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Everyday life under conditions of risk and uncertainty

pod redakcją

Iwony Taranowicz

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UNCOMMON DAILY LIFE/DAILY UNCOMMONNESS EVERYDAY LIFE UNDER CONDITIONS OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

Abstract. According to the proponents of the sociology of everyday life, the practices of everyday life maintain the order of social life. Berger and Luckmann argue that such practices are characterised by habitualness and unreflectiveness; they seem natural and self-evident, not requiring justification. However, their statement is no longer valid. It was not only the COVID-19 pandemic that violently disrupted the established order of everyday life. Even before the pandemic, processes of social change had occurred, and these processes shattered the unified vision of the world, the *nomos* in which all social practices found their justification. The sheer multiplicity of knowledge and belief systems that now exist, as legitimate as they are, forces individuals to be reflexive and to make choices from among different patterns of action. At the same time, new processes of change are constantly taking place that challenge the validity of previous choices. The COVID-19 pandemic did not start these processes, but it did exacerbate these processes. The question for researchers is how do individuals construct the order of their everyday life in these uncertain and risky conditions, an order whose constancy and predictability, as Giddens states, has always been a bulwark against fear and insecurity.

Keywords: everyday life, pandemic COVID-19, uncertainty, daily practices.

1. Introduction

The pandemic that has lasted for the last two years has undermined the obviousness and naturalness of the rhythm of everyday life and the content that fills it. Attending school and going out to work marked a clear separation of spheres and types of social activities and organised the order of the day. Suddenly this order was

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shattered. Daily life had to be organised anew, certain activities were removed and new ones were introduced. This was accomplished by adapting one space and one sphere of life to carry out practices that had hitherto been separated into different dimensions of social functioning, and by introducing new practices into the rituals of everyday life. This new situation was accompanied by various emotions; at the turn of 2020 and 2021, 66% of Poles feared being infected with the virus, including 22% who feared it very much (CBOS 2021), while 23% of Poles considered the restrictions introduced at the very beginning of the epidemic, in May 2020, to be excessive (CBOS 2020). Anxiety, fear, sometimes indignation and anger constituted an emotional reaction to the restrictions directly affecting the private sphere and home and family life and depriving individuals of choices. Daily rituals and habits had to be modified, which increased the sense of anxiety, for “habits and routine action are the most important bastion of defence against the individual’s threatening fears” (Giddens 2001: 55). How, then, did individuals cope with maintaining this bastion when breakthroughs appeared in it for reasons entirely beyond their control? How did they try to maintain their everyday “normality”, and what patterns did they resort to? The appearance of a deadly infectious disease, a threat out of control, was on the one hand a shock, as we no longer feared such diseases. On the other hand, the appearance of such a threat is part of the experience of the members of a societies at are at risk. Uncertainty was already a regular part of their experience. Did this experience in any way help those societal members to cope with the situation of the epidemic? The instability of the conditions of social functioning that are characteristic of postmodern society means that the ability to adapt to constant change has become one of the basic skills an individual should possess. This applies above all to cultural and structural changes, and to changes in the social order. Everyday practices, the essence of which has always been constancy and repetition, have to be inserted into this rapidly changing (Rosa 2020) framework. How, then, was this everydayness created and maintained in a doubly uncertain time, the spread of a deadly infectious disease in a society subject to such rapid change?

2. Everyday life as a category of sociological description

Everyday life has become of particular interest to those theoretical currents in sociology that have opposed functionalism. Its theorists consider that the essence of social life is what happens between people. They assume that society is the product of individual actions taken as a reaction to the actions of others. Its order is sustained and produced in interpersonal relations. The sociology of everyday life had primarily two theoretical sources, symbolic interactionism, as pioneered by G.H. Mead, and phenomenological sociology, as supported by Alfred Schütz (Szacki 2002). What both of these theoretical currents have in common is the recognition of what takes

place between individuals as the main focus of sociology. The essence of social life is the forms of individual activities undertaken in everyday relations with others.

In sociology, everydayness and everyday life do not appear as separate conceptual categories that require a clear definition of their fields of designations. They are usually treated as complementary terms that do not require an explanation of the meanings behind them. Representatives of the theoretical currents that consider everyday life to be the proper subject of sociology do not find it necessary to define them, as they are simply the social world and as such do not require a special definition. Alfred Schütz, writing about the reality of the everyday world, does not focus on explaining what he means by this reality. Rather, by pointing out intersubjective character of everydayness and the ordering and significance of individual interpretations and experience, he shows that the everydayness is that basic reality, the social world in which the individual acts, further strengthening this thesis by showing the differences between it and other types of reality experienced by individuals, such as the dream world (Schütz 2008). For him, this everyday world is the quintessential social world. The fundamental property of this reality is that its intersubjective nature is shared with others. It is the conviction of individuals that the surrounding reality means the same thing to others, that they give it the same meaning, that is central to the existence of social life. "The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification above and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity" (Berger, Luckmann 1983: 55). The fundamental feature of this reality, according to representatives of phenomenological sociology, is its unreflective character. The same forms of individual and social activity, repeated daily, sustain the conviction that the world is as it seems and as it should be. This makes the reality of the social world stable and predictable and the social order maintainable (Berger, Luckmann 1983).

In his anthology *Socjologia codzienności* (Sociology of Everydayness), Piotr Sztompka presents the sociology of everyday life as a third sociology, proposing a new paradigm in sociology that overcomes the limitations of previous theoretical perspectives. The book's title suggests that he considers the terms everyday life and everydayness as complementary (Sztompka 2008). Roch Sulima takes a different view, clearly distinguishing between the meanings of the two terms. For him, everyday life refers to the set of practices carried out within it, while everydayness is, as he puts it, a "figure of thought" linked to a specific historical time (Sulima 2011). Taking his distinction into account, it should be stated that sociologists are interested in both everyday life and everydayness. Everyday life, because the practices performed within daily life that make up what they call social life. However, in order for these practices to constitute this everyday life, they must be accompanied by a conviction that they are something obvious and natural, by a conviction that there is an order to everydayness, a mindset of everydayness is and should be. In characterising everyday life, Sztompka stresses that it encompasses all forms of

activity that are carried out in the presence of other people and in a social context. It therefore includes both the profane and the sacred (Sztompka 2008). Talking over dinner, shopping, walking the dog, attending Sunday service, and getting married are all practices that compose the content that fills everyday life.

3. Everyday life and postmodernity

Everyday life is characterised by an ordered system of realised activities that take on through their repetition the character of routine, unreflective practices. The institutionalisation of these practices ensures the stability of social life, which is maintained and reproduced through the practices. Talking about the weather with the neighbour, chatting in the neighbourhood shop, exchanging comments over Sunday lunch, arguing about who should take out the rubbish – all these practices maintain the order not only of everyday reality, but also of the social world. The importance of these everyday practices in stabilising the social order and the belief in the social order is very well demonstrated by Fritz Schütze using an example taken from Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (Schütze 1997). In the scene, Joseph K. tries to convince himself that his arrest that morning is just a figment of his imagination. He attempts to renormalise everyday reality by talking to his landlady, supposing that if the conversation goes on as usual, the order of his daily life, disturbed by the morning event, would be restored. The importance of daily practices, habits and routines in creating and sustaining different forms of social life is also shown by research. Family bonding and a sense of shared identity are achieved through, among other methods, shared meals and the rituals that accompany them (Spagnola, Fiese 2007; Wright-St Clair et al. 2005). Family rituals are also important means of socialisation (Schuck, Bucky 1997). A structured daily life has a positive effect on a child's development, well-being and social skills, and the rituals present are also conducive to a positive effect (Spagnola, Fiese 2007; Malaquias et al. 2015).

Berger and Luckmann emphasise that the world of everyday life is treated as obvious and natural and does not demand justification. It does not need to do so, because routine activities and habits are rooted in a specific, holistic, shared vision of the world containing their justifications, while their final validation is present in the symbolic universe, that is, an integrated system of shared, ultimate meanings and senses that link the past with the present (Berger, Luckmann 1983). In other words, at the core of everyday life and routine practices is a commonly shared vision of reality, a shared conviction of how this reality should be. The processes of social development and the increasing social complexity of connections between individuals, however, mean that the sense of shared connections with others is weakening. One of the main processes mentioned by sociologists is a process that accompanies the transition of societies from the industrial to the post-modern era: the process of individualisation. The increasing network of interconnectedness

between people weakens the sense of belonging and identification with specific social groups and categories. It increases the sense of subjectivity in the individual himself. The individual's identity, once constructed in close relation to the "we", is now constructed as the "I" in relation to the "we" (Elias 2009). The culture of contemporary society is a culture of individualism, in which obligations to oneself are replacing former obligations to one's group and society (Jacyno 2007). The place of the old communities is taken by neo-tribes, which are short-lived communities that are centred around commonly-shared emotions, or sensory impressions (Maffesoli 2008).

