of the bill was abandoned.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ministerstwo Finansów wydało komunikat. Chodzi o podatek od reklam*, "Wprost", 10.02.2021, <https://www.wprost.pl/polityka/10420431/ministerstwo-finansow-wydalo-komunikat-chodzi-o-podatek-od-reklam.html> [accessed: 30.05.2023].

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## BLOCKCHAIN IN DIGITAL ADMINISTRATION AS A STRENGTHENING ELEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**Marta Majorek**

PhD, Associate Professor, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University,  
Faculty of Management and Social Communication  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6541-5184>

### Abstract

In an era defined by growing sustainability challenges, public administration has a pivotal role in addressing these issues. The convergence of public administration, blockchain technology, and sustainable development initiatives and challenges is at the forefront of smart governance practices. This article explores the intricate interconnections between these domains, shedding light on the transformative potential of blockchain technology in enhancing the transparency, efficiency, and accountability of public administration while promoting, at the same time, main sustainability goals. Through an analysis of scholarly insights and some practical implementations, the article highlights the benefits, challenges and strategic considerations associated with this synergy. It underscores the need for collaborative, cross-sectoral efforts and comprehensive policy frameworks to leverage blockchain's potential for fostering smart governance practices. The crucial questions that should be answered concern how the digitalisation of public information and use of advanced ICT have reshaped the public administration sphere, and how they influence the implementation of the idea of sustainable development. Ultimately, the article emphasises the pivotal role of blockchain – public administration interdependence in shaping a more resilient, accountable, and environmentally conscious model of public management, aligned with the global sustainable development agenda.

**Key words:** blockchain, public management, ICT, sustainability

## Introduction

In recent years the digitalisation of public information has transformed the way governments, organisations, and individuals access, store, and disseminate information. This evolution has been driven by technological advancements, changing societal expectations and creating the need for greater efficiency and transparency in the public sector.<sup>1</sup> By exploring the evolution of digitalisation in the context of public information, examining its historical development, key milestones, as well as its far-reaching implications, it is possible to show its impact and connection to contemporary trends in building a more sustainable society. By referencing pivotal moments and technological advancements, we are able to show a comprehensive understanding of how the digitalisation of public information has reshaped our world and how it influences the implementation of the idea of sustainable development.

Digital transformation and sustainable development are two of the most important challenges in today's world that seemingly have little in common. As the strongest driving force of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digitalisation has been a response to the growing expectations of business, in line with the slogan "faster, higher, further", and it seems to have pushed the demands of sustainable development to the sidelines. However, it is the combination of both aspects that holds the greatest potential. Reorganisation of enterprises and public administration, optimisation of processes and conquering new markets using the opportunities offered by digitalisation are the basis for changing thinking and acting in the spirit of sustainable development.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is to critically examine the multifaceted implications of integrating blockchain technology within the sphere of public administration, with a particular focus on its transformative impact on sustainable development initiatives. By delving into the intersection of blockchain and public administration, this article seeks to elucidate the various ways in which blockchain applications can foster transparent governance, enhance administrative efficiency and promote environmentally conscious practices. The desk research method was chosen as the appropriate one for this topic, and through a comprehensive analysis of scholarly research with the addition of case studies, the article aims to underscore the pivotal role of blockchain technology as a catalyst for advancing sustainable development goals within the realm of public administration. Furthermore, by examining the role of blockchain in enhancing data transparency, ensuring accountability, and optimising resource allocation, it seeks

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<sup>1</sup> I. Mergel, N. Edelman, N. Haug, *Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews*, "Government Information Quarterly" 2019, vol. 36, 101385, p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002>.

<sup>2</sup> proALPHA, *Ekologia w biznesie, czyli o sztuce wyboru. Cyfryzacja drogą do zrównoważonego rozwoju*, Polski Przemysł, 28.11.2022, <https://polskiprzemysl.com.pl/it-dla-przemyslu/transmacja-cyfrowa-i-zrownowazony-rozwoj> [accessed: 5.10.2023].

to emphasise the crucial contribution of blockchain technology in reshaping administrative processes to align with the principles of sustainable governance. By offering a holistic perspective on the symbiotic relationship between blockchain, public administration, and sustainable development, it endeavours to stimulate discourse and inspire innovative approaches to harnessing blockchain's potential for fostering transparent, efficient, and environmentally conscious governance practices, thereby contributing to the global agenda for sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### The beginnings of digital transformation in public administration

The roots of digitalisation of public information can be traced back to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1970s and 1980s, governments began to digitise paper-based records and documents for easier storage and retrieval. This transition from physical to digital formats was a significant step towards improving data management. These systems represented a significant departure from traditional paper-based record-keeping methods, offering improved efficiency and accessibility.<sup>3</sup> However, it was a slow and costly process due to limited technology and resources. The advent of the internet and finally the World Wide Web in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of digitalisation. It provided a platform for governments to share information with the public on a scale never before imagined.<sup>4</sup> Websites like the Library of Congress in the United States and the European Union's portal were early examples of digital repositories of public information. Thanks to the internet we are facing

the disappearance of the asymmetry in the relationship between the sender and the recipient of the message, [...] the producer and consumer of information [...], since anyone who meets the technical standards can play both of these roles, often simultaneously. Access to information, therefore, is not subordinate to any restrictions, which is so much easier because information is such a good that, unlike material ones, can almost never be impoverished or exhausted.<sup>5</sup>

As the internet continued to expand, governments across the world initiated e-government projects to enhance the delivery of public services. These initiatives aimed to streamline administrative processes, improve citizen engagement,

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<sup>3</sup> D.C.G. Brown, S. Toze, *Information governance in digitized public administration*, "Canadian Public Administration" 2017, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 582–583.

<sup>4</sup> P. Dunleavy, H. Margetts, S. Bastow, J. Tinkler, *New public management is dead—long live digital-era governance*, "Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory" 2006, vol. 16, issue 3, p. 478.

<sup>5</sup> M. Majorek, J. Wojniak, *The Public Information Bulletin as an example of public information digitalisation in Poland*, [in:] *The Polish Media System 1989–2011*, ed. K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, Krakow Society for Education—AFM Publishing House, Krakow 2012, p. 182–183.

and increase the accessibility of government information. The open data movement gained momentum in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, with governments publishing datasets in machine-readable formats for public use. As digitalisation progressed, the concept of open data gained prominence. Governments worldwide started embracing open data initiatives, releasing vast amounts of public information for public use. These initiatives aimed to promote transparency, accountability, and innovation. Notable examples include Data.gov in the United States and Data.gov.uk in the United Kingdom. One example here could be that legislature defined the concept of public information in the text of the Polish Act on access to public information issued in 2001, showing an objective list in article 6, which defined what information should be totally accessible. The act states that public information shall mean all data obtained for public affairs in any form, including that obtained through direct expression of the members of the public authorities, public entities and persons entitled (or obliged) to represent the body, the personnel providing the service.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, open data has enabled the public, researchers and businesses to harness public information for various purposes, from developing new applications to conducting data-driven research. The digitalisation of public information has led to the rise of e-government and digital governance. Governments have developed not only platforms for disseminating public information, but also various online tools, public services delivery, and communication. Services like e-tax filing, access to online documents, and voting registration have become commonplace. These digital tools streamline government operations and enhance citizen participation, although they are no longer able to meet the requirements of both citizens and the rapidly changing technological reality.

### The transition from e-administration to digital governance

In the early literature on the subject<sup>7</sup>, we can find an inconsistent understanding of the term e-administration or e-governance. For the purposes of our considerations in this section, due to a number of interdisciplinary connotations, it will be worth following the approach promoted by Richard Heeks. He used to treat the concept of e-governance in broader categories, which means not limiting it only to the analysis of applications and government websites. Indeed, the term should be

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<sup>6</sup> Ustawa z dnia 6 września 2001 r. o dostępie do informacji publicznej, Dz.U. 2001 nr 112 poz. 1198 [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 2001 no. 112 item 1198].

