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The PPR, Systemic Transformation, and New Poland. Opportunity Structures in the Biographical Experience of Senior Social Reformers

Abstract   The paper is based on preliminary results of the analysis of four pilot narrative autobiographical interviews conducted with members of the oldest generation of Polish social innovators (born in the 1930s—early 1950s) working in the human sector area CSOs. In this text, I use the concept of opportunity structures, reflecting over sets of structures which facilitate the professional and personal development of social reformers. I refer mainly to Institutional Opportunity Structures emerging in Poland under the socialist regime, during and post systemic transformation. The leading argument here is that the social innovator's career interrelates with the use of opportunity structures available in a political and economic system regardless of its type and prevalent ideology.

Keywords   Systemic Transformation; Opportunity Structures; Social Reforming; Social Innovators; Third Sector; Human Sector; Helping Professions

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Let me begin with a personal, slightly auto-ethnographic statement about my inspirations underlying the brief analysis presented in this text: while studying biographical interviews of social welfare clients, I observed the relationships between socially excluded people and social policy institutions—the way in which the activities undertaken by welfare professionals influence (or not) their clients' lives, identities, self-esteem, et cetera. I have also been working with a few studies and analyses of social services interventions, and of social workers as an occupational category; which inspired my insights into the attitudes of public sector social workers towards service users.[1] As a sociologist exploring poverty and social exclusion, I have been cooperating both with public institutions and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). In the 90's, I was trained in just such an organization in the area of youth work and practical psychology, and I was working as a youth worker in a small local center run by CSOs. At the same time my husband was an active social actor in the field of alternative education. Thus—due to our personal involvement—I became familiar not only with social innovations, but also with social circles implementing them into the post-transformation reality in Poland. The results of my unstructured observations of non-governmental organizations actively engaged in providing professional help imply that, particularly in the 90's, the opinion was that the "non-governmental" attitude towards clients and the style of work was very different in comparison to reformed or "brand new" public sphere institutions. Social actors in the 3rd sector believed that the good quality and effectiveness of CSOs daily work stemmed from procedures of teamwork and the applied principle of "every-day democracy." Although those CSOs were "not perfect," the program texts of the Polish 3rd sector suggested that their work brought more positive results in clients' lives than interventions undertaken by public welfare agencies (*Elementarz III Sektora* 2005).

In this project (at the moment still "under construction"), I have been dealing with narrations of Polish social reformers and individuals working in CSOs, with reference to their biographical roots, life histories, identities, their drives in social innovation implementation, models of activities, philosophies of work, and professional standards.[2] This scientific undertaking is rooted in traditions of biographical sociology, most of all in the tradition of the structural analysis of the Fritz Schütze School. Already in the 1930s Florian Znaniecki indicated the need for biographical studies on social innovators. He named culture-forming individuals as above-normal deviants. In "Contemporary People and the Civilization of the Future" he wrote: "There is a definite need to undertake thorough studies of deviants using biographical method with special attention given to abnormal deviants who have been scientifically neglected until now. Before exploring biological factors, one should first exhaust all scientific possibilities of capturing deviants as cultural personalities on the basis of their [life]-histories as active participants in civilization in which they live" (Znaniecki 2001:275). Although it can be firmly asserted that undertaking a social role by the reformer stems from one's personality (which constitutes the subject of psychology[3]), the biographical research creates an opportunity to consider social, cultural, and biographical conditions "generating" social innovators. Research of this kind has been attempted in sociology to a limited extent—among resources in English we can indicate studies

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[1] For instance, the results of the study of social contract implementation in a municipal welfare agency in Lodz indicated that social workers not only constructed their relationships with beneficiaries in terms of power and control, but they also perceived the clients as unskillful, demoralized, and pretentious. Moreover, the clients were described and most probably treated as if they were passive objects or "naughty children"—immature, dependent adults (Golczyńska-Grondas and Kretek-Kamińska 2009).

[2] At the moment (May 2019), the project developing towards teamwork is still limited to my individual research activities supported by The Dept. of Sociology of Culture, University of Lodz.

[3] Though Znaniecki himself often referred to issues of personality.

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of the individual's role in social change (Hatcher 2013; Ulate-Sanchez 2014) or a monograph edited by Cnaan and Vinokur-Kaplan (2015) wherein thematic articles show socio-biographical contexts of social innovations. Life stories and biographical contexts are also present in the research of CSO activists and social entrepreneurs (Barendsen and Gardner 2004; Chimiak 2004; 2006; Palska and Lewenstein 2004; Weryński 2008; Wit 2008; Schütze et al. 2012; Chimiak and Iwińska 2015; Alber 2016; Sławecki 2016). The comprehensive account of issues pertaining to biographical conditions can be found in Jadwiga Koralewicz and Hanna Malewska-Peyre's (1998) work about Polish and French social activists. In 2011, Ilona Iłowiecka-Tańska (2011) published a book partly based on in-depth interviews with social change leaders presenting their role in forming the 3rd sector in post-transformation Poland. It is my intention to take it a step further—that is, **to analyze the biographies of people not only engaged socially, but who can also be described as a social activists' elite or better yet, social change leaders, authors of applied, model systematic solutions in the human sector** (broadly defined social work and education are the examples here). It is not only about examining the course of their biographical and professional careers. Fritz Schütze and colleagues (2012) stress that in the CSO narrations, one can find "a hidden biographical background" for a peculiar individual sensitivity towards others and towards social issues.

The main purpose of this article is to reflect on opportunity structures[4] facilitating the professional

and personal development of social reformers. Using both the life histories of social innovators and source texts, I refer here to structures functioning not only during the Polish People's Republic (PPR) period, but also to those which emerged over the years of systemic transformation. The paper is based on preliminary results from the analysis of four pilot narrative autobiographical interviews conducted with representatives of the oldest generation of Polish social innovators.[5] The narrators, born in the late 1930s—early 1950s, initiated their reforming activities in the PPR; hence, they can be addressed as the creators and co-creators of alternative society structures during the communist regime and 3rd sector builders in the period of systemic transformation[6] (Leś 2000; Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011). It must be underlined here that, "sociologically," norms and expectations of "the social clock" would render Polish senior citizens professionally inactive. However, contrary to old age stereotypes, the narrators in their 70s and 80s appear to be active team leaders, advisers, mentors, and role models in their communities. At the same time, psychologically, the narrators are at the stage of their lives which enhances their tendency to summarize whole *Gestalts* of individual biography by means of identity and biographical work.

Structures of Opportunity—Some Notions

The term "structures of opportunities" appeared in interpretative sociology at the turn of the 1950's and 1960's in the analyses of youth gangs functioning in the United States of America (Cloward and Ohlin 1961). Since then it has quickly risen in popularity among subdisciplines of sociology and consecutively in other social sciences. The concept relates to the most classic debate in sociology: structure vs. agency/choice or opportunity vs. constraints (e.g., Racko 2008; Loudon 2010; Cullen 2015) and is used to indicate collective activities. In particular, the term refers to: "constraints, possibilities, and threats that originate outside the mobilizing group, but affect its chances of mobilizing and/or realizing its collective interests" (Koopmans 1999:96 as cited in Suh 2001:441).[7] Opportunity structures present on various levels of social life (predominantly "macro and meso" structures) can be examined in the research of individual cases including studies of particular life-histories, as well as phenomena and social processes reflected in them. They seem also to assume the shape of a "surprise box"—since political opportunity structures determine institutional, discursive, or individual opportunity structures.