Perhaps the most important process that affects the shape of the practices of everyday life is the disintegration of an overall, holistic vision of the world, the normatively ordered system of meanings and rules that underpin the recognised social order. This is what Peter Berger calls the *nomos* (Berger 1997). Disintegration occurs when one comprehensive system of rules, knowledge, symbols and meanings relating to the entire social reality experienced by individuals breaks down into several equally existing systems of legitimation (Kaufmann 2004). Thus, different visions of the world exist side by side, justifying and legitimising different forms of the same social practices. We are witnessing the presence of this diversity in the reality that is around us. It is no longer tradition, direct generational transmission, family, community or social class pressures that shape everyday practices. It is the market and expert systems that become the source of knowledge and patterns of action (Beck 2002; Giddens 2001). Thus knowledge that is based upon science becomes one of knowledge and belief systems, and it must compete with the other systems for the attention of audiences. Disintegration was followed by a process that Beck called the demonopolisation of cognition (Beck 2002). A very good example of demonopolisation is the views on the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those connected to vaccines and immunisation. The system of knowledge and belief in which vaccines help, and the system of knowledge and belief in which vaccines harm both contain explanations and arguments that are similarly convincing to their proponents, regardless of the fact that the arguments are different and represent different visions of the reality around us. On the one hand we have faith in science, on the other hand we have distrust of science. The presence of multiple, equivalent schemes that regulate the same sphere of practice undermines the possibility of unreflective, routine behaviour and triggers reflexivity. No social practice is obvious and natural anymore, each practice requires reference to any of the knowledge and belief systems. The individual is confronted with the need to make a choice and justify it (Kaufmann 2004). Making and justifying a choice requires reference to a particular system of knowledge and beliefs creating a system of legitimisation for the chosen patterns of practice. All such choices define who he or she is and what group he or she identifies with.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann believe that institutionalisation of social practices that imposes one pattern of action has a positive meaning, because the

individual receives a clear message of how he or she should act, eliminating the need to think about which pattern of action to recognise as his or her own. However, this is no longer the case today. The individual is forced to make choices. Therefore, the following question can be asked: how is everyday life, life that is filled with repetitive activities that pass into routines and habits, created in a postmodern reality? How is a stabilised order of everyday life achieved in such a rapidly changing reality, and how are knowledge and patterns of practices deemed to be appropriate? Do the everyday worlds of individuals that refer to divergent knowledge and belief systems differ from each other, and, if yes, then by how far? Which systems do individuals reach for in an age of demonopolisation of cognition? How do they cope with everyday life under the threat of a deadly infectious disease?

4. Unusual everyday life during a pandemic

Almost all the texts in this issue deal with issues related to how individuals have functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of heightened uncertainty and anxiety. Here was the appearance of a deadly infectious disease that forced the implementation of many new daily practices (such as the wearing of masks), limitations to be placed upon many other ordinary tasks (such as walking or shopping), and the reorganisation of the order of daily life (such as the transfer of work and study to the domestic space). There appeared a kind of social laboratory, a laboratory in which conditions of uncertainty and risk intensified. The only source of knowledge about the virus and how to protect oneself from it, as well as how to deal with the pandemic in general an infected situation, were expert systems. Many such systems appeared, and they communicated different content, some of which was incompatible with or even contradictory to each other. At the same time, as is often the case in a risk society, the responsibility for eliminating the threat was placed on individuals, because, as the experts agreed, it was primarily individuals' compliance with the recommendations and norms (i.e. how to behave in a pandemic) that determined the spread of the virus and the disease. The pandemic-derived situation was superimposed upon the situation of uncertainty linked to the social changes that were already taking place. As a result, we all found ourselves in such a social laboratory, forced to function in specific, previously unknown, conditions, faced with new challenges, while at the same time having to continue our normal, everyday lives. Accordingly, we may ask several questions. How did we cope in this laboratory? What sort of attitudes to danger were revealed? What knowledge and belief systems were most frequently used? What practices and their patterns were followed in order to cope with the threat while trying to lead a normal, everyday life?

Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2004: 151) argues that "man does not have habits, but consists of habits [...]". It is these habits that determine the rhythm of daily life. At the same time, he points out that it is extremely difficult to get rid of habits and

introduce new ones in their place. This is because they are strongly internalised; even the body resists any attempt to change them. However, as they are strongly linked to individual identity, the transformation of habits is encouraged by any event that modifies some dimension of it. These types of events, such as a change of job or place of residence, occur more frequently now than before. In addition, contemporary individuals, forced to be reflexive and make choices, introduce micro-changes into their lives that do not go unnoticed in the routine of their daily lives. Kaufmann believes that in introducing micro-changes, individuals directly influence the formation of consumption patterns and the direction of social change. Through small decisions, whether they drink tea, celebrate name days, or listen to audiobooks, individuals decide which practices become commonplace, and which behaviours are institutionalised (Kaufmann 2004).

Simon Duncan sees these processes somewhat differently. Based on a study of inactive and active mothers, he concluded that their behaviour is not so much the result of reflexive choices as an adaptation to a situation existing in a particular social context, taking into account social expectations and norms (Duncan 2011).

Dale Southerton, on the other hand, points out that understanding habits and routines as automatic, unreflective practices is a significant impoverishment of the meanings associated with them. In trying to understand at least the way in which they are reproduced, it is necessary to look at them more broadly, realising that by habits and routines, we mean both the dispositions and sequences of an activity, as well as the procedures. In addition, it is difficult to talk about them without considering the temporal context in which they take place (Southerton 2013).

Everyday life under pandemic conditions could not continue unchanged. The sense of danger, the prohibition of direct contact with relatives, the limited opportunities to leave the house – all of these shattered the previously established daily routine. Routine activities had to be modified. The articles presented in this issue give at least a rough idea of (1) how this modification took place; (2) to what extent it was a result of reflexive choice, and to what extent it was an adaptation to the situation; (3) what these modifications were connected with and composed; (4) whether a procedure fundamentally changed, or changes to its the sequences or time involved were altered. Furthermore, we gain insights into which sources of knowledge prevailed, whether new practices emerged, and which practices were suspended or abandoned. The authors of most of the texts try to determine how the respondents dealt with the organisation of this unusual everyday life. I encourage you to read on.

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NIECODZIENNA CODZIENNOŚĆ/CODZIENNA NIECODZIENNOŚĆ ŻYCIE CODZIENNE W WARUNKACH RYZYKA I NIEPEWNOŚCI

Abstrakt. Według przedstawicieli socjologii życia codziennego to praktyki codzienności utrzymują ład społecznego życia. Berger i Luckmann charakteryzując te praktyki, podkreślają, że cechuje je nawykowość i bezrefleksyjność, wydają się naturalne i oczywiste, niewymagające uzasadnienia. To ich stwierdzenie nie jest już aktualne. Nie tylko pandemia COVID-19 gwałtownie naruszyła ustalony porządek codzienności. Już wcześniej zachodzące procesy przemian społecznych rozbiły jednolitą wizję świata, nomos, w której wszelkie praktyki społeczne znajdowały swe uzasadnienie. Wielość istniejących obecnie systemów wiedzy i przekonań, tak samo prawomocnych, zmusza jednostki do refleksyjności i dokonywania wyborów pośród różnych schematów działania. Jednocześnie wciąż zachodzą zmiany podważające słuszność dotychczasowych wyborów. Pandemia COVID-19 tylko pogłębiła te procesy. Pytaniem jest, w jaki sposób jednostki budują ład swego codziennego życia w tych niepewnych i pełnych różnych ryzyk warunkach, ład, którego stałość i przewidywalność, jak stwierdza Giddens, była zawsze bastionem przeciwko lękom i poczuciu niepewności.

Słowa kluczowe: życie codzienne, pandemia COVID-19, niepewność, praktyki codzienności.

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SIMPLIFYING LIFE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Abstract. This article aims to present selected aspects of everyday life of people who define themselves as followers of simplifying life in view of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland. The article comprises three parts. The first, in a synthetic form, gives an outline of the idea of a simple life, its main beliefs and manifestations, whereas the second describes the degree and types of changes in the organisation of everyday life of simplifiers at the given time. The third part investigates whether the pandemic-triggered experiences have the potential to modify current consumption attitudes. This point is a reference to voices appearing in the public debate signalling – especially in the initial phase – such a possibility on a wider social scale. The research material was blog entries, fragments of podcasts on the simple life, and other sources (reports, scientific and journalistic texts).