<sup>7</sup> See D.M. West, *E-Government and the Transformation of Service Delivery and Citizen Attitudes*, "Public Administration Review" 2004, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 15–27; R. Heeks, *Implementing and Managing eGovernment: An International Text*, Sage Publications, London 2006, [https://books.google.pl/books?id=hRzAnMulatUC&lr=&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.pl/books?id=hRzAnMulatUC&lr=&source=gbs_navlinks_s) [accessed: 7.10.2023]; M.J. Moon, *The Evolution of E-Government among Municipalities: Rhetoric or Reality?*, "Public Administration Review" 2002, vol. 62, issue 4, pp. 424–433.

considered as the totality of tools, computers, networks and all information and communication tools used in the public sector.<sup>8</sup>

E-governance refers to the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for providing government services, and exchange of information and communication between the government and the four major stakeholders of a nation, namely, citizens, businesses, employees, and other government organisations. Thanks to this, citizens of a given country have the opportunity to increase participation in the services offered by state institutions, and also have a simplified way of co-decision-making. E-governance also enhances the effectiveness of government services for all participants of socio-political life. Easier access for citizens to all information and greater transparency in administration has a positive impact on the reduction of corruption and the position of citizens. E-administration brings a very noticeable change in the form of reduced formalities and bureaucracy. It is intended to ensure better management and help validate government actions. An undoubted benefit is also reduced consumption of office supplies and other resources, including human resources. Significant limitations of office work and the use of electronic media speed up the provision of services, which leads to increased awareness of government policy among citizens.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the framework of e-administration is based on information and communication technologies, which comprehensively create good management practices for the further development of the public services sector. They can be divided into three basic groups. First of all, there is computerisation, i.e. supporting current, manual practices. An example would be supporting and promoting existing decision-making practices and their implementation. Secondly, there is process automation, i.e. the gradual replacement of current, traditional data processing practices. The third area in which the concept of e-administration arises will be transformation, i.e. rejecting or transforming old practices and replacing them with new ones using the tools of new information and communication technologies. Then a completely new approach civic administration in a broad sense emerges. In this context, ICT can provide cheaper and more efficient services.<sup>10</sup>

Several factors have driven the transition from e-governance to digital governance. First of all, it is worth mentioning innovative technological advancements, for instance the rapid growth of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. These elements have expanded the possibilities for government services and operations and, as a result, have led to increased expectations of citizens. They now expect convenient, personalised,

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<sup>8</sup> R. Heeks, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> R. Setiya, S. Pandey, A.K. Singh, D.K. Sharma, *Citizen e-governance using blockchain*, [in:] *Blockchain for Smart Cities*, eds. S. Krishnan, V.E. Balas, E.G. Julie, Y.H. Robinson, R. Kumar, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 120–121.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 121.

and efficient services similar to those offered by the private sector, driving governments to adapt.

Moreover, the ongoing phenomenon of globalisation cannot be ignored either, as in an interconnected world, governments need to cooperate and exchange information efficiently, not only inside the system, but also outside, so digital governance facilitates international collaboration. The transition to more advanced systems was also a response to the increased demand for security and privacy concerns: as cyber threats evolve, governments have had to prioritise security and privacy, necessitating more comprehensive approaches.

These causes of evolution are only some of many attempts to explain the transformation of e-government that can be found in the literature on the subject.<sup>11</sup> However, all known approaches have at least a few common features, such as progresses in stages, from simpler forms to more sophisticated and advanced ones. According to these assumptions, we will always be dealing with a certain gap that needs to be filled, in this case the public administration sector is too inflexible, highly bureaucratic, and does not meet citizens' expectations and the rapidly changing technological reality.<sup>12</sup>

E-governance, with all its limitations, was an indispensable step to creating more advanced information management structures in public administration. As previously indicated, it primarily focused on automating existing government functions and enhancing efficiency, but e-governance, while a significant leap forward, was still primarily a one-way interaction, with governments providing information and services online. As Darrell M. West points out, traditional structures will be characterised by a high degree of hierarchy, focused on delivery rather than exchange. One-way communication was no longer efficient, so it was necessary to shift the emphasis to creating processes with a high degree of interactivity and accessibility. This type of access to government services allows citizens to seek information at their own discretion, and the interactive aspects of e-government enable both citizens and officials to quickly exchange information. Thanks to two-way interaction, we are dealing with not only public services improvement and availability, but also with a response to the needs of citizens in the long run, which translates into increased social trust in authorities and public institutions.<sup>13</sup>

A simple examination of these assumptions clearly indicates that we are dealing with a greater focus on the individual, i.e. the citizen. Therefore, a citizen becomes more of a client than a supplicant, because it is his or her needs that are

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<sup>11</sup> E. Barcevičius, G. Cibaitė, C. Codagnone, V. Gineikytė, L. Klimavičiūtė, G. Liva, L. Matulevič, G. Misuraca, I. Vanini, *Exploring Digital Government transformation in the EU. Analysis of the state of the art and review of literature*, ed. G. Misuraca, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2019, pp. 42–45.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> D.M. West, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

noticed, and not only the state's procedures. Digital governance places citizens at the centre of government services and policymaking. It aims to provide personalised and responsive services, fostering active citizen engagement.<sup>14</sup>

The previously mentioned exchange of information between the citizen and the administration, which replaced one-sided transmission, is the starting point for the development of an important feature of digital governance, namely interoperability. In principle, "interoperability is the ability of [individuals, institutions and – M.M ] organisations to interact with each other across data, systems and processes, to achieve common goals." Thanks to this type of approach, we gain the opportunity to share "information and knowledge through business processes, by means of the exchange of data between ICT systems."<sup>15</sup> Digital governance promotes seamless data exchange between different government agencies and jurisdictions, ensuring cohesive service delivery.<sup>16</sup>

However, this process is burdened with a number of problems that make it difficult to fully implement the theoretical assumptions. In the technical area, we are dealing with a lack of compatibility between information technologies, as well as the use of different data models and standards. Apart from purely technical issues, there are a number of other factors, including organisational and administrative fragmentation, legal aspects, and lack of cooperation between public institutions at various levels.<sup>17</sup>

One of the more serious challenges for digital governance is an assumption that is also supposed to distinguish the new formula from the current e-government, namely inclusivity. A starting point could be the creation of supporting policies which work to expand internet and ICT infrastructure to less developed areas, including sustained government intervention to address gaps in service, and actions intended to reform the Internet services market in order to reduce the costs of access to the medium. The main goal is to bridge the digital divide by making digital services accessible to all citizens, regardless of natural differences and divisions resulting from demography and place of residence, their technological literacy or access to resources.<sup>18</sup> Lack of access, equipment or skills are the

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<sup>14</sup> S. Hovik, G.A. Giannoumis, *Linkages Between Citizen Participation, Digital Technology, and Urban Development*, [in:] *Citizen Participation in the Information Society*, eds. S. Hovik, G.A. Giannoumis, K. Reichborn-Kjennerud, J.M. Ruano, I. McShane, S. Legard, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2022, p. 4, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99940-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99940-7_1).

<sup>15</sup> B. Kruger, *Interoperability – the key enabler of e-government*, European Commission, 1.04.2022, <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/digital-skills-public-sector/solution/interoperable-europe-academy/news/interoperability-key-enabler-e-government> [accessed: 13.10.2023].

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> A. Campmas, N. Iacob, F. Simonelli, *How can interoperability stimulate the use of digital public services? An analysis of national interoperability frameworks and e-Government in the European Union*, "Data & Policy" 2022, vol. 4, e19-3.

<sup>18</sup> J. Wojniak, *Od podziału do nierówności – nowy wymiar cyfrowego wykluczenia*, "Aequalitas" 2013, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 2.

most frequently cited elements that have had a direct impact on the failure of various projects in the field of implementing public e-services.<sup>19</sup> One of the solutions being implemented is to promote digital literacy training and the provision of free programmes to help generate an equitable number of online services.<sup>20</sup>

The last important elements included in the concept of e-government are data-driven implications and security issues. These refer to the use of data analytics, digital technologies, and automation to improve the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of administrative processes within an organisation or government. In general, this approach involves the collection, analysis, and utilisation of data to make informed decisions, optimise operations, and deliver better services to citizens or customers. However, while leveraging data in digital administration can bring numerous benefits, it must be done in a way that ensures the security and privacy of the data being handled. By analysing data, administrators can identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement, leading to more effective and efficient decision-making processes. Moreover, data security involves protecting digital data from unauthorised access, corruption, or theft throughout its lifecycle. In digital administration, securing sensitive data is crucial to maintaining the trust of citizens or customers.<sup>21</sup> This requires the implementation of robust security measures, such as encryption, access controls, and regular security audits, to prevent data breaches and unauthorised access. Data security refers to the protection of personal information and the right of individuals to control how their data is collected, used, and shared. In the context of e-administration, respecting data privacy involves adhering to data protection laws and regulations, obtaining consent for data collection, and ensuring that data is only used for the purposes for which it was collected.

## Digital administration and sustainability - interconnections

Digital governance, finance, and sustainable development are intricately linked, and their interconnections are becoming increasingly apparent in the modern world. It is therefore necessary to consider what direct implications these connections have in the context of individual solutions developed both in the area of digital administration and sustainability.

As previously indicated, digital governance facilitates big data collection, analysis, and dissemination, and in the context of sustainability it allows

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<sup>19</sup> I. Dhaoui, *E-government for sustainable development: Evidence from MENA countries*, "Journal of the Knowledge Economy" 2022, vol. 13, issue 3, pp. 2076–2077.

<sup>20</sup> N. Tiku, *A world without digital inclusivity: What it means to securitize technology*, "The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare" 2021, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 168.