In sociology, the concept of political opportunity structures (POS) appears predominantly in the analyses of dynamics and the transformation of social movements (Jeydel 2000; Suh 2001; Loudon 2010; Cullen 2015; Gleiss 2017). In general, they are described as (consistent) aspects, components, and institutional arrangements, but also as dimensions of the political system or the political environment that have an effect on social groups and movements ability to emerge, mobilize, and undertake their actions (Tarrow 1998 as cited in Bondaroff and Burke 2014; Jeydel 2000; Giugni 2009 as cited in Gleiss 2017). Among the elements of POS one can infer "the level of electoral stability, level of unity among elites, mass opinion, and powers granted to party leaders" (Jeydel 2000:15), as well as the degree of openness of international institutions, the presence of influential allies, and changes in political alignments and conflicts (Bondaroff and Burke 2014). POS are also characterized in terms of dimensions both based on simple dichotomies (i.e., institutional vs. cultural dimensions of political opportunities) and more elaborate, empirically based typologies (the relative openness/closure of an institutionalized political system, the stability/instability of the set of elite alignments undergirding a polity; the presence/absence of elite allies and a state's capacity and propensity for repression) (Gamson and Meyer 1996 as cited in Gleiss 2017; McAdam 1996:27 as cited in Gleiss 2017:234). National political structures or otherwise national culture create historically specific opportunity structures (Racko 2008). Concurrently, transnational opportunity structures are identified on a macro level as a result of unification and the process of globalization (e.g., Cullen 2015).

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[4] The concept of opportunity structures appears to be one of the most interesting descriptive categories in the biographical conditioning analysis of social innovators.

[5] Social reformers constituting researched population come from CSOs. Schütze, Schröder-Wildhagen, Nagel, and Treichel (2012) distinguish three cohort generations of CSO workers functioning right now in Europe: 1) older generation of "grandparents" who experienced the Second World War and "eclipse of humanity," 2) generations of "parents" growing up in a politically divided Europe, some of whom experienced "their more or less total seclusion within the state-socialistic societies" (Schütze et al. 2012:155); 3) generation of "grandchildren" born in a stabilized European culture. However, biographical experiences of the narrators place them closer to both grandparents and parents on this continuum.

[6] Narrators comprise of people with tertiary education (graduate and undergraduate) living in large Polish cities.

[7] Similarly to other terms of social sciences, here we are dealing with a considerable number of definitions and with the difficulty to draw sharp logical boundaries of the phenomenon to be defined. For example, Bondaroff and Burke, following the notions by Rootes, Joachim, and Swindler, state: "The literature on political opportunity structure generally takes the position that: [p]olitical actors make history, but they do not do so in circumstances of their own making. Instead, they encounter constraints and are presented with opportunities configured by the institutional arrangements and the prevailing patterns of political power which are the inescapable contexts of political action. There has recently been a tendency to refer to these contexts of action as 'political opportunity structures.'" (Rootes 1999 as cited in Bondaroff and Burke 2014:168; Swindler 1986, Joachim 2003 as cited in Bondaroff and Burke 2014).

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Opportunity structures function within the framework of institutions and formal organizations. With this in mind, one can infer: access to institutional recourses, centralized leadership ensuring durability and continuity of actions, institutionalized theories and tactics (i.e., repetitive projects as an educational and mobilizing "tool," as well as an identity information carrier) together with the creation of activist subculture (Reger 2018; see also Loudon 2010). Linked to both POS and institutional opportunity structures are discursive opportunity structures (DOS; also transnational discursive structures)—pre-given and fixed structures "articulating meaning in new ways," which cover political and legal texts, socio-cultural discourses and mass-media discourses (Koopmans and Statham 1999 as cited in Gleiss 2017:235; Motta 2015). Thus, the assumption is that social activities are performed in two kinds of spaces—the political or institutional space and the discursive or cultural one. The key issues are subjected to "discursive struggle" relating to their different understandings claimed by participants of public life. DOS generate foundation for social valuing processes—policies and ideas, proposals and solutions are assessed in terms of sensibility, pragmatism, legitimating, et cetera. Therefore, "discursive struggle" influences not only reconceptualized meanings, but also attitudes and behaviors" (Koopmans and Statham 1999 as cited in Gleiss 2017:235). It can be said that it is POS together with DOS that shape historically specific opportunity structures. Thus, it is these structures that specify the broadest frame of actions which can be executed by groups or individuals for whom social change—including the introduction of reforms and innovations—is the aim. As Girts Racko (2008) emphasizes, in times of

transformation the battle is either about the transformation or preservation of historical opportunity structures.

On an individual level opportunity structures result from the functioning of primary groups in which an individual participates, especially family units or other social environments. They are treated, though, as external determinants towards social actors (external opportunity structures, i.e., Loudon 2010). The question of the functioning of the internal opportunity structures, which could be understood, for example, in the categories of internalized cognitive constructs and the disposition for activities associated with agency or resilience, is debatable.[8] It should be emphasized that, especially on the individual level, the use of opportunity structures may involve not only certain benefits, but also costs, since it is related to the socio-economic status of a person.[9] It can be assumed that every individual biography is uniquely marked with its own specific configuration of opportunity structures ingrained in dynamically changing reality (along with the course of life, historical processes, and structural factors) (Roberts 2009; Staunton 2015; Thompson 2017).

Opportunity structures (as well as constraints constituting their reverse) are dynamic, relational constructs. They are shaped on all levels of social life through convergences resulting not only from historical processes, but institutional, individual, and collective behaviors as well. Opportunity structures are characterized in relation to their innate properties which affect social actors' capabilities and their *modus operandi*. Open opportunity structures facilitate and promote human activities encouraging social actors responses to "favorable openings in the social structure," increasing the impact of people, groups, and social movements exerted over institutions whereas closed ones—constrain such activities through differentiated barriers: means, techniques, or strategies of discouragement (Reger 2018:560; Tarrow 1998 as cited in Bondaroff and Burke 2014; Jeydel 2000; Suh 2001; Gleiss 2017). Transformations of opportunity structures are conditioned by a variety of factors, but processes and agents maintaining them can remain the same (Roberts 2009). Particular importance is given here to actions of individuals defined as active agents interactively changing structures of opportunity or "to exercise individual agency within their reshaped opportunities" (Roberts 2009:358). Transformations of opportunity structures can be linked to the introduction of new, absent from the discourse until now, themes, appearance of new forms of actions, or the emergence of counter-movements against those proposed by social actors who make use of current structures[10] (Bondaroff and Burke 2014:168; see also Thompson 2017; Reger 2018).

Opportunity structures are subject to interpretation and framing grounded in cultural and structural-

ly based "filters." As Doowon Suh (2001:442, 443) states: "change becomes an 'opportunity' only if it is perceived as such by movement agents," and indicates that only apparent opportunity can be described as casual. A specific way of perceiving and interpreting structures themselves and chances for success linked to taking advantage of them determines if or how they are to be used by social actors. Some structures can be taken advantage of only in certain phases of the life cycle, which was already noticed in 1960.[11] In addition, opportunity structures can be subject to either collective or individual interpretations due to historical or biographical events (Gamson and Meyer 1996, McAdam 1996 as cited in Gleiss 2017).[12] Such a conceptualization of opportunity structures sets them clearly in the domain of cultural phenomena and it seems hardly justified to differentiate between "objective" structural political opportunities and "subjective" cultural opportunities. In certain political, institutional, and biographical configurations, opportunities fluctuate, open, or close. History indicates that especially in times of systemic change both processes can be noted—simultaneous closure and opening of political and institutional opportunity structures throughout all levels of social structure and social categories. Characteristics of such transformations may be final and irreversible.

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[8] It seems that this term scarcely exists in sociological literature. For example, Catherine Begnoche Smith (1979) approaches internal opportunities structures as internal settings of formal organizations, not in terms of individual attribute.

[9] That is, Cloward and Ohlin (1961:85), commenting Merton's notions on equal chances, state that: "the middle-class person can take advantage of educational opportunities despite their costs," whereas the educational career of the working class child entails significant effort on behalf of its family, also financial one. It is elaborated further: "opportunities must be available to those who seek them" (Cloward and Ohlin 1961:102).

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[10] For example, anti-hunt movement causes counter protest from hunters objecting against being portrayed as killers and murderers of the animals (i.e., Bondaroff and Burke 2014).

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[11] "Some youths become hoodlums instead of businessmen, not because they lack the ability to succeed legitimately…but because they find out too late the relationship between school adjustment and [upward social mobility]" (Toby 1958 as cited in Cloward and Ohlin 1961:101)

[12] In the analysis of social movements the concept of cultural framing is used here. It is defined in terms of conscious, collective strategic efforts to construct shared understandings of the world and of the groups that will stimulate and legitimize supra-individual activities (which also means negotiation of meanings) (McAdam et al. as cited in Suh 2001:442; Mc Addam 1994 as cited in Gleiss 2017).