Keywords: simple life, voluntary simplifiers, alternative forms of consumption.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic¹ and the ensuing lockdowns is a situation that has disrupted the rules of social life beforehand considered obvious and tacitly accepted, and thus has made the current social practices and actions the subject of reflection. It has resulted in the necessity to reorganise to a different extent – depending upon the social situation of the individual, their professional activities as well as health and personality conditions – everyday life and ways of experiencing it. A multiplicity of rules aimed at limiting the virus cases have been governing the functioning in public

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¹ I will not recreate the sequence of pandemic events chronologically as I acknowledge them as general knowledge. I treat the COVID-19 pandemic as the time frame to which the described phenomena relate.

space and included (to mention those important in the context of considerations): the need to keep a social distance, limit mobility, stay at home, as well as to restrict access to various places, e.g. shops and goods to be obtained. Both the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the preventive restrictions have triggered emotional reactions – most often anxiety, fear and confusion,² but also sometimes hope for changes in the functioning of the social system, mainly the economy. The authors of the report “*Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii. Raport z drugiego etapu badań*” [*Everyday life in times of the pandemic. Report from the second stage of research*] note: “The restrictions have changed the hitherto methods of operation. The world has been turned upside-down by ambivalence. The new conditions required the development of new practices and routines. What had been considered normal and obvious, has been negated during the pandemic” (Drozdowski et al. 2020b: 25). Given this point of view, it is worthwhile to wonder what normality means for those simplifying their lives and how it has been overturned by the COVID-19 pandemic (the context is Polish society). Before I start these considerations, it is important to define what a simple life is.

2. Briefly about simple life and simplification

Simple life (a term used interchangeably with voluntary simplicity) is most accurately described using the tangible-intangible dichotomy. It represents a negation of excessive consumption that goes beyond the natural needs, which is opposed to achieving self-fulfilment (greater and more durable gratification) in the non-material dimension. Limitations in the material sphere (reduction of possessions, opting-out from accumulating unnecessary goods, negating unreflective shopping habits and satisfying needs in an irrational way) are accompanied by an axiological change involving a positive evaluation of relationships with others, personal development, contact with nature, spiritual practices, contemplation, creativity (Shi 1985), contributing to an increase in the quality of life.

As life simplifiers, in turn, I describe those people and the actions they undertake of which the common denominator rests with the pursuit of a good life in a way that differs from consumption-oriented patterns (see Zrałek 2015; Burgiel et al. 2015). Voluntary simplifiers “limit expenditures on consumer goods and services, and to cultivate non-materialistic resources of satisfaction and meaning” (Etzioni 1998: 619). Simplifying life is – in a broad sense – a lifestyle programmatically opposing consumerism as the dominant paradigm of modern times. It characterises to a greatest extent the metropolitan middle class, people with incomes securing their material standard of living (specialists, free-lance professions, management

² The psychological effects of the pandemic are discussed, for instance, in the publication Duszyński et al. 2020.

staff) allowing for self-realization in a post-materialistic way.³ It should be noted, however, that although it is comprehended by followers as a form of contestation and resistance to hyper-consumption, it can, in fact, be perceived as – initiated by counterculture movements – a commercialised, market-oriented rebellion that absorbs and transforms elements of negation and criticism of the consumption culture of capitalism (Heath, Potter 2010; Barber 2009). Nevertheless, my intention does not involve exposure of the internal contradictions of voluntary simplicity, which I write about elsewhere (see Dopierała 2017). I treat the statements of simplifiers as carriers of – unchallenged by me – individual experience.

The declared disagreement with the ubiquitous consumerist practices manifests itself in many ways; literature includes numerous typologies illustrating this differentiation (see Elgin 2010; Shaw, Newholm 2002; Craig-Lees, Hill 2002; Etzioni 1998; Zrałek 2015). For the sake of clarity of the argument, it is efficiently enough – in my opinion – to place focus on the fundamental division based on the scale of the changes introduced. At this point, one can indicate those comprehensively simplifying – characterised by deeply internalised beliefs and the broadest range of activities (own crops, preferring natural food, living outside the city, resigning from the current job, being family-oriented, practising meditation or other forms of personal development), partially simplifying – using micro-strategies in selected aspects of existence (e.g. vegetarian or vegan diet, making consumption more ecological – avoiding some and preferring other brands, interest in the composition of products, reducing waste production), as well as supporters (showing their interest in the worldview, but at the same time keeping a distance). The voluntary simplicity comprises behaviours characteristic of other anti-consumerist lifestyles, e.g. minimalism, downshifting, zero-waste and slow life (see more: Cobel-Tokarska, Zalewska 2016; Kramarczyk 2018; Kramarczyk 2015; Duda 2016). They function independently on each other, yet many elements inherent to them are – in various proportions – also used in the construction of a simple life. Such a process involving the flow of ideas, values and attitudes, as well as the creative compilation of individual identifications has been – to my belief – increasingly noticeable in the field under discussion.

3. Voluntary simplifiers and COVID-19 pandemic

The reflections are based on reports on experiencing the beginning of the pandemic posted on blogs and podcasts by admirers of simple life. Various behaviours can be observed in the blogosphere concerned. This rests with putting the blogging

³ I am not concerned with a way of life marked by deprivation due to financial constraints, then it is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. The actions taken may be similar, but they are nevertheless the result of different motivations and life circumstances of the individual.

activity on hold, which is coincided with the pandemic, yet not explained by the author themselves (beforehand, high frequency of publications). Those blogs with a long history of existence included few references – only lapidary recalls to the “difficult” time and moving to another thread or using the general, but also the undeveloped formula of “breakthrough”. New blogs were created, existing about a year, but the pandemic was usually not indicated as the initial moment of their starting (it cannot be ruled out, however, that it played a catalyst role). Starting a blog could be a form of coping with burdensome experiences and emotions during a pandemic, but it also involved spending more time on it. The context of the pandemic in publications was present *expressis verbis* to a small extent. The reasons for this can be only presumed – individual experiences related to isolation/quarantine, health risk, problems in family or work life discouraging disclosure and public reporting. In parallel, the blog could be a space delivering emotional response, filtering through writing one’s own experiences, because the type of content presented depends upon the author’s discretion.

The criterion for selecting the material was the presence of threads related to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas the subject was not always reflected in the title of the post. Fragments of four Polish blogs were selected for analysis, namely “My eco ego. Minimalizm i zero waste” [*My eco ego. Minimalism and zero waste*], “Gaja pisze. Mniej, wolniej, lepiej” [*Gaja writes. Less, slower, better*], “Nieco mniej. Mieć nieco mniej, by żyć nieco bardziej” [*A little less. Have a little less to live a little more*], “Wolnym być” [*Free to be*] and a podcast “Ajka minimalistka” [*Ajka the minimalist*], which is a continuation of the “Prosty blog” [*Simple blog*] she has been running for several years. The posts were mostly from the first phase of the pandemic, which was accompanied by the greatest fears and restrictions. This could be interpreted as a reaction to an unexpected event and an attempt to get used to it by sharing experiences with others. The podcast is, in turn, a “summary” of the coronavirus epidemic after a year since its break-out.

3.1. Consumer practices – continuity and change

The behaviours described by the bloggers concerned several areas defining the framework of everyday functioning – typical home activities (cooking, cleaning), outdoor activities (shopping and recreation) and the general organisation of the day (time devoted to professional work, as well as allocating and spending free time). I will start with particularly interesting consumption practices related primarily to shopping (all posts are quoted in the form that is closest to their original form in Polish).

My life hasn’t changed drastically since we have been quarantined – after all, I’ve been working from home for over 2 years (I’m a HR process consultant, I’ve been working work on a global project, my entire team is scattered around the world and basically I don’t have to go to the office in Wrocław). So I’m not shocked I have to spend most of my time being surrounded by my four walls. You know, I go shopping much less often and I buy a little more food so I don’t

have to go to the store back and forth. I also go to my garden allotment less often (although the weather is tempting!). I've been trying to spend my free time reading, cleaning, baking or just reflecting and practising gratitude. Recently, I've been thinking about zero-waste and minimalism in the context of the whole covid19 situation.

I still go shopping with my fruit and vegetable sacks (and my own bag, of course), but I no longer carry the jars for pickles that I would always give to the seller in the greengrocer. I do so for my own safety and that of hers. For the last few years, I haven't bought pickles packed in a foil, so I think the world won't collapse if I do it 3–4 times during the pandemic. Additionally, *Bez Pudła* is also temporarily closed, so there's nowhere to buy loose products for my own packaging. So I've been trying to choose oatmeal in paper packages, the flour is almost always in the paper, and the pasta – I bought a kilo of Barilla, which is in a cardboard package and we haven't eaten everything yet.⁴

The analysed materials show that the pandemic and lockdown (as well as quarantine⁵) are treated as factors that have not significantly reorganised the functioning of the individual so far. Lots of those simplifying ones – usually representing the so-called freelance jobs – had worked from home even before the pandemic began.⁶ It is one of several dimensions of *à rebours* normality, which in the case of simplifying ones has not been disturbed. Therefore, one can venture an argument that the way of life based on voluntary limitations has turned out to be a good adaptation strategy.