<sup>21</sup> M. Alqahtani, R. Braun, *Examining the Impact of Technical Controls, Accountability and Monitoring towards Cyber Security Compliance in E-government Organisations*, Research Square" 2021, <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-196216/v1>.

policymakers to make informed decisions about particular sustainable development goals. Utilising big data analytics and digital platforms, governments can assess the impact of their policies on various aspects of sustainable development, such as environmental conservation, social equity, and economic growth.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen as a means to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) effectively.<sup>23</sup>

Another aspect may be increasing the availability and expanding the group of recipients of financial transfer technologies. Digital finance plays a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion, especially in developing countries. Through mobile banking, digital wallets, and other financial technologies, underserved populations gain access to banking services, loans, and insurance, empowering them to participate in economic activities.<sup>24</sup> This fosters economic growth, reduces poverty, and contributes to sustainable development by ensuring that marginalised communities have the means to improve their livelihoods. Besides, digital governance mechanisms ensure transparency and accountability in financial transactions. By leveraging technologies like blockchain, governments can create secure, transparent and immutable ledgers that track financial transactions in real time. This helps prevent corruption, financial fraud, and illicit activities, thereby fostering an environment more conducive to sustainable economic development and investment.

Undoubtedly, one of the main goals of the development of digital administration is to strive for greater availability of various services for the community. Digital governance supports e-governance initiatives that enhance the delivery of public services. Through online portals and digital platforms, citizens can access essential services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare more efficiently. Co-creation initiatives in public services are also becoming more and more visible. Thanks to the constructive exchange of knowledge, experiences and ideas between sectors, the improvement of overall social well-being is observed. This undoubtedly contributes to the attainment of sustainable development objectives, particularly those related to quality education, good health, and well-being.<sup>25</sup> In the context of the improvement of life and the

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<sup>22</sup> M.N.I. Sarker, M. Wu, M.A. Hossain, *Smart governance through bigdata: Digital transformation of public agencies*, [in:] *2018 international conference on artificial intelligence and big data (ICAIBD)*, IEEE, Chengdu 2018, pp. 64–66.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, *Transforming our goals. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [accessed: 12.10.2023].

<sup>24</sup> E. Ajambo, *Fintech and digital finance for financial inclusion*, with contributions from: A.S. Virdee, J. Palacin Lucio, M. Sanchez Cantillo, N. Obikili, S.A. Davies, W. Ngwabe, United Nations, [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/fintech4\\_14\\_march\\_2023.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/fintech4_14_march_2023.pdf) [accessed: 14.10.2023].

<sup>25</sup> N. Edelmann, S. Virkar, *The Impact of Sustainability on Co-Creation of Digital Public Services*, “Administrative Sciences” 2023, vol. 13, no. 2, 43, p. 2, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3387/13/2/43> [accessed: 13.10.2023].

general well-being of society, digital governance can promote the adoption of green technologies and the development of a digital infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> By incentivising the use of renewable energy sources, smart grid systems, and sustainable manufacturing practices, governments can reduce the environmental impact of digital technologies. This fosters environmentally sustainable development and contributes to the achievement of climate action goals outlined in the SDGs.<sup>27</sup>

And finally, as digital governance and finance rely heavily on technology, ensuring robust cybersecurity measures is essential. Protecting digital infrastructure and financial systems from cyber threats is crucial for maintaining economic stability and promoting sustainable development. A secure digital environment fosters trust among investors, businesses, and consumers, thereby stimulating economic growth and supporting long-term sustainable development goals.<sup>28</sup>

### Blockchain as a catalyst for sustainable public administration

Blockchain, understood in the simplest way,

is a shared, immutable ledger that facilitates the process of recording transactions and tracking assets in a business network. An asset can be tangible (a house, car, cash, land) or intangible (intellectual property, patents, copyrights, branding). Virtually anything of value can be tracked and traded on a blockchain network, reducing risk and cutting costs for all involved.<sup>29</sup>

Built on the principles of transparency, decentralisation, and immutability, blockchain offers a secure and efficient means of record-keeping and data management. It can also significantly enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public administration processes, but one of the key advantages lies in its ability to create an immutable ledger, ensuring not only the transparency but also integrity of public records.<sup>30</sup> This feature can be particularly beneficial in areas such as voting systems, property registration, and supply chain management, where data security and accuracy are paramount.

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<sup>26</sup> R. Verdecchia, P. Lago, C. de Vries, *The future of sustainable digital infrastructures: A landscape of solutions, adoption factors, impediments, open problems, and scenarios*, “Sustainable Computing: Informatics and Systems” 2022, vol. 35, 100767, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> M.E. Milakovich, *Digital governance: New technologies for improving public service and participation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, New York 2022, pp.118–120.

<sup>29</sup> IBM, *What is blockchain?*, <https://www.ibm.com/topics/blockchain> [accessed: 16.10.2023].

<sup>30</sup> D. Allesie, M. Sobolewski, L. Vaccari, *Blockchain for digital government. An assessment of pioneering implementations in public services*, ed. F. Pignatelli, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2019, pp. 11–12, <https://www.mafr.fr/media/assets/publications/blockchain-for-digital-government-2019.pdf> [accessed: 16.10.2023].

Additionally, the decentralised nature of blockchain can help streamline bureaucratic processes by reducing the need for intermediaries, thus minimising the potential for corruption and fraud.<sup>31</sup> By providing a secure and transparent platform for managing transactions and sensitive data, blockchain technology can foster greater trust between governments and citizens, leading to increased public confidence in the administrative machinery.<sup>32</sup>

The application of blockchain technology in public administration can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development initiatives. By enabling transparent and trustworthy record-keeping, blockchain can facilitate the monitoring and implementation of sustainability-focused policies and programmes. It offers a decentralised platform that enhances data integrity, promoting accountability in environmental governance and resource management. Furthermore, through the implementation of smart contracts and decentralised applications, blockchain can streamline administrative processes, leading to optimised resource allocation and reduced environmental impact.

The use of blockchain in public administration can also foster citizen engagement and participation in sustainable initiatives. By providing transparent access to information and decision-making processes, blockchain empowers citizens to increased participation.<sup>33</sup> They may actively contribute to environmental conservation efforts and hold governing bodies accountable for sustainable policy implementation. This increased transparency can strengthen the public's trust in governmental efforts toward sustainability and encourage collective action for a more environmentally conscious society.

The integration of blockchain technology into public administration for sustainable development apparently is not without challenges. One key hurdle is the need for interoperability between various blockchain platforms and existing administrative systems.<sup>34</sup> Overcoming this challenge requires the development of standardised protocols and frameworks that enable seamless integration and data exchange, fostering collaboration between different administrative entities and ensuring the compatibility of sustainability-focused initiatives.

Moreover, ensuring the energy efficiency and sustainability of blockchain infrastructure itself is crucial. As blockchain operations can be energy-intensive, the deployment of energy-efficient consensus mechanisms and the utilisation of renewable energy sources are essential for mitigating the environmental

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

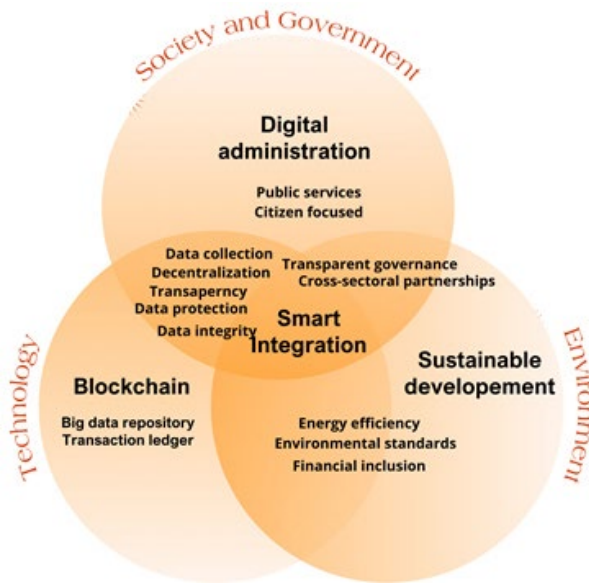
<sup>32</sup> S. Myeong, Y. Jung, *Administrative reforms in the fourth industrial revolution: the case of blockchain use*, "Sustainability" 2019, vol. 11, no. 14, 3971, pp. 6–7.

<sup>33</sup> F.L. Benítez-Martínez, M.V. Hurtado-Torres, E. Romero-Frías, *A neural blockchain for a tokenizable e-Participation model*, "Neurocomputing" 2021, vol. 423, pp. 704–705.

<sup>34</sup> S. Kurpjuweit, C.G. Schmidt, M. Klöckner, S.M. Wagner, *Blockchain in additive manufacturing and its impact on supply chains*, "Journal of Business Logistics" 2021, vol. 42, issue 1, p. 55.

impact of blockchain technology.<sup>35</sup> Governments must prioritise the adoption of sustainable practices in blockchain implementation, thereby aligning technological advancements with broader sustainability objectives.

Figure 1. Interconnection and smart integration of blockchain, public administration, and sustainable development.



Source: Own study.