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The principal argument of the article is that the social innovator's career interrelates with the use of opportunity structures available in a political and economic system, regardless of the type of the system and prevalent ideology. Social reformers are not only active beneficiaries, but also creators of political and institutional opportunity structures. It has to be mentioned that systemic transformation of the 1990s, on a number of levels, not only opened opportunity structures for social reforming, but caused certain structures to disappear, inevitably, as well.

Opportunity Structures in Biographies of Senior Social Reformers

Witold, Zenon, Zofia, and Żaneta—narrators telling their stories in the project—are reformers embedded within the social world of human service professions at the grass-root level structures of both the alternative society of People's Poland and post transformation Poland. In the light of the dichotomic categorization of social activists formulated by Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre (1998), who identified ideologically oriented and pragmatically oriented individuals, they represent the second category. Representing the latter are people working in micro and meso social worlds implementing their ideas in helping professions and alternative education. However, according to their clearly defined systems of values, they also shape public politics on the macro level.

Senior social reformers are witnesses and co-creators of contemporary history of post-war Poland. The origins of lives of the oldest narrators are painfully marked in various ways by the shadow of

World War II which sometimes dramatically shaped their childhood. "Impossible to forget images" anchored themselves in Zofia's memory: as a young girl she witnessed Gestapo soldiers killing Jewish children, she recalls her father, "a tough man," crying on the day Janusz Korczak was transported out of the ghetto to Auschwitz. She herself survived the execution carried out by German soldiers on the patients of the insurgent hospital, which was to be evacuated the following day. During the post-uprising mass exodus of civilians she watched burning houses, the suffering of people and animals. She lost her grandfather during the Volhynia Massacre[13] and her beloved brother in the Warsaw Uprising. Her grandmother, a resident of areas incorporated into the Third Reich, died in "despicable conditions" evicted from her flat because she refused to sign the Reich list. When Żaneta was born, the front line passed next to her town. She grew up in the Auschwitz vicinity, "about which little was known in those days. People kept silent. So it goes. In the shadows, of smoke, I grew up." Both Zofia and Żaneta "were lucky"—their parents survived and they grew up with them. Zenon's family fell apart—the mother, a teenage soldier of the underground state, was unable to take on the roles necessary for functioning in an adult life as a result of war traumas—the narrator first spent childhood and adolescence with relatives and later in care and children group homes. Only Witold, the youngest of the informants, mentions the war in the context of the loss of the pre-war, nationalized craftsmen's grandparents' es-

[13] For example, Portnov, Andrii. 2016. "Clash of Victimhoods: The Volhynia Massacre in Polish and Ukrainian Memory." Retrieved September 20, 2019 (https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/clash-of-victimhood-1943-volhynian-massacre-in-polish-and-ukrainian-culture/).

tate, one of whom believed that "this [system] would one day turn on itself." The period of adolescence of the narrators and the time of their early adulthood is the period after the October Thaw and the years 1960 and 1970.

People's Republic of Poland—The Structures of Opportunities

Although the post-war history of the Polish 3rd sector in the literature descriptions begins with the systemic transformation of 1989, it must be stressed that cultural and social capital, which was used in the establishing of its structures, was not created in a social vacuum. Also in the times of PRL, let's not forget—a highly oppressive state, there existed structures of opportunities shaping individual biographies, so that after 1989 innovators were ready to form the social reality in new political and economic conditions. First of all, there was a living practice of organic and "social" work at the base-line level. Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre (1998) indicate that these traditions were rooted in environmental ethos referring to three basic themes: 1) activity for regaining and maintaining independence of Poland, 2) patron's missions of the landowners class and intelligence, and 3) organic work for the country—raising the standard of living, hygiene, education, et cetera. This last thread, which can be described in terms of modernization, is the most interesting, considering the content of this article and the narrators' accomplishments. Secondly, the Polish People's Republic itself, although not to assess the historical and social consequences of this period, was a great modernization project implemented in the post-war years (e.g., Zysiak 2018), whose declarative goal was to rebuild

the devastated country and shape a new social order—creating a space for making various innovative actions (not necessarily consistent with socialist ideology, especially in post-Stalin decades). Thirdly, the People's Republic of Poland, "the merriest barracks in the socialist camp" was not a closed system. Despite the Iron Curtain between Poland and the "West"—the flow of information and ideas was possible to a limited extent even before the October Thaw and became clearly visible at the turn of 1960 and 1970. The emphasis on mass participation in culture favored the intellectual development of people interested, for example, through access to relatively cheap cultural goods—publications, cultural events. Even in the most difficult years of Stalinism, there could have been circumstances conducive to the acquisition of skills by teenagers involved in social life.

In relations of the narrators concerning life in the PPR, there appear sets of structures of opportunities within which their training towards biographical careers of social innovators took place. These setups were related to: 1) functioning in **youth organizations**, 2) the use of **educational opportunities**, 3) participation in **counter-cultural movements**, 4) participation in **democratic opposition and alternative society structures**, and 5) the use of **opportunities existing on the outskirts of the system and its institutions**. It should be emphasized that these structures of opportunities were available primarily for people living in big cities; even if they did not originate from intelligentsia, they participated in those social circles.

Annot. 1. All narrators in the period of adolescence and early adulthood have been active for some time

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in **youth organizations**—the Polish Youth Union (ZMP), the Polish Scouting (ZHP),[14] or the Union of Polish Students (ZSP). As a high school student, Zofia, enchanted with slogans of struggle for peace and social justice, signed up for ZMP and for a certain period of time was a very committed activist of this organization. Mocked during the meeting, when, as a practicing Catholic, she put the thesis about the cohesion of the idea of communism and Christianity, then urged to become an informer by the communist party activists (aiming at digging out dirt on one of the lecturers teaching "true" Polish history[15]), before college Baccalaureate examination she resigned from ZMP. Zofia, Żaneta, and Witold were also acting in scouting organization lead, to some extent, by pre-war scouting staff[16]:

Stalin died. Year 1956 [came]. And suddenly, it turned out that we could form a scouting troop…that there were such wonderful people among us...who were scouts before the war, during the war…I will never forget how we started to create scouting troops...we made a scouts' den [in the school basement] with our own hands...The first camps, wow, it's an amazing experience…We had to pitch our tents and these were heavy tents, military ones...We had to construct our beds, make them, build a latrine, and so on...It was again a period in my life, when I was getting something, well, I got an inheritance of these values, ideals, truth, respected by scouts, that is: "Fatherland, science, virtue", and initiatives for the benefit of others and care for younger ones...These nursery schools in various villages, crèches, day care centers for children...It was very important to me. It is still very important today, as we are talking about social innovations. To go to camp in summer, we had to work all year to earn some money, because of poverty… So we collected scrap iron, various waste, we took it to those scrap yards. Well, we put aside funds there, financial means to go somewhere…usually somewhere close. And then, we were already involved in the initiatives, some wider projects: the rally at Grunwald[17]...we were also discovering [the] Trail of Eagles' Nests[18]... It was in this project that our activity was combined with the benefit for the local environment, historical education, although it was then called differently. And also nature education was very intense. Well, and community, great brotherhood, the evening came, sitting by the fire and singing. [SIB01 Żaneta]

Collected data reveal the formative significance of the structures of opportunities created by formal organizations, that is: task training, internalization of values and norms related to independence, responsibility, community formation, discovering the meaning of social ties, or—under "favorable conditions"—lessons in democracy:

In any case, at some point...we had just decided that we wanted to introduce democracy…"We want to elect a squad leader."…the team leader said: "Choose him"…he handed it [responsibility] over to us. We chose Antoni Zieliński, who…was afterwards a member of [the name of the opposition organization], you know, he founded [name of the underground publishing house]...Then there was the question of the name of the squad, so we have chosen a very innovative name…Our team was called "US" ((laughs))…not Eagle Feathers, well, yeah..."US." [SIB04 Witold]

It must be underlined here that participation in socialist youth organizations could also confront future reformers with the constraint of making choices and withdrawing from actions incompatible with internalized values:

[P]eople in power, however, realized that the scouts could run into contradictions [with rules imposed by the communists] and managed to use the back door to smuggle in indoctrination…And so you had to slowly withdraw from this scouting, even. There was no acceptance in me to change the method of pedagogy to which I was attached very much…Although sentiment and memories, very, very strongly got stuck in my psyche. [SIB01 Żaneta]

Annot. 2. An additional set of opportunities that emerged in the biographies described here are associated with **participation in educational institutions**, primarily **at the level of higher education.**[19] It is worth recalling here that despite the apparent openness of the system during socialism (free of charge studies, preferential system for youth of working class and peasant origin), only a few high school graduates took up tertiary education.[20] This elite also included the narrators, students of the humanities in the 1960s and 1970s. The formative influence of tertiary education is the most apparent in the interview with Zenon—for a time a student at the polytechnics, who undertook subsequent humanistic studies in a special "empty year" of recruitment (the result of school reform and the creation of 8-grade primary schools instead of 7-grade schools). At the time, "all remnants" set to the entry exams, at the age of graduating students, definitely more mature than their colleagues from older years, which established a special position of that year students amidst academic staff, thus motivating them to intensive efforts:

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[14] Polish scouts played a huge role in the underground structures during World War II, and after its completion they joined the reconstruction of the country. The Polish Scouting Association (created after the First World War) in its "pre-war form" was appropriated by the communist authorities. Although formally in existence, in the history of Polish Scouts, 1948 is put as the year of the liquidation of the union taken over by the activists of the Polish Youth Union (ZMP) and cut off from the idea of pre-war scouts. In 1956, the ZHP was officially reactivated, restoring partially the Scouts traditions. Pre-war instructors returned and became active, trained the younger generation. However, in 1958, Polish United Worker's Party again took control over the association (History of the Scouts; see: https://zhp.pl/ozhp/historia-harcerstwa/. Retrieved April 18, 2019).

[15] The contents transmitted as part of school history lessons, especially in totalitarian regimes, are subject to ideological constraints—transformation and instrumentalization of the past, knowledge of which is supposed to support the functioning of the system (see, e.g., Kaźmierska and Pałka 2018). The "Marxist version of history" was coercively used in the Eastern Bloc Countries, especially in Poland most evident was the manipulation of the Polish-German and Polish-Russian relations, especially the history of World War II (Wawrzyniak 2005 as cited in Kaźmierska and Pałka 2018). Some of the history teachers—risking persecution by the communist authorities—passed a different picture of historical events to their students, consient with the collective memory of at least the intelligentsia and simultaneously contradictory to the official version.

[16] Cf. Palska and Lewenstein (2004).

[17] Scouting rallies held annually at Grunwald commemorate the anniversary of the victorious battle of Polish-Lithuanian military forces over Teutonic Knights in 1410.

[18] The route between Cracow and Czestochowa leading along the towns where are the ruins of Polish settlements and castles from the beginnings of Polish statehood.

[19] Only Witold talks about the importance of secondary school, or actually contact with a prominent high school teacher as a formative significant other, and the value of peer relationships.

[20] In the work published in 1963, Jan Szczepański wrote about a few percent of the first-graders of primary schools taking up university studies at the end of their educational career. According to the Act of 1958, higher education institutions should ensure "such class composition and the moral and political image of the university youth so that they can best fulfill their tasks of educating and shaping/molding people's intelligentsia" (Szczepański 1963:45). According to data provided by Szczepański, for example, in 1959/1960, 12.6% of high school graduates took up studies. In the first years of socialism, recruitment procedures were successfully manipulated so as to equalize the chances of youth of working and peasant origin constituting in the 1950s and 1960s about 50% of the students. In the following years, this figure systematically decreased.

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[There was] something called individual studies… If you looked at my index, you would be shocked because, first of all, I have twice as many subjects as there was a regular student quota, secondly, more than half of these are doctoral seminars...or some postgraduate [ones]...I was a member of four research teams...I was engaged very deeply in scientific activities ((with a smile)). I made money in this way, that…I was conducting research... for doctoral theses...S. [name of a colleague], which in turn was an absolvent of mathematics, we were the main... statistical and methodological consultants, at that time we both completed a postgraduate seminar under [names of professors], leadership—multivariate analysis, so I have, I have a powerful education…methodological and statistical. [SIB02 Zenon]

The years of studying provide enormous **opportunities to learn with and from outstanding teachers and mentors** who became significant others, and even "professional" biographical carers shaping aspirations and professional identities of the narrators: "it changed my life, because I went to meet him [the name of the lecturer]." Żaneta and Zenon also took on the role of active participants in social organizations supported by the communist authorities—they joined the Union of Polish Students (ZSP), quickly taking over the functions of the chairmen of the university/faculty councils.

Annot. 3. **The counter-culture trends** from the West reached not only the PPR, but also other countries of the Eastern Bloc,[21] "seducing" young people

with the ideas of freedom, authentic culture, and community. As Aldona Jawłowska (1988) writes, in the 1960s, ideological manifestations of youth were based on the slogans of changing the world through the reconstruction of oneself and the immediate environment. The change was to take place not through the destruction of macrostructures, but by blasting the whole system through alternative organizations "pushing into all the 'slots' of the prevailing organization of social life" (Jawłowska 1988:20). Humanistic psychology has been developing in the grey socialist reality, and the traditions of other (previously considered incompatible with communist ideology) orientations of "western" psychology were restored.[22] Alternative student theaters appeared and vanished.[23] They were inspired by the idea of "active culture" and the theater of Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory. The seeds of the future Buddhist sanghas were germinating, and the hippie contesting system shocked the "decent" citizens of the PPR with their looks and behavior.[24] During

their studies Zenon and Witold functioned in communities similar to the hippie movement, but clearly situated on its outskirts:

They were not exactly hippie communes...We were learning therapy and...and we were working...I worked with [name of professor]...since the beginning of the second year [of studies]...At the same time, many things have happened…It is difficult for me to calculate how many hours there were in the day time... because I think close to fifty hours... Well, because I lived in a commune, where every day…in the evening, there were some activities... structured ones. There was either a vernissage or... paratheatrical activities or a community or a therapeutic group or dances…Of course, everyone flocked down together in the evening because everyone was working very hard...Having completed the first year of studies, I had my first [therapeutic] group of patients, just like I am thinking that…back then...the Earth was spinning much slower ((laughing))...We dreamed that maybe in ten years time we will have our own clinic, after five years each of us had a clinic…Life flew so much faster, you know, than imagination. [SIB02 Zenon]

Fascinated by Grotowski and acknowledging him as one of his masters, Witold[25] was also involved with student alternative theater; using the term coined by Stefan Morawski, he can be included in

the category of "by-artists" (*przy-artyści*) (Jawłowska 1988:8-9)—sympathizers and friends of the theater stemming from the circles of young intellectuals, informal co-authors of performances, reviewers, advisers. Witold regards his ties with both theatrical trends as one of the most formative biographical experiences:

I got into [name of the student theater]...You could get there, there was an exam, you had to audition on stage...they said, "You're totally a rookie, you have to earn your stripes here." And it was extremely formative for me…I also signed up to the group which was led by [the name of the creator], then he was a kind of a mentor to me for a long time, somebody to whom I dropped in to talk about life, get angry, you know, such a good adult figure, so much smarter, wiser man, it was amazing, how I used to roam around this theater, [the title of a play] I watched...fifty times or forty…from every side...I then thought that I would be a theater man, we would do different happenings and ventures...Even for a long time, as I was learning therapy and this, and so on, I did physical activities, pantomime classes, paratheatrical activities, therapeutic for patients, but along these lines. [SIB04 Witold]

Annot. 4. All of the narrators actively participated in the actions of **the political opposition** to a different extent, going through a specific training in empathy and practical skills. The narrators were involved in anti-system activities already as young adults. Witold, Zofia, and Żaneta recall their active participation in the events of March 1968—the student protests in particular, and, most of all, the deportation of people of Jewish origin, "a period of shame in the history of Poland":

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[21] The socialist countries represented a specific type of industrial society with features independent of the political system (Toffler 1980). In the 1970s, faith in technological progress be-

came less and less pronounced and disillusionment with "favors of a large industrial civilization" was growing (Toffler 1980; Jawłowska 1988).