In terms of shopping practices, the author virtually does not problematise restrictions on leaving home to the store and regulations regarding shopping (different opening hours for different age categories, limits of people on a specific space, waiting in a queue to enter the store, rationing of products, e.g. hygiene ones). Intentional reduction of consumption, including programmatically less frequent going to the store and focusing on the utility function of goods (satisfying life needs), is a key characteristic of a simplifying lifestyle. Despite the incidental purchase of larger amounts of food, the reduction on the purchase inherent in the minimalists in the described time was continued (with some exceptions).

In addition to minimalism, zero-waste is also recalled. Its manifestation includes, among others, eliminating the use of packaging whose lifespan is determined by the phases of production -> attracting the customer's attention -> purchase -> throwing away. An alternative to them is the use of fabric-made shopping bags, sacks (usually hand-made from recovered fabrics) and jars. The possibility of their re-use generates less waste, especially when it comes to plastic, disposable bags. Nevertheless, some of these solutions were temporarily suspended for sanitary

⁴ <http://www.myeoego.pl/minimalizm-i-zero-waste-w-czasach-pandemii/28.03.2020> (accessed: 27.05.2021).

⁵ It is not my role to inquire how legitimate the use of this term is; it can be assumed that it refers to various colloquial expressions of a state of social isolation.

⁶ In the case of bloggers, they are: translator, corporate employee, entrepreneurs (investing in real estate and training and real estate, business consultant), a person who edits industry magazines, writes and translates specialist and marketing texts.

reasons during the pandemic. Therefore, “buying pickled vegetables in a foil” manifests itself as a factor that breaks into pieces the attitude integrated beforehand, thus triggering the need for self-justification. The author excuses this act with an extraordinary pandemic situation which makes reasonable the temporary suspension of the previously developed simplification strategies.

A simple life is also guided by the practices of purchasing goods from stores offering loose products, which, however, have been closed due to pandemic restrictions. It has forced the simplifying ones to modify their hitherto habits, however, while maintaining compliance with the professed system of values. People would choose products in paper packaging enabling its further processing, or would avoid those that were difficult to decompose. It shows the pursuit of a circular economy and the application of the principles of sustainable development – maintaining a balance between the individual, the economy and the environment (see Zalega 2015). Shopping “in a greengrocer” is, in turn, a manifestation of ecological consumption and ethical (conscious) consumption, involving, *inter alia*, buying seasonal products in local, small stores and avoiding shopping in large-format stores and those requiring a long supply chain.

3.2. Consumer practices – anxieties and ethical dilemmas

Some of the consumption behaviours were continued by the simplifying ones, while some required making corrections and coming up with excuses for them. With the departure from everyday routines, concerns and ethical dilemmas have arisen for the general public as well.

[...] we bought some preserves in glass and various sorts of canned beans. So, there’s no tragedy – we happen to buy something in plastic, but these are quite negligible amounts (two days ago I bought a huge packet of nachos! They were delicious, its packaging will serve as a bag for our sparse rubbish – according to the “reuse” principle). We’ve also been trying to eat what we have at the time, so that it doesn’t get expired. My greatest fear is that the nation has been buying enormous amounts of food while in panic and then it’ll all be thrown away. Hope I’m wrong!

This stockpiling isn’t necessarily consistent with my understanding of minimalism, because I always try to have as much food as we can eat in 5–7 days, not in 2 weeks like these days. Nevertheless, the situation is extraordinary, so I’ve decided not to torture myself too much. However, this situation has made me see another side of minimalism, quite close to me – limited consumerism. We no longer run around shopping malls, cinemas, pubs, cafes, we basically only buy basic necessities. This testifies to the possibility of living without this constant shopping and consumption frenzy. Sure, we can still shop online, watch Netflix, and so on. And if someone feels like doing so in this difficult time, that’s okay – especially if you’re not, like me, used to spending a great part of your life at home. But maybe it’s worth spending this time while reflecting and asking yourself the following questions: Do I really need this? Will it make me happy? What do I have now for what I’m grateful for?⁷

⁷ <http://www.myeoego.pl/minimalizm-i-zero-waste-w-czasach-pandemii/28.03.2020> (accessed: 27.05.2021).

Stockpiling during the pandemic was nothing unusual to the followers of simplifying life, yet the scale of the resources deemed essential for survival is – judging from the measures of a few cans and jars – smaller than average. It is essential on this occasion – as described earlier – to pay attention to the type of packaging and to treat it as an equally important product parameter (apart from nutritional and taste values) when making purchasing decisions. Glass and metal containers (also paper cardboards) are highly valued and treated as prospective not only due to the possibility of recycling, but also upcycling (see Izdebska 2017). From this perspective, the necessity to justify the purchase (even a small amount) of products “in plastic” is comprehensible,⁸ as it is treated as a departure from pre-pandemic patterns marked with care and concern for the environment (preferences for sustainable development). However, according to the doctrines of zero-waste, namely reducing waste and reusing things, it can be used otherwise (in this case, as a rubbish bag). The author mentions one of the principles – reuse, which is complemented in the basic 3R version by the already mentioned “recycle” and “reduce”, and in the extended 5R version by “redistribute”, “repair”, “refuse”, “rot” (Michniewska, Grodkiewicz 2017).

Behaviours shared with others determined by a pandemic situation – not only in this aspect – have disrupted the attitudes developed by those simplifying life. Buying larger amounts of food that is supposed to last for longer⁹ (previously limited) is in conflict with de-consumption (a rational, determined by real needs, form of consumption),¹⁰ that those simplifying life follow. It is illustrated by non-excessive stockpiling, controlling the food items (quantity that can be eaten in a few days and respecting the use-by date) to avoid potential food waste.

From this point of view, attention should be paid to the formulated concerns about the excessive purchasing behaviour of other people (and subsequent mass throwing-away), which were fostered by the fear of pandemic-triggered uncertainty (whether the stores will be open, will the continuity of supplies be ensured, will there be no shortage of basic necessities, will production maintained, etc.). Considering the statistics pertaining to the scale of wastage of food products, the fear that

⁸ However, during the pandemic, the consumption of food packed in plastics and plastic disposable products (cutlery, gloves) increased.

⁹ The initial phase of the pandemic witnessed the increased purchases of food products and cleaning products – 56% of Poles declared that they had bought various products “for a rainy day”, of whom 66% bought pasta, 55% flour, and 53% toilet paper. The greatest number of purchases in terms of the variety of products and the amount of money spent on them were made by people who were most afraid of the new virus and felt that the situation at that time was out of control (Maison 2020).

¹⁰ De-consumption manifests itself in three forms, the common feature of which is a knowing limitation: 1. of consumption due to increased uncertainty of households (the so-called assurance consumption); 2. of quantity in favour of quality (e.g. giving preference to more durable, more expensive items); 3. in the material sphere and the valuation of what is intangible, e.g. servitisation of consumption (Rachocka 2003; Bywalec, Rudnicki 2002).

these practices would be intensified was real.¹¹ What is interesting in this context is a reference to the findings presented in “*Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii. Raport z pierwszego etapu badań*” [*Everyday life in times of the pandemic. Report from the first stage of research*]: “Buying large amounts of food ‘for a rainy day’ was treated by the respondents with understanding or jokingly (almost 70% of the respondents approached it standoffishly and did not disapprove it)” (Drozdowski et al. 2020a: 17). Therefore, one can notice a clear difference in opinions – the attitude of the simplifying ones has a clearly negative emotional resonance (it is treated as an unacceptable violation of the principles they profess and implement).

In the quoted post, not only does the author mention limiting consumption but also cultural activities and focusing on the domestic sphere. The next section is devoted to this issue; I write more about reflection and gratitude in the fourth part.

3.3. Consumer practices – cocooning and DIY

It was pointed out – on the basis of the topic concerning purchases and work already done at home – that those who simplify their life have not experienced any significant change due to the introduction of mobility restrictions. Others have joined this activity during the pandemic.

[...] children at home (we strived for this ourselves, thinking about, for instance home education), working from home, car used only when needed, almost no contact with the “comforts” of the city, such as cinemas, restaurants, etc., and a lot of walking and appreciating the possibility of a simple walk or a run amid the fresh air. I think a lot of people have also been trying various DIY initiatives, such as baking their own bread. In addition, uncertainty about the future, which discourages people from spending money like water, or rather makes them save and not take out more loans. Well, spitting image of the world of the Free Ones, which – as we realise – not everyone has to like it, and certainly should not be enforced top-down in such circumstances as we have to experience.¹²

As part of the simplifying lifestyle, many activities carried out conventionally by institutions are situated in the home space (such as the aforementioned professional work) or at least such a location is thought of (planned home education for children). This “transfer” of services (including consumption) from the relevant institutions to the private sphere, within the household, is referred to as cocooning (Kowalska

¹¹ In Poland, approx. 9 million tonnes of food waste are generated, which is 235 kg per person per year. At the production stage, 6.4 million tonnes are wasted, while in households 2 million tonnes (54 kg/person per year). The data presented in the publication *Nie marnuj jedzenia* (2019) shows that the respondents indicated the following reasons for throwing food away: spoilage of food (65%), overlooking the expiry date (42%), too large portion (27%), too large purchases (22%), ill-considered purchases (20%), too large packaging (17%), improper storage (14%), low-quality purchases (11%), no idea how to use an ingredient (10%). It seems that running awareness-raising and educational campaigns (e.g. how to use leftover food, how to rationally buy) is necessary and justified. On the various aspects of wasting food, see Modrzyk 2019.