Several countries have made significant strides in integrating blockchain technology into public administration to promote sustainability by creating smart integration of technology, contemporary government management systems and sustainable development (see Figure 1). For instance, Bhutan’s integration of blockchain into its carbon-neutral initiatives has enabled the transparent monitoring and trading of carbon credits, incentivising sustainable practices and fostering environmental conservation.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the integration of blockchain technology into carbon footprint reduction strategies carries multifaceted implications for environmental governance and sustainable development. By promoting transparent and auditable carbon accounting mechanisms, blockchain fosters greater

<sup>35</sup> J. Sedlmeir, H.U. Buhl, G. Fridgen, R. Keller, *The energy consumption of blockchain technology: Beyond myth*, “Business & Information Systems Engineering” 2020, vol. 62, issue 6, pp. 603–604.

<sup>36</sup> See G.T. Vives, S. Tashi, J. Singay, *Of dragons, data and clouds: Bhutan’s journey into carbon markets, technology, and a resilient future*, World Bank Blogs, 19.10.2023, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/climatechange/dragons-data-and-clouds-bhutans-journey-carbon-markets-technology-and-resilient> [accessed: 20.10.2023].

trust among stakeholders, enabling more effective collaboration and knowledge sharing in the pursuit of carbon neutrality.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Singapore's utilisation of blockchain for digital identity management has streamlined administrative processes, enhanced data security, and facilitated the seamless delivery of sustainable public services, contributing to the nation's commitment to building a smart and sustainable city-state. Additionally, Sweden has leveraged blockchain technology to enhance transparency and traceability in its supply chains, particularly in the food and forestry sectors.<sup>38</sup> By implementing blockchain-based solutions, this country has improved supply chain efficiency, minimised waste, and promoted sustainable production practices, thus advancing the country's commitment to sustainable resource management and environmental conservation.

## Conclusion

The transition from e-governance to digital governance represents a profound shift in the way governments operate and interact with citizens. It encompasses a citizen-centric, data-driven, and interconnected approach to governance. While it presents numerous opportunities for improving government services and operations, addressing cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital inclusion challenges is crucial. This transition is not a destination but an ongoing journey, and a clear example of this process is the possibilities, advantages and disadvantages of using blockchain technology that have been analysed here.

The implementation of blockchain technology in public administration holds immense potential for promoting sustainable development and fostering transparent governance practices by creating smart integration processes and practices. By leveraging blockchain's inherent capabilities, governments can enhance data integrity, promote citizen engagement, and streamline administrative processes, all while aligning with sustainability goals. While the integration of blockchain technology into sustainable digital administration presents unprecedented opportunities, it is not without its challenges. One of the key obstacles lies in the establishment of regulatory frameworks that accommodate the complexities of blockchain-based transactions, while upholding environmental standards and data privacy regulations. Furthermore, ensuring the inclusivity and accessibility of blockchain-powered services remains a crucial consideration, as equitable

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<sup>37</sup> M. Wang, B. Wang, A. Abareshi, *Blockchain technology and its role in enhancing supply chain integration capability and reducing carbon emission: A conceptual framework*, "Sustainability" 2020, vol. 12, no. 24, 10550, pp. 4–6, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/24/10550> [accessed: 20.10.2023].

<sup>38</sup> M. Hultgren, F. Pajala, *Blockchain technology in construction industry: Transparency and traceability in supply chain*, Master of Science thesis, supervisor: T. Karrbom Gustavsson, Royal Institute of Technology, Department of Real Estate and Construction Management, Stockholm 2018, p. 14.

access to digital infrastructure is paramount in fostering sustainable development and bridging the digital divide.

Amid these challenges, there exist significant opportunities for collaborative partnerships between governments, private enterprises and civil society organisations to develop inclusive and sustainable blockchain solutions. By fostering cross-sectoral collaborations, governments can harness the collective expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders to co-create sustainable digital administration frameworks that prioritise environmental stewardship, social equity, and technological innovation. So despite the obstacles and challenges mentioned previously, with strategic planning, collaboration, and a commitment to energy efficiency, the integration of blockchain into public administration can serve as a catalyst for fostering a more sustainable and transparent governance framework that prioritises the well-being of both present and future generations.

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# PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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## PROFESSION OR VOCATION: TEACHERS OF PRESCHOOL AND EARLY SCHOOL ON THEMSELVES AND THEIR OCCUPATION

**Justyna Wojniak**

PhD, Associate Professor, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow,

Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6158-1115>

**Katarzyna Górka**

Graduate, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0187-4167>

### Abstract

This article refers to selected narrative axes surrounding the teaching profession. Against the background of organisational and legal aspects as well as the social perspective, the opinions of preschool and early school teachers about their professional work are presented. In order to gain insight into teachers' points of view, in 2022 a diagnostic survey was conducted in which 63 teachers of preschool and early school education participated. For the purposes of this research, hypotheses were formulated relating to the level of teachers' satisfaction with their work, remuneration as one of the key factors of job satisfaction, the phenomenon of professional burnout and teachers' perception of their profession in terms of social mission. The results did not confirm the dominance of low professional satisfaction among teachers. They also indicated that the remuneration is not a factor determining its occurrence. The assumption that professional burnout is a common phenomenon among teachers was not confirmed, and furthermore, it is not a problem that only affects teachers with great professional experience. At the same time, most of the teachers surveyed agreed with the statement that their profession was a vocation.

**Key words:** teacher, preschool education, early school education, profession, vocation

## Introduction

When considering the teacher profession, we can distinguish several characteristic narrative axes. One of them is closely related to the organisational and legal aspects of the functioning of this professional group. To illustrate this approach, one should refer to legal acts that are generally applicable, such as acts or regulations of the minister responsible for education and upbringing, as well as to acts of internal law in force in individual educational institutions, with particular emphasis on the most important of them, i.e. the school statute. The Education Act (*ustawa Prawo oświatowe*) specifies teachers' duties, for example, in the following way: "In his/her teaching, educational and caring activities, a teacher is obliged to be guided by the good of pupils, concern for their health, moral and civic attitude, with respect for the pupils' personal dignity."<sup>1</sup> Detailed regulations regarding the professional status of teachers are set out in the Teacher's Charter Act (*ustawa Karta Nauczyciela*), which contains a more detailed description of teachers' duties. These include the reliable implementation of tasks related to the position entrusted to him or her and the basic functions of the school, namely, teaching, education and caring, including tasks related to ensuring the safety of pupils, supporting each pupil in his or her development, striving for full personal development and professional development. The legislator also draws attention to the obligation to educate and raise young people with a love for Poland, with respect for the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, and in an atmosphere of freedom of conscience and respect for every person. No less important is the attention to shaping pupils' moral and civic attitudes in accordance with the idea of democracy, peace and friendship between people of different nations, races and worldviews.<sup>2</sup>

The Teacher's Charter also contains provisions regarding the qualification requirements necessary for the position of a teacher, including grades and conditions for professional promotion<sup>3</sup>, as well as other detailed regulations relating to the establishment and termination of employment, the remuneration system, and pension rights, etc.

The second fundamental axis of the narrative surrounding the teaching profession is created by the social ideas and expectations that are formulated towards its representatives. The strength of persistent stereotypes is especially visible in relation to teachers of kindergarten and early education (years I–III). This is confirmed by research such as that by Ewa Sosnowska-Bielicz, who asked parents about their preferences regarding the gender of their children's teacher. The vast majority chose women, justifying their choice by saying that "the matter concerns

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<sup>1</sup> Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. Prawo oświatowe, tekst jedn. Dz.U. 2024 poz. 737 [consolidated text, Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 2024, item 737], art. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 1982 r. Karta Nauczyciela, tekst jedn. Dz.U. 2024 poz. 986, art. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, art. 9, 9a and 9b.

small children who need a woman's warmth."<sup>4</sup> Only 23% indicated a preference for a man, arguing that "men are more assertive and will not let themselves be walked all over."<sup>5</sup> These trends go hand in hand with the image of a teacher, which is created in the context of the natural role of mother, caregiver and housewife. In this perspective, the academic path, professional internships, diploma examinations and professional advancement are just an accessory to women's nature.<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to the social image of teachers, it is worth referring to the results of research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center. Research from 2012 shows a relatively high level of social respect for teachers. The respondents pointed out the high competences of teachers, their diligence and willingness for self-development, and emphasised the responsibility and vocation that they consider indispensable in this profession. Despite the positive perception of the teacher, over half of the respondents (54%) did not want their children to become teachers.<sup>7</sup> In the case of research from 2019, carried out after the end of the nationwide teachers' strike, teachers took seventh place, which was relatively high (out of 31), behind representatives of professions that traditionally enjoy the greatest social respect, such as firefighters and healthcare workers or academic staff. 77% declared that teachers enjoy the respect of society. Furthermore, 43% of respondents expressed the opinion that teachers have a sense of mission.<sup>8</sup> This confirms that a large part of society tends to perceive the teaching profession as a vocation.

The third axis can be created on the basis of the perspective of teachers themselves and the statements they formulate about the specificity of their profession. To achieve this goal, research conducted in 2022 gathered the opinions of 63 teachers of preschool and early school education.