[22] For example, Hanna Strzelecka-Jaworska (2007) describes the return to the tradition of analytic psychology that took place in 1960 in Poland thanks to the efforts of Jan Malewski. Malewski, despite the censorship and blockade of scientific exchange with the West, managed to reach psychoanalytic literature. Following his experiences from scholarship in Prague he "smuggled" ideas of psychoanalysis into state medical care system.

[23] In 1970-80 there were several hundred student theaters in Poland (annually, on average, their number fluctuated around 200). Paradoxically, their functioning was possible thanks to the patronage of the (Socialist) Union of Polish Students, an organization involved in dealings with the communist authorities (Jawłowska 1988; Grupińska and Wawrzyniak 2011).

[24] Polish hippies appeared as a collective in 1967. The hippie movement was anti-systemic also in the political dimension: "The Polish hippies reminded the authorities that the Polish nation is still not looking in the direction in which it should. He breaks out of the ideological field of gravity; he is still looking for his center outside the devised orbits in the Kremlin" (Sipowicz 2008:94).

[25] "Because the second current, extremely important, it was Grotowski...We went to 'Apocalypsis cum figuris' [one of the most famous performances of the Laboratory Theater] to Wrocław...And what was going on for me was like an encounter with the Absolute…After all, we were transported into a different dimension...I just stood there, with my friend, we were thunderstruck, we were…just shivering...When Grot came to Warsaw...we were such groupies, sat with him in the hotel, went to all meetings, I admired his way, actually, you can say—I took something in from him…this respect to people, that there are no stupid questions" (SIB04 Witold).

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Suddenly it transpired that I have Jewish friends…my closest friend was a Jew...and suddenly…his father was fired, his mother is in trouble, he tries to wrap his mind around [hmm] his Jewishness and I just, I was ashamed that I'm Polish…there was this, from home [preconception], you know, "And like a Jew about an empty store"…such anti-Semitic comments...His [the friend's] suffering just hurt me, you know, too close to the bone...Suddenly my friends started to leave, forced by their parents, forced by the situation…it was as if you were tearing away a piece of your heart...[In] [19]69..., Antoni [a friend from scouting] approaches me, says: "Listen, the anniversary of 1968 is coming… Are you in?" "I'm in. What is it?" You just have to throw leaflets to the crowd in the city, remind them of this anniversary…I organized [people in] five pairs. The system was as follows…you only have a leaflet and glue…and I have a stack of leaflets. You just hold one, you go, and you stick it and leave. If they catch you, you have nothing [in your hands]…I follow you and when I see there is nothing happening [no danger], then we meet again and I give you another leaflet…there was all this methodology. [SIB04 Witold][26]

This oppositional activism is most evident in the biography of Zofia who, after the October Thaw, was one of the initiators of the ZMP denouement. She defended her MA thesis as a twenty-one-year-old ("everything was happening so fast after the war") and became a school teacher. Her early career of school teacher rapidly ended in being blackballed (getting a "wolf ticket")—she refused to agree to the

demands of the Polish United Workers' Party secretary, who pressed her to change the final grades assigned by her to her students (high school graduates expressing views incompatible with the communist ones)[27] to insufficient. In the years 1956-89 she participated in many anti-system goings-on. During the uprising in Hungary she helped collect blood sent to fighters, participated in a network of help for Poles returning to the country who had been laid off from Siberian camps. As mentioned above, she took part in student protests in 1968, actively got involved in helping workers injured during the Radom strikes in 1976 and co-ran one of the underground publishing houses. In the Solidarity Carnival, she became one of the experts in the field of independent education. She did not give up her involvement with the opposition despite brutal repercussions from the Security Service. For many years, Witold actively cooperated with the opposition, performing tasks for them (distribution of independent publishing bulletins, conducting observations, and social research). Żaneta, a girl who dreamed of a career as a politician, quickly withdrew from attempts at political activity: "there was always a beginning to make, and then I kept on coming across... a blank wall of discord, a concession of a moral nature." She survived the time of professional drift, for some time working as a journalist. From the context of the interview it appears that she was keenly engaged with the future political elites of the new Poland. Zenon also mentions his active role in preparing opposition

candidates for the June elections in 1989, which indicates his engagement. The activities and even the acquaintances themselves in social networks and circles created by the political opposition of the PPR during the systemic transformation will constitute access to symbolic and economic resources, as well as the possibility of creating neoliberal institutional opportunity structures.[28]

Annot. 5. Already in the 1970s and 1980s, adepts of professional help structures, Zenon and Witold, engaged themselves in activities that can be described as innovative professional work.[29] Having completed their internships in institutions run by their mentors, they (co-)created teams that in their own innovative way worked with so-called difficult youth and/or psychiatric patients. These undertakings animated social activities in local neighborhoods, establishing centers and even schools. From interviews, it appears that within the framework of innovative professional work in the socialist regime, **the institutional structures of opportunities and discursive structures existing at the outskirts**

of the system or even **shadow opportunity structures**[30] (constituting the invisible basis for actions) were used there.

The work of reformers in People's Poland can paradoxically be described as a "joyful creativity" or ingenuity combined with "scheming." In order to introduce innovative solutions, all possible ways were sought out: coalitions with like-minded professionals were formed and inventive actions were skillfully "smuggled" to formal institutions. Allies were sought in ministries and institutions, the officials' ignorance, as well as "gaps" in law and ideology were used to communicate with decision-makers: "it was such a contraband. It was not possible to 'do' upbringing, because the upbringing was to be socialist, but the therapy could be done." One could also use hospital set-up to run desired school activities, out of which more complex work systems or neighborhood club networks grew:

I began to deal with pulling people out of the drug addiction, home rehab…different things like that. And at some point…there [was] a professor S. at the moment, retired, the head of the hygiene clinic… And he had a small building...upstairs there were

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[26] For Zofia and Żaneta, the participation in March events brought about the repression of the communist secret service. As for Witold, militia "got him" later, when, as a student of a Catholic university, he illegally distributed Leszek Kolakowski's "Thesis on Hope and Hopelessness."

[27] In the justification of the work ban, which she received from the director of the facility, it was written that she: "educates young people in the spirit of fideism and enjoys the adoration of young people because she favors their lowest instincts." Zofia became a doctoral student and an assistant researcher at one of Polish universities.

[28] According to Palska and Lewenstein (2004), social activists who were active in political opposition in the PPR can be characterized as individuals strongly oriented towards social reforms.

[29] The concept of innovative professional work comes from Katarzyna Waniek who follows Everett Hughes' notions on professional work understood as a series of actions undertaken by individuals with theoretical expertise and long-lasting practical experience socially recognized as experts in their vocations. Innovative professional work is defined here as a series of novel interactional and communicative activities performed by social reformers in social worlds of human services towards the others defined as students, wards, clients, service users, or beneficiaries. It is the foundation of social innovations as the first stage of implementing novel, systemic solution oriented towards solving social problems and fulfilling social needs ("Innovative professional work in different logics of power. A comparative qualitative study on social worlds of reformers before and after 1989 in Poland and Eastern Germany" 2018—project in evaluation procedures of international grant contest).

[30] I would like to thank Magdalena Rek-Woźniak for the concept of shadow opportunity structures. They are depicted in the interviews in the example of the financing of Polish multi-annual research and implementation programs from funds subsidized by the US government as part of the settlement of the grain loan (which was commonly known information). Yet, during the transformation period, it was said that these funds were at the disposal of the CIA supporting the activities of Polish pro-democratic circles, to which the American services included, among others, new therapeutic trends. One may also put forward the thesis that—apart from the shadow opportunity structures—there are dirty opportunity structures—as an example it is possible to give funding for socially approved activities from means of illegal sources or crime. We would therefore deal here with the innovations in the classical Mertonian sense.