¹² <https://www.wolnymybc.pl/koronawirus-update-21-03-2020-dysonans/> (accessed: 27.05.2021).

2015). Its wide-spread is conditioned by the easy availability of electronic devices (RTV and household appliances), whereby many products can be manufactured at home, as well as of information and communication technologies that enable the independent performance of various operations defined as virtualisation of consumption (e.g. electronic banking, running administrative errands, online shopping). The closure of institutions during subsequent lockdowns has intensified these actions and favoured

the wide-spread and inventing new types of services delivered to home or enabling the performance of specific practices without leaving it. [...] A large portion of everyday inventiveness was caused by the necessity to do things that are usually entrusted to others (teaching children, producing food, creating hygiene stuff), which resulted in not only coping with something but also increasing self-sufficiency (Drozdowski et al. 2020b: 16).

What is an emblematic factor in this context is baking bread, popular during the pandemic, which is also mentioned by the author of the post. Researchers interpret this phenomenon manifold: primarily as a need to regain control, a sense of subjectivity and perpetration, but also as an example of resourcefulness and the pursuit of self-actualization in free time. Similar stabilising and therapeutic functions were delivered by planting vegetables and plants, caring for them and observing their growth (Drozdowski et al. 2020b: 16). DIY, self-manufacturing and processing practices, are a permanent and durable element of a simple lifestyle as a counterbalance to the consumptive sourcing of essential goods. Once again, they have the status of constitutive action in the everyday life of simplifiers, both in the self-realization and the pragmatic dimension. Not only are these activities undertaken for the purpose of managing an excessive amount of time or as a substitute for pre-pandemic normality, but they are also of fundamental self-identification importance.

The restriction of consumption practices, so typical of simple life, also applies to traditional cultural and social activities. The ways of spending time are dominated by “domesticated” forms of participation in culture, thus displacing going to the cinema, theatre, restaurants, etc., not only during the pandemic. It goes without saying this sphere has been intensified by the lack of alternatives to participation in cultural and artistic events other than mediated ones. Streaming services, platforms with films and music – for the general public – have become at this time the only form of communing with cultural products, thus making this form of reception even more popular.

An almost universal drive during the closure period accompanying the pandemic was to turn towards nature, one of the dimensions of voluntary simplicity. Walking, running, recreation on the allotment garden (when not subjected to the restriction), mentioned by bloggers, refer not only to practising a healthy lifestyle but – more broadly – to the need to live in harmony with nature (many voluntary simplifiers live outside the city). Reinstating the balance between the individual and the environment, their mutual attunement as the foundation of a simple life, is a continuation of the counter-cultural theme of escape from the technicised and materialised world.

The pandemic-driven “discovery” of nature, in connection with the described “domesticated” and virtual cultural practices, can be interpreted as “returning to experiencing the world in such a way that is not mediated by the media, and expressed by careful observation of animals, plant growth, the immediate vicinity that earlier, amidst the multitude of other impressions, had disappeared from sight completely” (Drozdowski et al. 2020c: 96). Again, it can be said that these activities had been beforehand “in the field of vision” of the followers of voluntary simplicity. All sorts of alternative consumption that distinguish a simple way of life – eco-consumption, ethical consumption, de-consumption – illustrate the interest in the “well-being” of the universe (see Wilczak 2016). The implementation of ecological consumption is evidenced, for example, by less frequent use of one’s own means of transport. One may say that the possibility of unlimited communing with nature by living on the outskirts of the city is a form of luxury and non-ostentatiously positioning good (Kozłowski 2013a; 2013b).

Again, there is a topic of re-thinking the hitherto purchasing habits and financial management, of limiting the spending of money due to the uncertain future and the need to secure it – at least partially – by having savings.¹³ Importantly, the postulated restraint of consumerist practices is not formulated in the directive mode.

4. Pandemic – stopping by and reflecting

I believe (or rather hope) that the coronavirus will change our lifestyle for the better, in particular our shopping habits. Fact – some have gone nuts and buying up toilet paper for a rainy day. As for me, I must admit I momentarily got carried away and bought a few cans of chickpeas and a kilo of rice – just in case.

But once these shopping emotions subside (or the cash just runs out) – we may notice that we do not need at all many of the things we buy so eagerly. That maybe in the back of the cupboard I have an entire bag of dry chickpeas, which I bought in the hope that I would cook it myself instead of buying cans. And that we don’t have to visit a shopping mall every weekend in search of bargains. That it’s better to reflect on what we already have in our homes. Whether we like spending time there and whether they have what we need to feel good. This is what prompted me to reflect on this whole situation.¹⁴

The situation of a pandemic suspension – in the belief of those simplifying ones – should become an impulse to reflect on the social and economic order and the possible reorganisation of some of its areas. They consider it crucial to change

¹³ The report KPMG (2020: 4, 5) implies that half of Poles withhold expenses other than necessary. 25% of respondents declare that as a result of the pandemic they will start buying local and national products and will be willing to pay a maximum of 10% more for them than for a similar product produced abroad. At the same time, support for local communities increased by 29%.

¹⁴ <https://gajapisze.pl/wszystko-co-jest-potrzebne-o-pracy-zdalnej-i-nie-tylko/18.03.2020> (accessed: 28.05.2021).

purchasing habits, which would become more reflective and take into account the level of real (in line with the assumptions of de-consumption), instead of created and imposed (by a consumerist approach) needs. This is related to the departure from making impulsive purchases that deliver functions other than utility ones, as well as to not succumbing to marketing-induced whims leading to nothing but excess (“buying unnecessary stuff”). Minimising spending on consumer goods and services also means avoiding excessive accumulation (however, the narrator recognises as such “a few cans and a kilogram of loose items”). One can venture a statement that these expectations were partially made realise, although it is not known whether they were permanent. The report “*Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii. Raport z drugiego etapu badań*” [*Everyday life in times of the pandemic. Report from the second stage of research*] says about modifications in the ways of planning the day, customary activities, including shopping – the respondents began to prepare lists and plan purchases (Drozdowski et al. 2020b: 103), as postulated by minimalists.

The reflection should also be paid to forms of spending free time otherwise than in a shopping centre providing multiple stimuli, and to not treating shopping as a form of alternative experiences. It is related to wondering about one’s possessions, which is also a form of consideration of what is genuinely important and what can be reduced. The essence of minimalist life strategies rather rests with limiting the possessed things or new purchases in favour of the effective use of existing items (things) instead of wasting them, e.g. through collaborative consumption (see Lipowski et al. 2020). The dichotomy of “what’s at home” versus “feeling good in it” is in line with the counter-cultural (and continued by contemporary “anti-consumerist” lifestyles) opposition to having and being. These dimensions do not have to be treated separately and in opposition to each other, although they fit in with the findings of psychologists, according to whom materialistic aspirations coexist with depressed mood, increased anxiety, and decreased level of spirituality and religiosity (Zawadzka 2014). The postulated shift towards post-materialistic values and those associated with well-being is manifested by recalling, *inter alia*, gratitude, humility, postponement of gratification, kindness and a sense of community (Kozłowski 2013a; Zawadzka 2014); although cocooning and self-sufficiency due to DIY encapsulate the individual rather than socialise it. The author of the next statement refers to these and other values included in the well-being repertoire.

I’d like to relieve you a little of the anxiety that accompanies all of us and encourage you to make sensible use of the situation in which we’re living. Many of us will stay at home this weekend, which gives us a chance to deal with relations with our loved ones and with our inner selves (just to be clear: I endorse a responsible approach to the situation).

Perhaps the time ahead is a unique gift. Not only a sort of test of responsibility, but also a new cause for many contemplations and reflections. Maybe this is the time when your adventure with minimalism and the search for moderation will begin. Maybe this is the time to clean the

wardrobe and think about what I “really” need to live. Every now and then there’re event in our lives that changes our priorities permanently. “Time for yourself” favours such reflection. I wish you to reflect for a moment on what is important.¹⁵

In the quoted fragment, the author firstly draws attention to the blog’s function – supporting, allowing to tame difficult emotions (mainly uncertainty), but also informative and activating. Secondly, the pandemic is treated – on a larger social scale – as an opportunity to not only redefine the current consumer lifestyle, but also to appreciate social networks created by individuals (these threads are interconnected according to a simplifying interpretation of less materialism/more postmaterialism). Contacts with others – family, friends, acquaintances, spending time in these groups are of crucial importance in the hierarchy of values for those simplifying life. Apart from interpersonal relations, an essential role rests with introspection processes important for self-actualisation, self-knowledge, and, consequently, also for the subjective feeling of happiness.