### Teachers' opinions about themselves and their profession

The research problem focused on how teachers perceive themselves and their profession. Their statements, as well as their preference for specific formulations

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<sup>4</sup> E. Sosnowska-Bielicz, *Nauczyciel(ka) edukacji wczesnoszkolnej – czy zawód nauczyciela edukacji wczesnoszkolnej ma płęć?*, "Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka" 2019, nr spec. 1, p. 97, see also pp. 95–96, 98.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> D. Klus-Stańska, *Infantylizujący stereotyp nauczycielki wczesnej edukacji. W poszukiwaniu kontekstów i źródeł ukrytego dyskursu „naszej pani”*, "Kultura i Edukacja" 2010, nr 2(76), pp. 19–20.

<sup>7</sup> *Wizerunek nauczycieli*, oprac. M. Feliksiak, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2012, p. 3, [https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K\\_173\\_12.PDF](https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K_173_12.PDF) [accessed: 17.11.2023].

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2; Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, *Które zawody poważamy?*, oprac. M. Omyłka-Rudzka, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2019, p. 3, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K\\_157\\_19.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_157_19.PDF) [accessed: 22.11.2023].

used in the questionnaire, allow us to trace how this group creates a narrative around their profession. Areas that are worth paying special attention to have also been identified, as their analysis allows for a more multidimensional characterisation of members of the teaching profession. Therefore, the following elements were considered necessary for constructing the image of a teacher, namely, factors motivating people to work as a teacher, factors determining job satisfaction or lack thereof, and difficulties and limitations that teachers encounter in their work. The hypotheses that were formulated for the research are as follows: teachers experience a low level of satisfaction with their work, which is associated with a low level of earnings; remuneration is one of the key factors of job satisfaction; teachers with extensive work experience observe the effects of burnout; teachers treat their work as a kind of vocation and social mission.

The research was conducted using the diagnostic survey method, and the tool was a questionnaire, with one of the questions being open-ended. The questionnaire was addressed to preschool and early school teachers. 63 respondents took part in the study, including 61 women and two men. Such proportions clearly confirm that at the stage of preschool and early school education we are dealing with the phenomenon of feminisation of the teaching profession, which is strongly rooted in Polish society. To complete the characteristics of the research sample, it should be added that 31 respondents were employed in kindergartens, and 32 in primary schools as early stage teachers (years I–III). The age breakdown was such that the group of people aged 30–39 was most represented (21 people), 14 people belonged to the youngest group (up to 25 years of age), and 11 respondents were in the age group of 25–29 years old. A more experienced group of teachers also took part in the study: 40–49 years old (eight people) and over 50 years old (nine people). The work experience of the respondents was quite diverse: 24 people declared work experience in education of less than five years, 15 stated that they had between five and nine years' experience, ten people – more than 20 years, eight people stated they had between 10 and 14 years' experience, and only six, between 15 and 20 years. The largest number of participants in the study were teachers living in rural areas (33 people), 17 people stated a town with a population of up to 50,000 inhabitants as their place of residence, four people stated a town of 50 to 150,000 thousand, two people – a city of 150 to 500 thousand inhabitants, and seven teachers were from large cities with over 500,000 inhabitants.

The respondents were asked about the motivation that guided them in choosing their profession (table 1). The vast majority answered that the key factor that influenced their decision was their passion for working with children. Several people also marked the answer indicating teaching traditions that existed in their families.

Table 1. Reason for choosing the profession

Reason for choosing the profession	Number of responses
Personal inclinations to work with children	55
Family tradition (a family of teachers)	4
Chance	2
Interest in humanities and working with people	1
Curiosity	1

Source: own research.

It is worth noting that personal inclination to work with children may have an effect on the greater likelihood of actual involvement in working with children and motivate effort more than chance or curiosity. Taking into account this answer, we are also dealing with a reflective approach to choosing one's career path and a better thought-out decision in this respect. Following family traditions, although they should not be disregarded, may suggest imitation and a lack of one's own vision of individual professional development. This approach may result in low effectiveness in professional work or limited satisfaction with the tasks performed. This, in turn, is not a good prognosis when it comes to contact with pupils and relationships between teacher and pupil, and may ultimately lead to faster burnout.

The next question concerned how teachers perceive their profession and what aspects of their professional work they pay attention to (table 2). They were presented with a choice of several elements associated with professional activity and asked to what extent they confirmed the existence of a relationship between being a teacher and a specific characteristic that can be attributed to professional activity. The respondents perceived the greatest degree of consistency with the teaching profession in relation to such elements as the large scope of responsibility, compliance with moral principles, high personal standards and having specific personality predispositions. A significant number of respondents (27) mentioned great satisfaction with the work performed. The respondents firmly rejected the suggestion that their profession goes hand in hand with a large amount of free time or high earnings and the possibility of quick promotion. The respondents also did not agree with the statement that their profession is associated with a high level of prestige. This should be a cause for concern due to the social importance of this profession. It can be said that the relatively low salaries of teachers are still an obstacle to achieving the status of a prestigious profession.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, none of the respondents agreed with the statement that the teaching profession offers the possibility of quick promotion.

<sup>9</sup> Załącznik do rozporządzenia Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 24 lutego 2023 r. zmieniającego rozporządzenie w sprawie wysokości minimalnych stawek wynagrodzenia zasadniczego nauczycieli, ogólnych warunków przyznawania dodatków do wynagrodzenia zasadniczego oraz wynagradzania za pracę w dniu wolnym od pracy, Dz.U. 2023, poz. 352.

This is justified by the provisions of the education law specifying the pace of promotion and its stages. Although the provisions of the Teacher's Charter changed in 2022 and the number of promotion levels was reduced, one should remember that it is necessary to work for the period specified in the act in order to apply for promotion to the next level.

Table 2. The teacher's job is connected with...

The teacher's job is connected with...	Number of responses				
	I strongly disagree	I tend to disagree	I have no opinion	I tend to agree	I totally agree
observance of moral principles	2	3	4	16	38
high earnings	38	17	3	3	2
high prestige of the profession	23	25	4	7	4
the possibility of quick promotion	26	22	6	9	0
great satisfaction with the work performed	4	4	3	25	27
a threat of professional burnout	6	12	13	22	10
great responsibility	4	1	0	11	47
ease of qualifying (relatively easy training course)	18	24	11	9	1
high personal standards	5	3	1	17	37
specific personality predispositions	4	3	3	18	35
self-directed learning	5	0	4	26	28
a large amount of free time	40	14	4	3	2

Source: own research.

An interesting supplementation to these results was the answer to the question as to how the authority of the teaching profession has developed over the years. It was assumed that the period of interest to the researchers was the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is significant that all respondents (63 people) gave the unanimous answer that we are dealing with a decline in the authority of the teaching profession. No one provided an answer indicating not only an increase in authority, but also doubts in this regard ("It's hard to say" – 0 people). Researchers point out in this context that the strike of education staff that began in April 2019 was an event as a result of which "the image of the teacher suffered serious damage, and his or her work was deprived of the previously assigned ethos and respect."<sup>10</sup> The economic demands formulated during the strike dominated the coverage in the public media, and the authorities themselves emphasised the demanding attitude of the striking teachers.

<sup>10</sup> P. Ziółkowski, *Strajk nauczycieli w 2019 r.*, "Zeszyty Naukowe WSG. Edukacja – Rodzina – Społeczeństwo" 2020, nr 5, p. 264. See also: A. Mierzyńska, #DworczykLeaks. *Fala hejtu na strajk nauczycieli była zaplanowana i sterowana przez PiS. Są dowody!*, OKO.press, 14.01.2022, <https://oko.press/dworczykileaks-fala-hejtu-na-nauczycieli-kierowana-przez-pis> [accessed: 11.10.2023].

What comes as quite a significant surprise, however, is the respondents' clear belief that the general public does not associate their profession with authority. This position can be considered quite shocking, especially considering the professional role and tasks that a teacher has to fulfil. A question to pose here is whether the approach to their profession perceived by teachers themselves among the adult part of society affects the attitude of children and young people to teachers' work and pupil-teacher relations. An affirmative answer would significantly call into question the effectiveness of the teaching and educational activities of the contemporary Polish school.

The authority of the profession is probably not enhanced by the fact that pedagogical courses are now widely available. Combined with the decision to train as teachers declared by individual respondents based solely on curiosity or chance, this may result in students not selecting this profession. As a result, through their attitude, these people may contribute to creating a negative opinion of the teaching community.

The previously mentioned financial aspect of the teaching profession was also included in the study as a factor potentially reducing motivation to work in the profession. The respondents agreed that in Poland teachers are a professional group whose earnings are not sufficient in the context of the responsibility of their profession and its social importance. The overwhelming majority of teachers are not satisfied with their earnings. Of the 63 responses, only two people said that salaries in education are too high. Such a sparsely represented position may be a consequence of working in non-state institutions, where the level of remuneration does not have to be determined in accordance with the regulations of the minister responsible for education and upbringing. It is also possible that the respondents marked this answer option incorrectly.