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some empty rooms…and an attic. And we [a group of young therapists] went in and started talking to him… [that] you know [we want to] take care of these young people, who are senselessly on drugs, help them to get out. And I just do not have [enough] words of appreciation for him, that he just said to such a gang: "So, I am giving you this attic and…just go on." It was not that, you know, we worked for him…[Later on], at some point, our children did not get into school… so we went to [professor] S., we say: "Wouldn't it be possible to piece together some school here?" And he says: "Well, why not? We'll use hospital set-up for classes."[31] [SIB004 Witold]

The use of institutional, PRL opportunity structures was associated with **dilemmas regarding the definition of the situation and the social roles** assigned by the system:

I suddenly became a director in the education…we are full of enthusiasm, and finally we won [got our own center]…I have to hire people full-time, we will just do our job. At that time, there was such [a supervisory] institution [with] a well-known financial manager…And as the director, I had to report to her…I walk in, long hair, you know a little bit, slack, well: "Can I help you?" no ((giggle)), and I say that my name is Witold W., in connection with this center [name] which is to be opened. "But, this… Aaaaa, welcome. sir, director!" And I turned around because I thought someone came in. And…suddenly such goosebumps

on my back, I say: "Damn, she is talking to me! I am a director in the education ((with excitement))) it is impossible!" [SIB004 Witold]

Similar **cognitive dilemmas and interactional problems** in relations with people representing the alien social world for them were experienced by representatives of socialist authorities. And it was them who had a final word in the fate of innovative programs. If they decided that the project could pose a threat to the public or simply their personal interests, they undertook formal or informal actions to close them down:

Each year we celebrated…the holiday of the residential area…[The idea of] festivities which [shocked] the board [of the socialist housing cooperative]…They were completely stunned…it was of bigger dimension than the festival of "Trybuna Ludu" [communist daily] near the Palace of Culture, only that the celebrations…under the Palace of Culture cost millions of zlotys, and that…everything…the residents did it themselves…Asked if they could come to our meeting… Then it turned out that they had cash prizes and medals for us…They came—and they were witnesses of the scandal, [because] I said that I would be only a guest [during the feast]…but, of course, I was chipping in ((laughs)). And, of course, our team rolled over me like a lawn mower…Suddenly, they saw a bunch of people, who, with no inhibitions whatsoever, don't take any prisoners. And also that—without any respect, you understand, I almost got my head bitten off, that ((laughs)) that it was that. And they did not say a word…they did not acknowledge that these medals and bonuses were of their doings, but in the evening the secretary of the party came to me, a bit

woozy…in exasperation and said, "Mister, you must come to us."…I knew that I could not refuse him, although we have never been hanging out with them… That…all the apparatchiks and all of those secret service thugs, and they…said, "This is communism, what are you doing"…They meant…what… Marx and Engels went about…in their postulates, that honesty, openness, authenticity, yes? Full social control, yes… they thought beforehand that "I, head honcho, run the show with an iron fist."…And it was a matter of how to seduce me… They saw that this team is totally uncontrolled…that…I only have a chance [standing] if I manage to convince people to do something…Keep in mind, it was half a year before, you know, "Solidarity."…And since that day on it started, some massive obstruction in our work and so on, so it went. That if girls, for example, went on parental leave, then they lost their jobs and so on, that's how it was. Anyway… it turned out that eighty percent of our problems were not problems with the implementation of this program, only with the justification. And we thought that…it makes no sense at all. And, well, we moved away. [SIB02 Zenon]

Towards the end of the socialist period, opportunity structures on the outskirts of the system continued to open. Leaders introducing innovative solutions in education and work with children and youth or people socially excluded just after transformation were prepared for their roles already in the 1980s, including participating in trainings organized by narrators:

Hundreds, thousands of people came, such cycles, containing interpersonal training, in which [it] was included self-improvement work, preparing yourself to work,

to help…under the banner of sociotherapy. It spilled into different areas, one can say, at some point in time, I called it "the movement of psychological help in education" and it happened, in the whole country…And we told those people who were finishing the course… first of all, stay together as a group…There is integration, keep going, create something more, your reality. Secondly, if you need a structure, you can always say you are our colleagues from [name of the professional association], associated with a club, group, workshop… And in this way…from such powerful energy in the meetings of a group, such bubbles were created…People became heads of provincial counseling…because their competence grew in strength…Throughout the country there was such a movement formed, people knew each other, went to conferences…so that they would get to know one other, flow. In the meantime, new centers were created. [SIB04 Witold]

Concluding this part of the text, it is important to say that the use of socialist structures of opportunities was of considerable importance for the development of biographical careers of narrators. Participation in both socialistic formal organizations ("psychologically available" only for some young people) and structures of the alternative society prepared social reformers for functioning in the first years of transformation and the emerging neoliberal new reality. Narrators gained knowledge and skills used in various ways throughout their professional lives, and developed the assumptions and working procedures used today. It was in the PPR that they became independent, mature professionals. It was then that their beliefs and attitudes were formed, which did not always facilitate and do not now facilitate their functioning in neoliberal social order.

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[31] Hospital classes/schools were organized in hospital wards in in-patients/walk-in clinics for ill students admitted there (to a hospital or a clinic), so that they could participate in school activities on a daily basis. In the case discussed in the interview, this form was used while working with so-called troubled (acting-out) teenagers treating them as SEN children.

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System Transformation—1989: The First Years of New Poland and New Structures of Opportunities

Systemic transformation in many dimensions completely changed the *modus operandi* of the opportunity structures in which Polish society functioned. As Piotr Sztompka (2000) wrote, in the first decades of transformation, Poles experienced traumas of great change. The change of political system was accompanied by the disappearance of some institutions of public life, the emergence, in their place, of new and far-reaching reconstructions of others. Life-styles, patterns of education, work, and leisure were being modified radically. The history of Poland was being redefined, language was evolving,[32] questions about the importance of subjectivity, citizenship were born (Sztompka 2000; Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011; Modzelewski 2013). The time caesura seemed to radically separate the times of socialism ("before") from the new reality ("after"), and the transformation would become "a decisive element of collective experience" (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011:50) of several Polish generations. According to Ilona Iłowiecka-Tańska, builders of the 3rd sector of Free Poland ("PPR" social activists and opposition activists) attempted to create this sector consciously as a new formation based on new types of social relations arising from the self-organization of civil society. In the process of modernization that would make up for Poland's civilization backlog, a "new man" was to arise, changing reality for the better in a different way, a man with new attitudes, behavior patterns, complete

opposite of self-centered, passively subordinated to fate, and external coercion *homo sovieticus* (Tischner 1992; Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre 1998; Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011; cf. Palska and Lewenstein 2004). Therefore, the builders of the 3rd sector were the followers of the "utopia, in which the social order was to support moral development and the fulfillment of which...seemed closer and more real than ever" (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011:81).

Iłowiecka-Tańska's analysis also shows that the 3rd sector builders kept on rejecting the models of functioning of the organization of the PPR period, both mass social organizations and the democratic opposition ones, recognizing both models as anachronistic, and the PPR itself as a negative reference point. The basis of their social project was to raise the society to participatory democracy by rebuilding social capital. The utmost significance was assigned to the independent, decentralized, horizontal structures and organizations which, from the bottom up, using innovative methods, were to solve social issues and problems. The emerging leaders of the third sector were advocates of collective actions based on the principles of solidarity, trust, and cooperation, activities regulated not by coercion, but ethical norms valid throughout the sector. In the new order, non-governmental organizations were supposed to be an equal, independent from the state, partner of social dialogue, subject to legal regulations of that state, including registration possibilities (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011). Considering the 3rd sector statistics, plans, and dreams of Polish civil society were close to being fulfilled. In Poland, similarly to other post-communist countries, there was an "eruption" of civil society organizations. In the period of 1990-

93, about 67 thousand associations were set up every year, and the index of foundations growth was in the early 1990s at 500% *per annum* stabilizing at the turn of 1993/94 at the level of 115% (Elementarz III Sektora 2005; e.g., Racko 2008; Fabián and Dubnová 2018; Facts about NGOs[33]).