The author also proposes to consider whether we need all the things that sign consumption keeps telling us; whether they reflect our real needs; and whether the individual’s life should be limited to possessing and identifying ourselves through this aspect. Consumer culture, although it offers a promise of happiness and fulfilment (see Baudrillard 2006; Bauman 2009), in fact does not ensure their achievement, as it would undermine its own mechanisms of functioning. The “breakdown” of the consumer order and the exposure of the illusions they produce – according to the blogger – renders it possible to modify the lifestyle to reflect moderation in terms of material goods. The described context may, therefore, foster a biographical metamorphosis, or at least prompt reflection on the identity and tools (other than positioning/status goods) with which it is constructed. The proposals of the minimalists are considered to be as such. This resonates with the attitudes emerging from the cited reports: “Individuals stop focusing on prestige, status, and success, yet focus on what can provide them with security. Therefore, they celebrate closeness, contacts with others, taking care of health and mental balance” (Drozdowski et al. 2020b: 20). A special role in this case can be played by the therapeutic and counselling discourse, “suggesting how to make use of the lockdown time, for example for development, bonding, or noticing what was previously overlooked” (Krajewski, Kubacka 2020c: 72).

In this context, it is interesting to recall the voice of the minimalist podcast “Ajka minimalistka” [*Ajka the minimalist*], who summarises the pandemic time and points to several factors inherent in a simple life, which – in her opinion – determined its final “positive” assessment. She did not find it burdensome to stay at home as a consequence of the lockdown and to “transfer” many activities to the home space. This was due to the beforehand (re-)organisation of the private

¹⁵ <https://niecomniej.pl/2020/03/13/co-jeszcze-moze-sie-zdarzyc-czyli-czy-koronawirus-zmieni-nasze-priorytety> (accessed: 28.05.2021).

sphere and designing it according to minimalist patterns. The author felt comfortable in her home – although it is a small area, the space is functionally furnished, consciously arranged and does not overwhelm with an excess of equipment. Despite physical separation, relationships with loved ones – from her perspective – became strengthened, emotionally-wise; gestures of caring for relationships and remaining important despite being remotely contributed to this. Characteristic factors for simplifying life is the feeling and exercise of gratitude – present in this and earlier statements – for everything that happens, what we have and also what we do not have, but the lack of it is not subject to problematising. The author derived joy from travels and social contacts undertaken when it was possible; they were appreciated more than ever before. In the end, she places an emphasis on enjoying what is ordinary in everyday life, on focusing mindfulness on simple and cliché things, while (through experiencing them in such a way) highlighting everyday life – rituals, conversations, and walks. All of this – namely behaviours and values associated with well-being – allowed her to “come out” of the pandemic smarter. The authors of “*Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii. Raport z trzeciego etapu badań*” [*Everyday life in times of the pandemic. Report from the third stage of research*] also point out these aspects:

In the ways of dealing with the moods accompanying the pandemic and isolation, various forms of appreciating small things and small pleasures were dominant, constituting peculiar gaps in the monotonous, but also fearful time of waiting for a change of situation. Such pleasures were everyday, not just festive, meals celebrated in the family circle, the possibility to carefully observe plant growth or animal behaviour, reading and watching what you had not had time for before (Krajewski, Kubačka 2020c: 69).

As for the followers of voluntary simplicity, however, not only are these activities a breakthrough in pandemic-triggered uncertain everyday life but they also constitute the essence of their lifestyle.

5. Conclusions

The initial phase of the pandemic witnessed Li Edelkoort (trend analyst) forecast a massive quarantine of consumption. She predicted that following the initial global recession, the coronavirus epidemic would allow reorganising the world of values and force individuals to slow down the pace, teach self-sufficiency and mindfulness (Edelkoort 2020). These elements – to a varying degree – were noticeable not only in the statements by the simplifying ones, but also in the answers given by the respondents in mentioned reports. The life-simplifying people had introduced this consumption quarantine intentionally and voluntarily beforehand. Most of their activities during the COVID-19 pandemic have not changed dramatically; some of them have been modified to adapt to social regulations (e.g. minor stockpiling). Some of the already well-established practices have been extended and subjected

to innovations, especially in the field of independent, home-based manufacturing. In their opinion, the pandemic has confirmed the functionality of the simplifying lifestyle, and the proposed and implemented solutions associated with it have made it relatively easier to find oneself in a new situation. To the dominant extent, their voices were affirmative and reinforced the rightfulness of the choices made.

Habits and routines that had been common and obvious everydayness for the simplifying ones, during the pandemic have become something usual – by necessity – for the majority. Will these changes be permanent and embedded in the minds of individuals? As the cited reports show, the ideas and discourses that organise the simplifying worldview have been becoming visible in the experiences of others, although they do not constitute a defined coherent lifestyle. When it comes to the potential good effects driven by the pandemic situation, there are two phenomena that are interesting in view of the presented considerations. The first is to re-evaluate various issues in everyday life; to see what is most important; to bring family members closer to each other; to appreciate interpersonal solidarity and sensitivity to the needs of others. The second is to treat the crisis as a hope to change how the world works – especially when it comes to consumerism and waste, as well as the lack of respect towards the natural environment (the remaining indications concerned the appreciation of the role and importance of the health service, science and scientists). It is surprising how much these areas resonate with the repertoire of attitudes characterising the simple life (at least on the rhetorical level) (see Drozdowski et al. 2020a). The language of description itself is analogous – what is important, closeness, cooperation, empathy, namely the already-invoked components of the subjective well-being impossible to be made realised within the framework of consumer culture.

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UPRASZCZANIE ŻYCIA W PANDEMII COVID-19

Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie wybranych aspektów życia codziennego osób określających się jako zwolennicy upraszczania życia w kontekście pandemii COVID-19 w Polsce. Artykuł składa się z trzech części. W pierwszej w syntetycznej formie przybliżono ideę prostego życia, jej główne przekonania i manifestacje, w drugiej opisano stopień i rodzaje zmian w organizacji codzienności upraszczających życie we wskazanym czasie. W części trzeciej dociekano, czy doświadczenia pandemii mają w sobie potencjał modyfikacji obecnych postaw konsumpcyjnych. Punkt ten stanowi nawiązanie do głosów pojawiających się w debacie publicznej sygnalizujących – szczególnie w początkowej fazie – taką możliwość w szerszej społecznej skali. Materiał źródłowy stanowiły wpisy na blogach, fragmenty podcastów poświęconych prostemu życiu oraz inne źródła niewywołane (raporty, teksty naukowe i publicystyczne).

Słowa kluczowe: proste życie, osoby dobrowolnie upraszczające, alternatywne formy konsumpcji.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE ORGANISATION OF FAMILY LIFE AND THE PURSUIT OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF MOTHERS SEEKING IT JOBS

Abstract. The article discusses the topic of experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the organisation of family life and the realisation of professional plans of mothers wishing to pursue their ambitions in the IT sector. The starting point for the considerations is a gender-sensitive analysis of the condition of the IT sector in Poland conducted on the basis of found data, complemented by an exploratory qualitative study conducted in two stages using the technique of Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The study is part of the ongoing POB HERITAGE grant “Women, get to coding! Mapping educational initiatives supporting women. Pilot study”.

Keywords: home office, COVID-19, digital economy, IT, division of household chores.

1. Introduction

As recently as in February 2020, remote working was just one of the non-wage benefits at many companies, including those in the IT sector. The pandemic situation, and the accompanying sanitary requirements, turned it from a privilege into a necessity, which, combined with the transfer of all childcare to households, presented a major adaptation challenge. Pre-pandemic research had already indicated that daily struggles to balance paid work and family responsibilities were particularly burdensome for female workers with children. Despite their education and pursuit of professional fulfilment, as well as their opinion that relationships should be based on a principle of equality between partners, they took on the majority of

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housework and caregiving responsibilities (Scholarios, Marks 2004). The pandemic, as the research shows, has exacerbated these trends (Galasso 2020; Alon et al. 2020; Del Boca et al. 2020; Hite, McDonald 2020; Uddin 2021; Power 2020), and will continue to affect both work organisation (Del Boca et al. 2020; Hite, McDonald 2020) and inequalities related to reproductive workload (Galasso 2020; Hupkau, Petrongolo 2020). The topic of gender inequalities related to remote work and caregiving responsibilities in the context of the demands of the digital economy has been widely discussed recently (UN Women 2020). The study presented here focuses on the pandemic experiences of Polish women seeking to pursue careers in the IT sector. It addresses issues related to the organisation of daily life and adaptation of domestic space to the demands dictated by the insecurity of the pandemic reality, the impact of these experiences on the realisation of career plans. Everyday life is an important dimension of social life (Lewicka 2021). In the pandemic, it was mainly realised at home, causing a gradual blurring of the boundaries between work and private life. This led to problems with maintaining a balance in these two spheres of life, even in IT professions, which are associated with flexibility and theoretically easier reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

In addition, it contributes to the discussion on creating an enabling environment for women in modern technology sectors (Hanson, Krywult-Albańska 2020), as well as to the literature on the inequalities and challenges of the women's workload during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Characteristics of the information and communication technology (IT) sector in Poland during the pandemic, including the situation of women

According to the data from the National Official Register of Business Entities (REGON), the number of entities declaring their business activity increases every year. At the end of 2021, there were 4.2 million entities, 3% more than the year before. There is also an increase in entities involved in the area of computer programming, consultancy and related activities (Section J, Division 62 of the Polish Classification of Activities, PKD). On the last day of December 2021, there were 141,400 such entities in Poland (3.3% of all entities), more than twice as many as at the end of 2015 (68,000, 1.8% of the total). The growth of the number of entities in the areas of Division 62 occurs at double-digit rates every year. In 2021, compared to 2020, the number of entities increased by 16% (by 19,500), five times more than the number of total entities, and in 2020 it was 10.1% higher than in 2019 (GUS 2021a; GUS 2021b).