However, the results obtained directly indicate the impossibility of achieving financial success in the education industry. This relationship becomes even more striking when we realise that a feature of the teaching profession in Poland, but in other countries too, is its strong feminisation. This is due to the specificity of the tasks performed by teachers, especially in preschool and early school education, which is generally associated with the "natural" role of a woman. It includes caring and educational functions, which in professional work are considered to be a kind of extension of the mother's role and its transfer from the home environment to the environment of an educational institution. Stereotypes accompanying the social perception of women and their professional activity are confirmed by research. The results indicate that professions characterised by a high level of feminisation are lower paid.<sup>11</sup> In the education sector we are also dealing with the "glass escalator" phenomenon, consisting in privileged treatment of men

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<sup>11</sup> *The gender pay gap situation in the EU*, European Commission, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en) [accessed: 22.10.2023].

employed in professions traditionally considered as feminine, which results in an easier and faster path to promotion to higher (managerial) positions. This *status quo* may be confirmed by the overrepresentation of men in management positions in education, which is disproportionate to the actual number of regular employees of a given institution.

The next point of analysis concerned the most important attribute that a teacher should have in the opinion of the respondents (table 3). The response pool contained five options. Most people considered involvement in working with pupils to be necessary (two people did not provide an answer to this question). The importance of the teacher's high level of knowledge and personality traits was also significant.

Table 3. Essential in the teaching profession

Essential in the teaching profession	Number of responses
High level of general and methodological knowledge	12
Completion of a Master's degree	2
High self-discipline and systematic work	6
Involvement in working with pupils	32
Personality predispositions	9

Source: own research.

It follows that, although the respondents are aware of the importance of the level of substantive knowledge, they attach much greater importance to the element of involvement in working with pupils. Perhaps this is related to the belief that knowledge can be acquired at various stages of professional development by participating in the many forms of professional development available to teachers. However, involvement in working with pupils should be treated more as an attitude that is difficult to shape at a mature age if a given person does not manifest this type of predisposition.

Interesting information was also provided by the answers to the question that required respondents to identify the social and interpersonal skills that should characterise a teacher (table 4). This question made multiple choices possible by allowing participants to tick a maximum of three items. Among the seven answer options presented, there was an "Other" option, the selection of which allowed the addition of an element that was necessary in the respondent's opinion but omitted from the proposed list. One person took advantage of this opportunity, adding "Consistency in actions" as the most important skill in her opinion. Patient, kind and endowed with a great deal of empathy: this is the image of the teacher that emerges when analysing the respondents' answers. Education practitioners attach great importance to the ability to build pupils' self-esteem. The respondents also indicated the leader's attitude, managerial and organisational skills, which certainly make teachers' work easier. It is significant that those

elements that are helpful in the development of pupils come to the fore, and those, such as organisational skills that facilitate the daily work of teachers themselves, recede into the background.

Table 4. Preferred characteristics of teachers

Preferred characteristics of teachers	Number of responses
Patience and kindness	47
Sense of humour and ease of establishing contacts	23
The ability to motivate others	23
Authenticity	23
The ability to build self-esteem in pupils	25
Empathy	29
Leader's attitude and organisational skills	11
Consistency in actions	1

Source: own research.

The respondents were also asked about the factors that determine professional satisfaction (table 5). They could tick a maximum of two options out of four variants, and an "Other" option was also available. Mentioned here were "Contact with children and awareness of the impact on people's life" and "Pupils' successes and their educational and upbringing progress". These answer options mentioned by the respondents themselves indicate how important the phenomenon of feedback in contact with the pupil is in the teaching process, which translates into the teacher's sense of professional satisfaction. The answer that received the most responses was that the highest degree of professional satisfaction is determined by a personal sense of fulfilment. Far fewer respondents mentioned the prestige of the profession and the financial aspect as the source of their satisfaction, from which, as already noted, the respondents maintain a great distance.

Table 5. Actors determining professional satisfaction

Factors determining professional satisfaction	Number of responses
Earnings	7
A sense of accomplishment	51
The prestige of the profession and the respect of society	8
Professional success and appreciation	28
Contact with children and awareness of the impact on people's lives	2
Pupils' successes and educational and upbringing progress	5

Source: own research.

For a more comprehensive analysis of the sense of professional satisfaction, the questionnaire included a question in which teachers could indicate

factors determining a lack of this in their profession (table 6). It is not surprising that the main reason for this lack of satisfaction turns out to be low earnings. The lack of respect from the immediate environment, i.e. parents and pupils, is equally acute. It is worth noting, however, that this does not go hand in hand with the level of social respect for the teaching profession declared in the 2019 study by the Public Opinion Research Center. A significant group of respondents also struggle with excess responsibilities and an atmosphere of competition among colleagues at the establishment. The results obtained also indicate teachers' readiness for professional development. This is not treated as an element of pressure from the institution's management or a burdensome obligation, but is treated as an element of teachers' everyday life. It also allows us to see the readiness of teachers to expand their professional horizons, extend competences and acquire new skills.

Table 6. Factors determining the lack of professional satisfaction

Factors determining the lack of professional satisfaction	Number of responses
Earnings	41
Lack of respect from society (pupils, parents)	34
Excessive demands of superiors	7
Too many responsibilities	18
Constant pressure of development	5
Competition among teachers	9

Source: own research.

When asked about their sense of level of professional satisfaction, understood broadly, the overwhelming majority marked the option "Definitely yes" (28) or "Probably yes" (25). Several people (seven) chose the answer "It's hard to say"; perhaps these are teachers whose working conditions, e.g. employment instability, result in variable levels of satisfaction. There were also individual responses from teachers who did not feel satisfied with their work. This aspect is worth relating to the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The answer "Probably not" was given by two young kindergarten teachers (up to 25 years of age and between 30 and 39 years of age). Both of them had worked in their profession for a relatively short time; their work experience did not exceed five years. One kindergarten was located in the countryside, the other in a town with a population of up to 50,000 inhabitants. In their case, the lack of satisfaction may result from difficulties caused by limited experience, which temporarily obscures the positive aspects of their work. The answer "Definitely not" was given by just one person, an experienced teacher (over 50 years old and over 20 years of work experience) from a primary school located in a town of 50,000. inhabitants. This case can be considered a manifestation of professional burnout, especially since the respondent reported physical ailments and a general reluctance to do her job.

These teachers were also asked about the difficulties they perceive in their professional work, with the option to indicate a maximum of three answers and use the “Other” option. Most teachers admitted that they found administrative activities and maintaining extensive documentation to be the most problematic thing (39 people). This shows that there are some gaps in the teacher education process. Study plans definitely lack courses that would practically prepare graduates in the field of constructing work plans, filling in diaries or preparing professional development plans. Many respondents admitted that difficulties, especially at the beginning of their professional path, resulted from the lack of experience in being an educator and conducting classes themselves (37). This is, to some extent, natural, but in order to minimise the feeling of uncertainty of young teachers in direct contact with pupils, a modification of the student teaching practice programme could help, for example by extending their duration or changing its formula to a continuous one.

Some teachers indicated problems related to pupil discipline (24) and contacts with their parents (22). The specificity of the profession somehow requires such skills since it seems that they can be developed over time as they acquire professional experience, personality predispositions also being important. Planning your own work can also be problematic (12), which is probably related to limited administrative and organisational experience. A small group of respondents (6), thinking about the difficulties, indicated establishing contact with the rest of the teaching staff at the beginning of their professional career. Only four people indicated a complete lack of difficulties.

An important topic of the study was the phenomenon of professional burn-out, mentioned previously. Respondents were asked to characterise how they understood this concept (table 7). The largest number of people chose the phrase “Lack of willingness and motivation to work with pupils”. Other respondents indicated “A lack of willingness and motivation to work with pupils”. Some of the respondents also indicated a lack of satisfaction with their work: “despite the high demands I set for myself and the goals I achieve, I no longer feel happy and satisfied with it”, writes one of the respondents. One of the symptoms of burnout in the opinion of teachers is the feeling that “when they go to work in the morning they are doing something against their will”. As one of the respondents notes: “It’s a state where I don’t even want to go to work because it makes me unhappy”. There is also a feeling of stagnation: “I feel a lack of willingness to work, a lack of motivation to improve my qualifications. I am stuck in a state of immobility and this has a negative impact on the people in my care”. It is worth quoting here the statement of the kindergarten teacher, mentioned above, with considerable teaching experience: “Not only do I understand the definition of the phenomenon, but I have experienced it myself. It was a moment in my professional life when I came to the conclusion that there was nothing more I could do. Work and children had overwhelmed me and my further actions could have harmed someone.

Me or, worse still, the children.”<sup>12</sup> The teacher also added that at that moment she decided to retire and sign up for therapy. After a year, she gained new strength and to this day she works part-time in a kindergarten, conducting art classes with children once a week. It is also worth emphasising the awareness of the problem among these teachers and their knowledge of the potential symptoms of its occurrence. In turn, the statement quoted above can be considered a tip for other teachers in a similar situation. Recognising the problem in one’s own case may be the most difficult, but also the most important step from which the process of solving the problem of burnout may begin, and examples of individual strategies and exchanges of experiences may encourage one to take action.

Table 7. Professional burnout is...