At the beginning of the transformation, narrators, then people in the Eriksonian phase of generativity, became very intensely involved in the activities of the non-governmental sector. In their biographies, from the **opening transformational structures**, the following opportunities are particularly visible: 1) the possibility of **establishing independent foundations and associations**; 2) **access to people of power** deciding on the political opportunity structures; 3) **economic opportunity structures**; 4) **dissemination of models and standards of innovative professionalism** on the supralocal level, including **shaping discourse opportunity structures.**

Annot. 1. In the early 1990s, the narrators established **civil society organizations and non-public institutions** that constitute the formal framework for their uniquely own actions. Zenon and Witold had at their disposal teams on which they could rely. The programs they implemented constituted in certain dimensions the continuation of professional activity dating back to the period of the Polish People's Republic. Zenon, with the team, established a foundation that organized a network of community work

centers in one of the districts of the big city. Witold joined the attempts to reform the education system by training, among others, employees of the ministries, education supervisors, and directors of the institutions. When it turned out that the "system gets bogged down" due to the resistance of the social environment to change, with its association created and implemented nationwide programs of activating the unemployed youth. Then he set up his own training facility with a semi-commercial profile. Zofia and Żaneta started an innovative activity in the human sector in the institutional dimension, in a sense "from scratch," only in 1989. Zofia, just after the elections on June 04—implementing her values and ideals—created one of the first Polish non-public democratic schools:

[A]lready in June, eighty-ninth year, using the word of mouth, we announced the recruitment to the school that we wanted to set up...Under the cover of the university, the professor X agreed to make the room available to us. And they came, those who wanted to be teachers, those who wanted to have children in such a new school, and also the students themselves...And together we discussed the program, the principles of education, the educational program, and the didactic program. We wrote a pretty good program, where subjects were correlated...And this idea of school democracy was also born there, so that the students could influence the community. And so that in that way they could learn responsibility not only for themselves, but for the group they are part of. And all these postulates...we have integrated into the program of the school to be open and we had an unbelievable number of candidates. We did not have a building; we had no money, nothing but a massive

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[32] The discourse of real socialism was replaced by the discourse of the birth of capitalism (Alexander 1992, 1998 as cited in Sztompka 2000).

[33] In 2018, there were 117 thousand associations and 26 thousand foundations registered in Poland. It is estimated that about 65% of this number is active. Organizations operating in the human sector are probably about 20% of all organizations (7% deal with social services and social assistance, 13% with education and upbringing) (see: https://fakty.ngo.pl/fakt/liczba-ngo-w-polsce. Retrieved September 20, 2019).

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crowd of willing spirits…There were probably five candidates for one place. We…created four classes, no location was known, where it will be. [SIB03 Zofia]

Żaneta, for whom the communist political opportunity structures had been open for some time and who, for ethical reasons, abandoned the idea of a political career in the socialist system, quickly got disappointed with the political reality of the Third Polish Republic. After the fiasco attempts to influence the new order through expert work directed to the government authorities, aware of the costs of transformation, which were dramatically high for a part of the society, she decided to establish her own center:

I then cooperated with professor M. very closely. We wrote one program, then the next. Such a national program for youth, but politicians did not accept it. Well, it was a failure again…not frustration, as in the 68th year, but frustration, nevertheless, disappointment, I would say, and then it was such a turning point. So, if you cannot change the system, and it was very raw, personal pain, I was 100% convinced that this is a big mistake and later the following years proved it…Well, I decided…to set up my own space…Create, organize such a space that will generate conditions for those people who are hurt by transformational changes. It was somewhere around 1993, more or less, that is to say, the association was born out of this sense of defeat, failure, and refusal to accept it. [SIB01 Żaneta]

It is worth referring here to the statement formulated in the mid-1990s by Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre (1998:150), according to which in the new Poland the choices of activists lost "the nature of moral imperative." The content of interviews indi-

cate that the thesis was overly "optimistic." Moral imperatives "evoked" by the increasingly visible, growing wave of social problems could continue to be a significant motive for the actions undertaken by the reformers. Only the contexts, in which choices and decisions were made, have changed,[34] which sometimes turned out to be the starting point for well-thought-out biographical projects. It should be emphasized that organizations and institutions established in the first years of transformation under these projects operate to this day, mostly with the involvement of narrators.

Annot. 2. **Access to the people of the "new power"** created the possibility for the innovators to **influence political opportunity structures**, constituting significant conditions for the professional innovative work of the interviewed narrators in the initial years of transformation. The narrators, who were embedded in the structures of civil society, personally knew the activists of the anti-communist opposition that formed the first post-transformation governments. For a certain period of time, some of the senior social reformers themselves were in performed functions in ministries, advisory bodies, expert teams, also at the central level:

Well, in the ninety-ninth year, when the Round Table talks began, I was invited to participate in talks by this Solidarity committee, at the so-called educational "sub-table"…We just outlined this postulate of the right to establish independent schools and social

schools, which could be founded by other entities, different than the state. And that they could function in accordance with their programs. And we succeeded, that consent came out. [SIB03 Zofia]

Initially, the authorities seemed willing to use some of the innovative solution models developed by the environments centered around noteworthy social change leaders, who also **influenced discursive opportunity structures** by participating in debates on key social issues. Impacts of social innovators are visible, for example, in statutory provisions and regulations, for example, related to the reform of the social welfare system introduced at the turn of 1998/99. Over the years, the influence of senior social reformers on social policy processes became more and more limited; people from the 3rd sector became one of many social actors in a complex, political, multi-dimensional game of interests.

Annot. 3. Being embedded within the circles of the elite gave access to **the economic opportunity structures.** In the first years of transformation, this access could be related to the support of activities by politicians, for example, by facilitating access to technical infrastructure (like the using of a deputy computer) or transferring grants from the funds available to familiar decision-makers:

First elections, the fourth of June… citizens committees asked us for help in the elections and we were there to prepare candidates for two months…And all our candidates…won…in these elections by a large margin… bigger than the rest. And everyone suddenly appreciated us very much…and they told us that they would give us everything they could, but they could

not do much. Nevertheless…gradually…we got more and more money and as long as they were [there]… And until the end of 2000, we had a lot of resources. [SIB02 Zenon]

It was also possible to obtain fixed assets in the form of premises remaining after closures of institutions, including the liquidated property of communist parties whose resources, after transformation, became the property of the state treasury. And although this practice seemed to be quite widespread among emerging CSOs, again, personal relationships with people in power could have a considerable significance:

By the end of this eighty-ninth year…there was disbandment of Polish United Workers' Party. And the place, which was a party activism school in Starowiślna street…[was] being vacated."…I ran to the minister [surname] with a request to grant us this building for our facility, which has been functioning in such [very temporary] conditions for three months now…And we got permission to have it and that's how we moved to [street name]. [SIB03 Zofia]

In the area of economic opportunity structures, a significant role in the development of civic society and the professionalization of the 3rd sector was played by **foreign aid programs** implemented since the early 1990s. These programs, to a large extent, were working as the opening opportunity structure, anyway—based on the principle of grant contest—they caused tensions on the procedures and the ethos of work. The freedom of action was largely limited, and their implementers had to prove that they acted professionally, deliberately, methodically, and effec-

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[34] Ilona Iłowiecka-Tańska (2011:139) writes about the builders of the non-governmental sector, who, in the early 1990s, "stood at the crossroads, whose paths led in opposite directions," occasionally merging around building a new style of work.

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tively, achieving effective results based on the principles of economics (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011). The rules of the grants' contests forced the change of attitudes and identities, the transition from the symbolic space of spontaneity to the ordered and structured space in accordance with the principles of social engineering (Szacki 1994 as cited in Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011:100; see also Dudkiewicz 2002). It seems that at first the narrators were relatively resistant to these constraints. Their innovative projects were the effect of both personal (intellectual and emotional) and social capital accumulated over many years. Senior social reformers, embedded in their professional roles, with elaborated work procedures, do not need support of foreign experts, whose role in creating post-transformational institutional order is mentioned in literature (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011); some of them even claimed that those experts "sell" the knowledge that Polish specialists have already possessed for years. The narrators carried out their activities maintaining and improving their own methodologies and work systems, efficiently adapting to the cumbersome formal requirements that limited access to the opening structures of opportunities:

We've got at least as much, from various international competitions, and so on. And there was a 20-year program [of community work]...We got Equal,[35] that gave us the opportunity to...support...our [wards]...in the period when they entered the labor market, but for us it was an opportunity primarily...to validate...our

[35] The EQUAL Community Initiative Program was implemented in the years 2001-2014 in the European Union. Financed by the European Social Fund and from the budgets of member countries, it was aimed at developing and disseminating innovative solutions and good practices (see: http://www.equal.org.pl/equal.php?lang=pl. Retrieved September 20, 2019).