It is worth noting that in 2020 women accounted for 46.7% of the total working population, a percentage that fluctuates only slightly from year to year (GUS

2020a). The shares of women among employees (48.4% in 2020) and among owners, co-owners, and family members helping in business (42.1% in 2020) are also stable. The impact of the pandemic is not visible in the 2020 data. However, the situation of female workers in software and IT consulting companies is different. Overall, there are more women working in this industry, with 47,000 in 2016 and 67,000 in 2020. However, the share of female workers is much smaller than in the economy overall. In 2020, women accounted for 27.5% of the employed population (0.3 percentage points less than in 2019). Significant differences exist in the status of women working in business areas listed in Section J Division 62 of the Polish Classification of Activities. There is a much higher (and increasing year by year) share of women working under an employment relationship (36.4% in 2020, while in 2016 the percentage was 32%) than the share of women in the group of business owners and co-owners (7.2% in 2020, the lowest since 2016, when it was 11.7%). As this is a trend observed since 2016, it is difficult to link it to the pandemic. For every one female owner/co-owner of an entity listed in Section J Division 62, there are more than eleven women employed in such businesses. Considering the total workforce in this industry, there are two employed persons per owner/co-owner. However, when analysing these data, one has to bear in mind that there are also persons in managerial positions among those listed as employed.

In 2020, more than 161,000 full-time employees and more than 8,500 part-time employees (95% of the total were full-time employees, 93.4% were women) worked in software and IT consulting entities. Among those employed on a full-time basis, 35.8% were women and among those employed part time, there were 47.4% of women (2020). In 2020, the number of full-time employees in Section J Division 62 increased by 5.2% compared to 2019, and the number of women among full-time employees increased by 6.4%. At the same time, the number of part-time workers fell by 1.9% and the number of female part-time workers fell by 5%. Perhaps this is related to the pandemic, or perhaps the decrease in female part-timers is some kind of correction after the dynamic increase between 2018 and 2019 (the number of female part-timers increased by 21.3% then). This question requires additional analysis which will not be undertaken in this article (GUS 2020b).

GUS (Statistics Poland, formerly known as CSO) data on employment and wages of employed persons by occupation show that in 2020 there were about 15% women in IT-related occupations in managerial and middle-level positions (technicians), and about 19–20% women among those in specialist positions (systems analysts, database and network specialists). In relation to 2018, the share of women has increased in all groups except managers. In specialist occupations, where relatively more women are employed, the largest wage gap between men's and women's earnings exists, with income differences of up to one fifth (GUS 2020b).

Eurostat's data on professionals working in ICT show that in Poland in 2020 women accounted for 15% of this professional group (85% were men), while in the EU as a whole the percentage was 18.5%. Both in Poland and in the EU, an

increase of 0.6 p.p. was recorded in comparison with 2019 (Eurostat 2020). These data cannot be compared with the GUS (Statistics Poland) data for methodological reasons, including a completely different definition.

In the ranking “Women in Digital Scoreboard 2021” (published in November 2021), created on the basis of 12 indicators, Poland, with a score of 43.7 (on a scale from 0 to 100) ranked 24th among 27 countries in Europe. The average score for the entire European Union was 53.2, and for Finland (first place) – 76.9. In terms of specialist skills and employment (one of the three components), Poland ranked 20th with a score of 40.6. The value for the entire EU was 47, and for Ireland (first place) – 67.2. This component consists of three indicators:

1. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) graduates – according to the data for 2018, Poland is second in the EU, behind Ireland. Poland has 17.4 female STEM graduates per 1000 people aged 20–29 (Ireland 23.9, EU as a whole 13.7). The value of the indicator for men in Poland is 22.6.
2. ICT professionals (service managers, specialists, technicians, installers, repairers) – data for 2020, LFS (Polish: BAEL). Female ICT specialists constitute 1.14% of the total number of employed persons in Poland, which means the 25th place in the EU (the leader is Finland with the result of 3.68%). The indicator for the entire EU amounts to 1.73%. The value of the indicator for men in Poland is 5.18%.
3. In terms of the gender wage gap indicator, Poland (28.2%) ranked 24th. The smallest gap (8.7%) is in Sweden, while in the whole EU it is 19.3%. The data used here are for 2019 and include all employees of companies with 10+ employees, not only ICT (European Commission 2021).

The report “Women in IT 2020” by No Fluff Jobs indicates that the industry is perceived as attractive by women, who most often mention higher salaries (70%), opportunities for personal development (51%) or the possibility to pursue their passions (40%) as the main motivators. Women who want to take up programming usually just change their jobs and educate themselves. 49% of Polish women who want to start a career in IT gain the necessary knowledge and skills by self-studying, 25% want to complete specialist courses and only 7% are thinking about university studies in this field.

The report also indicates that employment contracts are the most common among women in IT. Only 17% of the surveyed women work under a B2B contract, despite the fact that such a form of cooperation is often associated with greater freedom as to the place and time of providing services and, theoretically, easier reconciliation of numerous professional and non-professional duties, as well as with maintaining work-life balance.

The cited research also indicates that due to the pandemic, women working in IT have more work to do at home. 41% of female programmers worldwide believe that remote work has negatively affected them. It is hardly surprising, considering the fact that many tasks and issues related to childcare, despite the declared equal

partnership-based model of relationship, in practice are still assigned to women (CBOS 2020). Helping children to study remotely while taking care of the home and the irregular working hours caused by the pandemic are therefore not making life any easier for any woman, including those working in IT. As many as 57 per cent of women feel more burnt out in their jobs, 43 per cent of them work longer hours and 42 per cent have more household duties than their partners (No Fluff Jobs 2020).

As indicated on the basis of the presented data, the pandemic has not stopped the development of the industry. The IT sector is constantly looking for new employees, including women. Considering the above-mentioned findings and the fact that the pandemic causes an increase in the load of caregiving work, which is delegated to households to a substantial extent and burdens women, it seems justified to recognize women's pandemic experiences and their impact on the organization of family life and the fulfilment of professional plans.

3. Research methodology

The conducted research is exploratory in nature. Respondents were selected by means of purpose sampling on the basis of a key variable – the desire to pursue professional ambitions in the IT sector.

In order to capture a fuller picture of experiences at different phases of the pandemic, the study was conducted in two phases on the same group of female respondents, the first part between March and June 2021 and the second part in January and February 2022. It is worth noting that on 12 March 2020, activities and classes in kindergartens, schools, and universities were suspended, and distance learning was introduced. In the following days, the government declared a state of epidemic and ordered a lockdown. At the beginning of May 2021, a gradual lifting of the restrictions began and kindergartens were allowed to open, but the order to wear masks and keep distance in public spaces remained in force. In 2022, due to further mutations of the virus, the rules of the sanitary regime were temporarily reintroduced, including distance learning and work from home.

The pandemic situation, the accompanying uncertainty and lack of safety, as well as the requirements of research ethics necessitated the implementation of the research process through online platforms (Zoom, Messenger, MS Teams). All respondents agreed to participate in the study and were informed that their participation would be anonymous.

In the research, the IDI (Individual In-Depth Interviews) technique was used. It allows for a dynamic modification of the scenario, depending on the respondent's specifics, the nature of answers or the introduction of topics to the conversation that were not considered at the stage of designing the interview scenario.

The first part of the research, conducted in 2021, was focused on the respondents' life situation, their professional plans, the organisation of their workspace, the

difficulty of combining work with caregiving and studying, conflicts, fears and expectations. The second part (2022), on the other hand, referred to what the respondents believed they had achieved in their professional and domestic lives.