Professional burnout is...	Number of responses
To be tired of one’s job (mental and physical)	4
A lack of satisfaction with your profession	8
A lack of willingness and motivation to work with pupils	10
Performing one’s duties automatically, without paying attention to the pupils’ needs	4
Reluctance to go to work	6
A feeling of being dissatisfied with the actions taken	3
A lack of ideas	5
A lack of work efficiency	4
A lack of willingness to develop yourself and professional routine	3
Increased stress and decreased empathy for pupils	5
Looking for a different career path	6
A feeling of uselessness and pointlessness in doing work	5

Source: own research.

After the respondents had defined the phenomenon of burnout, they were asked to state whether they had ever observed any symptom indicating professional burnout. Of the three answer options, “Yes”, “No” and “It’s hard to say”, most respondents (28) indicated the occurrence of symptoms that could be interpreted as a manifestation of professional burnout. This group also included people with only a small amount of work experience, which means that a simple relationship between the length of work in the profession and undesirable symptoms should be ruled out. Of course, a group of teachers who have been working longer and are more experienced is theoretically more vulnerable, but this fact itself is not crucial, and the occurrence of burnout symptoms or their frequency is not directly related to age, experience or even place of work. This proves the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomenon of burnout. At the same time, 21 people gave

<sup>12</sup> Source: own research.

a negative answer, declaring that they had not observed any disturbing symptoms (compared to a group of 14 people who were unable to clearly state this), which may be a bit of optimism, considering the difficulties indicated by teachers in their professional career, for example their unsatisfactory remuneration or low level of social prestige.

The final part of the questionnaire included a question as to whether, if you could choose your profession again, but with your current knowledge and experience, you would become a teacher. The majority of respondents (34 people) gave an affirmative answer, 19 were hesitant (“It’s hard to say”), and ten would definitely not take up a job as a teacher. Therefore, it is noticeable that many teachers accept their professional career path with all its advantages and weaknesses. Thanks to this, their passion for their work and its specificity allow them to overcome the everyday difficulties they have to face. At the same time, a significant number of teachers consider their choice to be completely appropriate and hesitate in assessing the validity of their professional choice. This shows that in their case, moments of satisfaction from their profession are not able to eliminate difficulties or increase the motivation to work. This state of affairs is undoubtedly influenced by the threat of burnout and the symptoms of this phenomenon experienced by active teachers.

## Conclusions

As research has shown, teachers associate their work with a high level of professional satisfaction: the overwhelming majority strongly or mostly agreed with this statement. Significantly, most respondents did not consider the financial aspect to be a key factor in job satisfaction. It is clearly visible here that the narrative that appeared in the media in the context of the teachers’ strike in 2019 and which highlighted the financial claims of the protesters is not reflected in the opinions of the teachers surveyed. They consider the sense of fulfilment resulting from the work performed as a much more important factor that determines professional satisfaction.

The phenomenon of burnout from the respondents’ perspective also turned out to be interesting. It would seem that the problem is common among teachers, especially in the context of the difficult situation in the education sector related to the reforms carried out in recent years and the above-mentioned financial situation. The high level of responsibility in working as a teacher and the social expectations associated with this profession may also be a factor that contributes to the symptoms of burnout. The teachers surveyed are aware of the threat of this phenomenon, although a relatively large part of this group clearly indicated that they did not experience symptoms of burnout, and the rest did not provide a clear answer. It is also worth noting that the problem is also observed among teachers

with relatively little work experience. Perhaps this is due to the disappointment that novice teachers feel when confronted with a professional reality that does not match their expectations and ideas about their chosen profession.

Finally, it is worth quoting the respondents' answers to the question posed in the title of this study: Teacher – profession or vocation? The hypothesis that teachers tend to treat their profession in terms of a social mission was clearly confirmed. This position is consistent with the research results of the Public Opinion Research Center from 2019, quoted in the Introduction. The vast majority of teachers chose the “Vocation” option, no fewer than 55 people. The remaining eight selected the “Profession” option. The perception of the profession as a social mission may be important at the stage of choosing an educational path and then taking up one's first job. Young people may idealise their chosen profession and thus try to increase its status in their own eyes. Seeing one's career path as something more than just a profession can also be a significant motivator at the start. It may also be a mechanism that helps reduce cognitive dissonance resulting from, for example, unsatisfactory remuneration in a given profession or its low social prestige.

In connection with the research topic and in relation to the future of the teaching profession, an interesting thread would be to extend its scope to include a group of students training to be preschool and early school teachers. They would have the opportunity to formulate their expectations regarding their future profession. Confronting expectations with reality could also provide interesting material for formulating conclusions regarding possible changes in teacher education or creating systemic solutions expected by pupils, parents and teachers themselves.

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Załącznik do rozporządzenia Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 24 lutego 2023 r. zmieniającego rozporządzenie w sprawie wysokości minimalnych stawek wynagrodzenia zasadniczego nauczycieli, ogólnych warunków przyznawania dodatków do wynagrodzenia zasadniczego oraz wynagradzania za pracę w dniu wolnym od pracy, Dz.U. 2023, poz. 352.

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# **CONFERENCE REPORTS**



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## **“WE DON’T KNOW WHERE WE’LL BE IN A MOMENT BECAUSE WE DON’T EVEN KNOW WHERE WE ARE NOW”. REPORT FROM 5<sup>TH</sup> MEDIA EDUCATION CONGRESS “MEDIA EDUCATION X.0: CROSSING BORDERS”, WARSAW 24<sup>TH</sup>-25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

**Joanna Bierówka**

PdD, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, Faculty of Management and Social Communication  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2668-3503>

For the fifth time since it was founded the Polskie Towarzystwo Edukacji Medialnej (PTEM, Polish Association of Media Literacy) has organised its V Kongres Edukacji Medialnej “Edukacja medialna X.0: przekraczanie granic” (Media Education Congress “Media Education X.0: Crossing Borders”). This time the co-organisers were the Institute of Applied Polish Studies and the Laboratory for Research on Polish and Media Education of the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw. Around thirty panellists from fourteen academic centres focused on the dilemmas of media education at a time of considerable change both in the media and in the real world. In this context, the organisers speak of a post-pandemic world of post-truth, fake news, both disinformation and an excess of information, clickbait, and manipulation of cultural memory, which gives rise to threats, uncertainties and loneliness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V Kongres Edukacji Medialnej Warszawa, 24–25 listopada 2023 r. „Edukacja medialna X.0. Przekraczanie granic”, <https://wfil.uwr.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/171/2023/06/anons-V-kongres-PTEM.pdf> [accessed: 25.04.2024].

As one can infer from the central theme of the Congress, it was intended to encourage participants to cross borders. What borders were considered? “[...] mental borders – determined culturally, socially and politically”; identity borders – which determine media usage, and “technological borders – a humanoid model of communication in an age of bots and artificial intelligence [...]” And ultimately the borders of media education itself – its condition, position among various academic disciplines and even, as transpired during discussion, its *raison d’être*.<sup>2</sup>

The announcement of the event promised a debate about the role in media education, not only of the school, but also of institutions that function outside of it, such as libraries, informal and home education establishments, as well as academies, which provide “delayed” media education and which train teachers as the media educators of tomorrow.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of the Congress was to enable those who work in media education to integrate, i.e. the educators, teachers and researchers who represent various institutions and academic disciplines. Magdalena Trysińska, who represented both the University of Warsaw and PTEM, states in the report from the meeting that there was also an opportunity to promote the association itself.<sup>4</sup> The use of the symbol X.0 to designate media education in the context of the Congress is intriguing. In the report just mentioned Magdalena Maziarz, a member of the PTEM board, explains that this is a reference to the concept of media education 3.0 of Grzegorz Ptaszek<sup>5</sup>, or media education 4.0 of Agnieszka Ognowska<sup>6</sup> – influential representatives of Polish research into media education and founders of the PTEM. 3.0 and 4.0 are successive versions, or successive stages, at which media education has found itself. However, at present the dynamic of change within media is so powerful that media education is in the process of constant change, in which individual stages cannot be identified. “This X.0 – says Maziarz – means that we don’t know where we’ll be in a moment because we don’t even know where we are now.”<sup>7</sup>

The Congress was an opportunity to look for answers to essential questions about media education. These questions are not always easy, as noted by Jacek Pyżalski, the vice president of PTEM. What are we, as media education theoreticians and practitioners, not successful at? What are the shortcomings of media

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> A. Podviazkina, *Reportaż z V Kongresu Edukacji Medialnej*, <https://www.facebook.com/PTEM.org/videos/927558025762945> [accessed: 26.04.2024].

<sup>5</sup> G. Ptaszek, *Edukacja medialna 3.0. Krytyczne rozumienie mediów cyfrowych w dobie Big Data i algorytmizacji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2019.