results. And...like with all these programs [from the pre-transformational period], the effects were stunning. [SIB02 Zenon]

The **emergence of the 2nd sector** is also worth mentioning together with the economic opportunity structures—profit-oriented business organizations and private capital. Although in the first years of transformation the concept of corporate social responsibility did not function in Poland, gradually a group of people willing to support the actions of non-governmental organizations emerged:

[W]hile I was looking for the first venue...I had carefully worked out premises of this venture, the mission, the structure, even the organizational scheme... despite various difficulties [my association] keeps on developing like a *perpetuum mobile*...A businessman helped me, mmm, Mr. G., who ran a business here since his great grandfather's time...At some meeting he listened, listened, got up and said: "And, you know, you make sense. I will give you a venue… Free, without money, meaning, but only for three years. After three years you will have to get your own." [SIB01 Żaneta]

As it is apparent in research field observation (as well as in the interview with Witold), some social reformers in the area of the human sector, during the period of transition, founded professional companies that often provided highly expensive psychological and training services—thus, **shifting from 3rd sector to 2nd sector.** Probably exceptional was the attitude of one of the narrators, who in the first years of transformation ran his own profitable business company, from the profits of which he financed, for two years, the activities of his teams working with

socially excluded people; and the construction of a training center offering free or low-paid training cycles for adepts and professionals.

Annot. 4. **Dissemination of the models and standards of the innovative professional work** on the supralocal level stands for another very important set of opportunity structures. This dissemination took place through training implemented within the framework of projects that promoted vocational procedures standards, passed on knowledge and skills. One should emphasize the importance of extensive training cycles, based on training/meeting group procedures, which added value were changes in the attitudes and ethos of their participants' work and, above all, "copying" innovative solutions in places of residence and work of trainees. Also, both ephemeral and permanent new national professional associations, confederations, and unions of associations operating in similar professional areas established. Open environmental conferences and seminars were organized. Senior social reformers in these activities functioned and continue to function as trainers, supervisors, members of advisory bodies. It can be argued that in many dimensions of social policy disseminating activities created a new kind of institutional discourse referring to the idea of subjectivity, demarginalization, solidarity, and social inclusion.[36]

[36] For instance, the language structures concerning the institutionalization of children and young people have changed very significantly. In the early 1990s, placing children from multi-problem families, including simply poor families, was treated by the employees of the children and family care system as a completely legitimate or even obvious solution. Over the decade (the time of intensive training of foster care staff supported by social campaigns on deinstitutionalization run by prominent CSOs) the language of debating on this issue has changed—institutionalization started to be described as a "final outcome," possible after all other means and methods have been exhausted.

Although the transformation aimed at creating a democratic state of law, based on a strong civil society, in the case of the 3rd sector seemed to create conditions that were particularly conducive to innovative professional work, the opportunity structures that were opening up in a democratic state were not unlimited. On the contrary, as mentioned above, as the years passed, it became increasingly apparent that profiting from the opportunities was associated with many barriers, constraints, and coercions. Already in the first years of transformation at the macro-social level, dichotomous, discursive structures appeared—of a systemic optimism accepting a new order and a systemic pessimism containing a multidimensional critique of this order (Kowalski 2010). Senior reformers, despite their support for the emerging Third Polish Republic, were fully aware of the costs of transformation, encountering in their practice the rapidly growing unemployment and inequalities. Their dreams and illusions about Poland as a democratic state, created in the times of the PPR, quite quickly disappeared:

After the 89th year it could be clearly observed that the new order, new power, new Poland, for which… we dreamed of and sang songs about, is an evil stepmother. She is a stepmother and she is being built at the expense of those people who are the poorest, the weakest…especially the young ones, it was assumed by the politicians that either they would cope, or… simply drown. [SIB01 Żaneta]

Professional counteraction to the effects of transformation and social action towards (re-) integration also in the area of the 3rd sector were soon subjected to the rules of neo-liberal economy. The area

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of the 3rd sector has been dominated by the logic of the free market together with the discourse of knowledge-based economy (or innovative economy) founded on the "grant culture" or "contract culture." Grant contests rules along with the principles of competitiveness required new patterns of actions, forced confrontation of previously held values and attitudes used over the years. "The man of service" was to be replaced by a competent professional (Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011; Zarycki 2014) who managed projects, as well as their beneficiaries, whose attachment to values such as selflessness, spontaneity, and solidarity seemed to interfere rather than to help. The tensions resulting from the functioning of this logic in the case of senior social reformers can be associated with their axiological identity defined as a permanent commitment to change proof actions as a result of new circumstances or emotions, accompanied by a sense of freedom, values defined in opposition to power and privileges (Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre 1998). Following Zenon's statement, we can think about the narrators in terms of "old school," inspired by the traditions of social reforms, social change, community work, cultural change, or even dreams about a better new world typical of 19th century social activists. It seems also that narrators are stable in their focus on working with specific groups of clients, and at the same time to some extent immune to "grantosis" (the common-sense term used to describe the phenomenon of chasing project after project with unclear, short-term results depicted mostly in statistics and ongoing evaluation, with no focus on clients' specific needs, their situation). Two strategies seem to be crucial in the narrators' biographies: one is the strategy of manipulating and working out the system "while

doing your own thing," developed and perfected in socialist times; the second is the commercialization of actions combined with maintaining significant pro-social values—this thread requires, however, a separate study.

Final Remarks

1. Social reformers of seniors' generations differ in some important dimensions from their peers in the course of the life cycle (see, e.g., Zalewska 2016). Their biographies, both in the professional and personal dimensions, are certainly not standard. Social reforming is in their case a kind of lifelong, consistently developing activity, or referring to the concept of Fritz Schütze, a biographical plan of action in which retirement (understood in terms of the period of professional deactivation) was not foreseen—the narrators continue to be very active in their social sub-worlds.

2. Narrators certainly represent this generation of activists with whom axiological "I" resonate closely. Using the words of Koralewicz and Malewska-Peyre (1998), it can be stated that these individuals are different from Bauman's postmodern man—their professional biographies are characterized by continuity, cohesion, and pro-social orientation.[37]

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[37] It is worthwhile to acquaint oneself with a sentence by Bohdan Cywiński from "Rzeczpospolita" (April 2000) in the article "Premature Obituaries of Intelligentsia": "without people from Żeromski's world, without ridiculed 'Strong Women,' Judyms and Gajowiecs [names of social activists—protagonists of positivistic literature of the 19th century], all of this Poland will render itself an unbearable space, a dirty and boorish marketplace from which honest and decent survivors will have to flee" (Cywiński 2000 as cited in Iłowiecka-Tańska 2011:28).

3. The analysis of the first collected biographies of senior social reformers indicates that the concepts in which social change is described as a process occurring in the space of structural options defined in terms of limited opportunities for action are justified. These options result from the accumulative effect of earlier actions (Sztompka 2000). As Piotr Sztompka (2000:17) writes: "The process of social becoming takes place in the social context inherited from the past, that is, in a common pool of ready-made patterns of symbolization, interpretation, conceptualization, and narrative of current social practice." Concurrently, the analysis seems to support the Gleiss' assumption, quoted in the first part of the paper, about social activities performed in two kinds of spaces—the political/institutional and the cultural. The interlinks between POS and DOS are noticeable in the collected material.

4. The four cases presented in this text illustrate the individual processes of knowledge and

skills accumulation using the structures of opportunity existing in various political systems. The constellations of opportunity structures create both unique biographical patterns, as well as more general models. Here, two such models of biographic careers of senior social reformers are disclosed: 1) a consistent implementation of innovative activities regardless of political conditions (Witold and Zenon) and 2) undertaking innovative professional work only when post-transformational opportunity structures have emerged (Zofia, Żaneta). It is worth noting that the years 2015-2019 are a period of re-transformation of the political opportunity structures and discursive struggle in Poland, which clearly determines the activities of actors of the 3rd sector. The planned continuation of biographical studies covering both the generation of senior social reformers and their successors brought up in the neo-liberal reality gives an opportunity to verify the findings and the statements contained in this text.

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