<sup>6</sup> A. Ognowska, *Słowo od Redaktor Tematycznej*, [in:] *Edukacja medialna 4.0. Między technokulturą, cyberpsychologią a medialnym kulturoznawstwem i medialną pedagogiką. Strategie – praktyki – instytucje*, „Studia de Cultura” 2022, t. 14, nr 4, red. A. Ognowska, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> A. Podviazkina, *op. cit.*

education? Do we always properly match content and methods doing things to our audience?<sup>8</sup> Are there groups of media users that we particularly neglect in media education?<sup>9</sup>

Grzegorz D. Stunża, the president of PTEM, making the diagnosis that education, especially the systematic aspect, is an area that reacts to change very slowly, also asks if the education system can be restructured in such a way that it reacts to change itself.<sup>10</sup>

Answers to these questions first appeared during the plenary sessions, during which Pyżalski focused on the media education needs of Polish teenagers. The central idea of this presentation was diversity. It should be remembered that teenagers are a diverse demographic and include disabled, non-heteronormative and non-binary individuals. According to the results of research presented by Pyżalski, teenagers' differing needs shape the way in which they use the internet and should be taken into consideration when designing educational activities intended for them.

There were further attempts to answer these questions about media education during the panel discussion and breakout sessions. The breakout sessions were organised around six thematic blocks. One of them concerned internet users in the Web X.0 era. The presentations again made reference to their diversity. They mentioned the differing attitudes towards mediatisation depending on the generation to which an individual belongs.

Attention was also paid to the special needs of deaf internet users. The vulgarisation of media reports was pointed out, together with the effect of this on journalism students' attitude towards language. The next sessions were devoted to teachers and teaching practice. Questions such as the role of the teacher were considered, as well as the authority of the teacher and teacher training in the age of artificial intelligence. The teaching of English and Polish in the current media environment was discussed, and the possibility of using channels that promote Polish language and literature was pointed out. Attention was paid to the use in media education of critical rhetoric and the teaching of writing techniques using electronic media. Once again the frequent media education topic of how to teach about online threats was brought up.

The next sections concerned educational tools and inspiration in the age of Web X.0. Media competences were considered – how to measure them, how to shape them, what components they should contain. Here attention was paid to incorporating references to the values, ideals and subjectivity of one's audience into media education. Again there were references to diversity, this time in the context of making media education activities culturally diverse. It was

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> S. Kubryń, P. Tomczyk, *Relacja z V Kongresu PTEM*, <https://www.facebook.com/PTEM.org/videos/247224818461315> [accessed: 29.04.2024].

<sup>10</sup> A. Podviazkina, *op. cit.*

also considered whether free online games or fake news simulations can be educational tools.

One section was devoted to the role of libraries in the Web X.0 age. Here good practices were reviewed, taking into account the needs of people of different ages who use libraries.

As has already been said, the intention of the organisers of the Congress was to integrate people who work in media education, i.e. both theoreticians and practitioners. The latter included three institutions that are important for Polish media education. The Demagog Association, which has been engaged in fact-checking for the past ten years, or the “[...] combat false information and disinformation while providing citizens with reliable, unbiased, and verified information.”<sup>11</sup>

Demagog also runs workshops for school children and training sessions for teachers through the Fact-checking Academy, in addition to making a large number of interesting materials available on its e-learning platform.

During the Congress a representative of the Demagog Association, Patryk Zakrzewski, took part in the panel discussion. In the report that I previously referenced, he emphasised that as far as educational activities are concerned, it is essential to provide users with information about how the internet is constructed, how information reaches us, and to what extent we make decisions ourselves or they are made by algorithms, i.e. real people who decide how an algorithm works.<sup>12</sup> This aligns with Pyżalski’s presentation, which I have already written about. For it turns out – according to the results of the research he presented – that teenagers’ knowledge of this topic is rather weak.

The next institution that operates in the field of media education is the Empowering Children Foundation (ECF), at whose headquarters a workshop for Congress participants took place. ECF has been countering child abuse in Poland for thirty years. Since the internet became part of our reality, the Foundation has been undertaking extensive work to protect children’s wellbeing online. ECF’s best known projects include such social campaigns as “Do you really know who’s at the other end?”<sup>13</sup>, “Near the telephone – a long way from the child”<sup>14</sup>, as well as a children’s and young people’s helpline 116 111. The workshop allowed participants to get to know the Foundation better, but also to create their own plans for media education workshops for children and young people. Participants also became acquainted with the well-known insight that media education is also a strategy of alternatives, i.e. it not only raises awareness

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<sup>11</sup> Demagog, *Let’s Introduce Ourselves*, <https://demagog.org.pl/en/lets-introduce-ourselves> [accessed: 27.04.2024].

<sup>12</sup> A. Podviazkina, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę, *Niby wiadomo...*, <https://fdds.pl/dzieckowsieci.html> [accessed: 29.04.2024].

<sup>14</sup> Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę, *Blisko telefonu – daleko od dziecka*, 20.02.2024, <https://fdds.pl/co-robimy/kampanie/blisko-telefonu-daleko-od-dziecka-2.html> [accessed: 29.04.2024].

of aspects of internet use that can be dangerous, but also shows young people how to use the internet positively and constructively.<sup>15</sup> In addition, when it comes to online activity, adults tend to be guides primarily for younger children, but they themselves should also be open to guidance in the digital world from older children.<sup>16</sup>

The last point of the programme of the 5<sup>th</sup> Media Education Congress was the participants' visit to FabLab powered by Orange. The Orange Foundation, like the institutions mentioned previously, has been operating in the field of media education in Poland for many years. However, the nature of this visit and the project – FabLab – will not be immediately obvious to the reader. FabLab comprises a series of workshops – carpentry, electronics, sewing, screen printing, and others – in which you can use devices such as 3D printers, laser plotters and CNC milling machines. In this creative space you can take part in workshops or a series of workshops, and do individual projects using the space, tools and the support of experienced educators. What does this have to do with media education? The projects undertaken at FabLab give you the opportunity to develop those skills that belong to the catalogue of media competences, such as creativity, algorithmic thinking and the ability to work together. It turns out that media education does not have to take place in front of a screen and does not always have to be intellectual work. The Congress participants found this out. After two days of intensive intellectual work, the experiences at FabLab were a revitalising change that sparked a surge of creative energy.

From the perspective of someone who has been a member of the PTEM for many years, and a participant in all the Congresses, I can make the claim that media education is developing dynamically, and that it remains, as before, a difficult challenge and an extremely responsible task, although it is always based primarily on grassroots activities and not systemic solutions. The 5<sup>th</sup> Congress will surely inspire many new activities, collaborations and research. Its tangible outcome will be publications, which are currently in preparation.

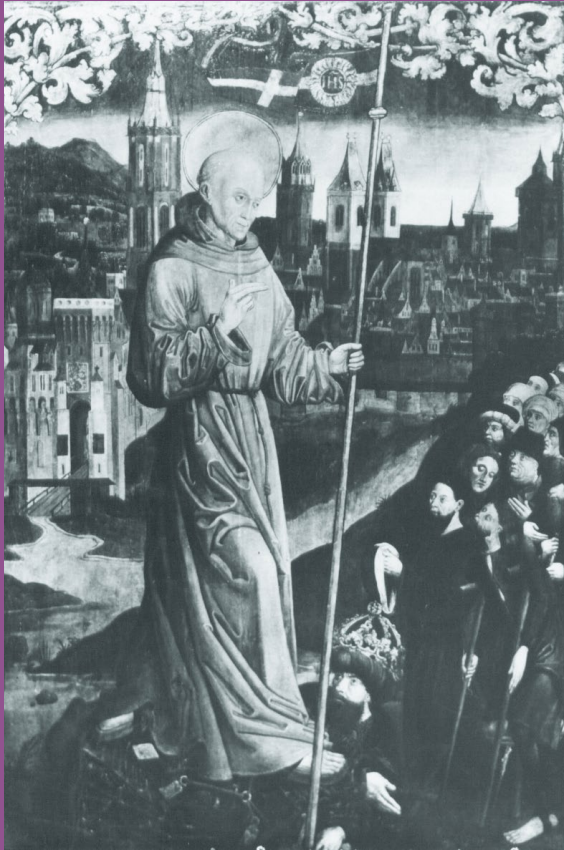
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<sup>15</sup> Statement by Łukasz Wojtasik in: A. Podviazkina, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Statement by Katarzyna Zdanowicz-Cyganiak in: A. Podviazkina, *op. cit.*

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Unknown author, St. John of Capistrano, early 16th C.,  
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Od zakończenia II wojny światowej udało się odzyskać dla polskiej kultury jedynie niewielki odsetek z ponad 500 000 dzieł sztuki zrabowanych przez Niemców z terenu Polski. W ramach propagowanego przez Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego programu popularyzacji najbardziej wartościowych spośród dzieł utraconych, redakcja czasopisma „Państwo i Społeczeństwo” od 2020 roku publikuje jedną reprodukcję w każdym numerze.

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During the Second World War Germans looted more than 500,000 works of art from Polish territory. Over the course of almost 80 years only a small proportion of them has been returned to Poland. As part of a programme aimed at popularizing these lost works of art encouraged by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the editors of *State and Society* decided to print a reproduction of one of these lost masterpieces in every volume of the journal starting from 2020.

<http://lootedart.gov.pl/en>