The interview scenario consisted of three parts. The first was a free, in-depth account by the interviewee of her own story in the context of her career aspirations and pandemic experiences centred around her life at home, as well as combining work duties or job searching with her responsibilities to her family. The second part consisted of the explanation of any points that might be unclear, while the third part consisted of additional, more specific questions (Merrill, West 2009). In addition to these core parts, the interview was introduced with a brief discussion of its aims and concluded with an open-ended question about issues that the interviewee felt had not been addressed (Kvale 2007: 106). To summarise and code the data, thematic analysis was used. Data labelling was used in the transcriptions to protect the identity of the participants.

During the study, 17 script-supported in-depth interviews were conducted in two rounds. Seven of them involved young mothers (ages 23–26) who, being fresh out of university, attempted to start working in the IT sector during the pandemic. Ten of them involved mothers (ages 27–40) with more work experience who wanted to retrain and change jobs. All the respondents were married, with higher technical (9) or humanities (8) education and lived in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, i.e. Kraków (5), Warsaw (6), Wrocław (3), Poznań (3). Among the respondents who planned to change their occupation during the pandemic, there were female science teachers, i.e. mathematics and physics teachers (3), foreign language teachers (3), a translator (1), a designer (1) and corporate accountants (2). As for the occupations of the husbands of the women surveyed, in the group of mothers entering the labour market, three men worked as sales representatives (working outside the home, also in lockdown), two in local government administration (working from home) and two were associated with the IT sector (working for corporations). In the group of retraining women, four men were working in corporate accounting (who also worked from home in lockdown), three as sales representatives (working outside the home), two in uniformed services (working outside the home) and one was self-employed.

4. Findings

The participants of the study are women who are in favour of a partnership family model, understood as a union of equals in which decisions are made after open discussion and domestic roles are negotiated. Only four of the surveyed women come from metropolitan cities in which they currently live. The others, except for two, came from small towns (up to 50,000 inhabitants) to study at universities and stayed, seeing it as an opportunity for a better life, as well as for personal and professional development. Two of the respondents came to live in the city from

the countryside (Poznań voivodeship, Podlaskie voivodeship), while their brothers stayed on the farm. Being a homemaker does not suit any of the respondents. They have been observing the lives of their mothers and despite the fact that they perceive their childhood as being within the norm, they do not want to repeat patterns taken from home. A recurring theme in the interviews is that of a tired and unappreciated mother who kept a brave face. Even if the father was “fine” and family life was within the local norm, i.e. no more serious issues than quarrels about money, silent treatment or alcohol were present, the respondents perceive the falseness of their mothers’ declared contentment. One respondent said:

I am grateful to my parents for the way they brought us up, it was hard at times, but they persevered with each other. I could never understand why my mother, who was offered a career in mathematics when she was at university, chose my father and a stable job as a teacher. When he died, about 4 years after his death she burned pictures of him, and I found out I had a brother out of wedlock. I think she regretted her decisions a bit (M, mother of three, thinking of divorce).

The respondents combined work with study when they were at university. These were various occupations, from being a hostess, a cleaner in corporate office buildings, a tutor, an Avon salesperson or a babysitter, to more prestigious jobs, such as being an accountant in a small company or working at cultural events. This is where linguistic skills came in handy. Their work was a form of self-expression, an element of building an alternative to the “husband, children, chores, bitterness” scenario (as referred to by A, mother of two). Those respondents who are young mothers just after graduation stress that they are “looking for a well-paid idea for living, so as not to get stuck” (B, mother of an 11-month-old daughter). Good earnings and a better quality of life are emphasized, “which, if you want to live on a decent level, costs a lot” (D, mother of a 6-month-old son), especially when the couple are paying off a mortgage, and their families have contributed to the payment.

This cash we got from my husband’s family for the flat is nice, but I feel obliged to his family. The mother-in-law claims the right to interfere in everything, even though she has not been an exceptionally good mother and has been divorced twice. All her unsolicited advice and telling me off for buying clothes, even though I earn my pennies and breastfeed my kid at the same time (D, mother of a 4-year-old daughter and a 5-month-old son).

In the women’s answers, there is also a recurring issue of increasing mortgage instalments and the need to reduce the financial burden borne by the husband: “The instalments for the flat are getting higher, and because of his job (sales representative) he hardly ever sees us. When we do see each other, we growl at each other out of exhaustion” (G, mother of a 3-month-old daughter). It appears from the statements of the interviewed women that the husbands most often resort to the strategy of “intensification of activities” in order to meet their idea of the husband’s role that they learned at home, which, despite the declaration of equal partnership, is related to providing for the family, especially in times of uncertainty and insecurity caused by the pandemic.

Differences in spouses' earnings play a significant role in this. The respondents appreciate what they received in the family home, even if it was not a smooth experience. However, they want to avoid repeating patterns copied from their family of origin; on the contrary, they intend to build their marriage on the basis of equal partnership. A crucial element in the statements made by the interviewed women is the orientation towards having their own money and fulfilling their ambitions and, what is more important, combining these two spheres with a successful and harmonious family life. The respondents are aware of the burden resulting from their upbringing, habits, and the full set of experiences that has shaped them. They try to structure their family life on the basis of valuing themselves as a fully-fledged partner and not as someone who is just of service to others.

5. Professional plans. Achievements

The IT sector comprises many professions. The young mothers who participated in the study treat it as a kind of discernment of options, an element of development. They are tempted by good salaries, by the development of the sector and by the fact that if they get settled in the profession, "the career will take its course". "Everyone praises it so much, and I've always been good at maths, we'll see, maybe it will be the golden shot" (O, mother of an 11-month-old son). In the answers, there is often (6 respondents) a theme of not knowing which profession would be best for them and which one to try. "When you read blogs, and you stumble upon incentives to go in that direction every step of the way, you catch the hook, but it's hard to determine on your own what it is you have an aptitude for" (A, mother of a 4-month-old son). Four respondents aspire to IT because their friends have found their way in the profession, and they are following them. "While still at university, a friend got me interested in IT, explaining that it's not just coding. I like teaching, but we all know how little money you earn at school. She succeeded even though she taught herself everything" (B, mother of a 6-month-old son).

The women actively use what the Internet and support groups for mothers have to offer. They participate in forums and information exchanges. There they seek comfort and inspiration. They also seek information on the best options available through personal networks, through word of mouth and through friends, for example from their university.

The pandemic experience did not change the mothers' career plans. It only adjusted the timing of their expected success, even a small one. In the group of mothers with some work experience, four have been successful. However, the adaptation to the new working conditions is still a significant effort, despite the relaxation of restrictions and the fact that the world is slowly returning to normal. This is indicative of the persistence of women's demands on themselves and their pragmatic approach to finances. "You don't know what will happen with finances,

times are uncertain. I am still earning less and the bills are increasing” (M, mother of three, thinking about divorce). Even successful retraining is accompanied by huge remorse. “I barely started working and, here we go, the little ones are sick again, so everyone is quarantined” (A, mother of a 4 -year-old son).

In the group of young mothers entering the job market, three women have been successful. Two of them got an internship as testers and one as a data analyst. In the group of mothers with some work experiences, five have changed their jobs. They all emphasise that it cost them an awful lot of self-denial and that their children give them wings in the daily struggles for a better tomorrow. The remaining women are still looking for their place and definitely do not want to give up.

6. Organising the workspace

Home office is a big challenge. It is only seemingly limited to organising a work area. The respondents mention practices aimed at time management (also children’s time: naps, teaching the daily routine, specific rhythm of the house), technological support such as smartphones, tablets, and solutions aimed at adapting the available and often scarce space of the home for work. This is particularly difficult when both parents work remotely. It also frequently generates difficult situations and battles over territory or habits.

The worst thing is to find my own place to work, a quiet one. If I somehow manage to get a piece of space for myself, I desperately protect it from the rest of the family. It’s difficult because every time I start writing a CV, doing commissioned work, or finishing a training course, I have to clear my place of mugs, teddy bears, and other knick-knacks (D, mother of a 6-month-old son).

It is also difficult to find time to work.

When you start a conversation, suddenly everyone wants to drink or eat. Not a moment of peace. A complete disaster. The kids’ rooms and the bedroom are also out. The husband works in the bedroom. Check-ins, calls. During lockdown, we kept bumping into each other. The atmosphere in the house was getting thicker (A, mother of 4 year-old son).

Both space and time are subject to negotiations. However, these negotiations are not on equal terms. Women’s aspirations often lose out to finance and the pragmatics of everyday life.

7. Balancing work, care, and study. Strategies

According to the statements of the women interviewed, there emerges a picture of a kind of a maternity multitasking frenzy composed of a series of “must do” activities. “You’re trying to assemble a jigsaw puzzle on the floor during dinner, checking if the laundry is already done, trying to have a conversation with your

daughter” (H, mother of a three month-old daughter). There is a theme of guilt towards the child, but also strategies undertaken to juggle different fields of daily activity. The strategies are dictated by the husband’s availability after work, especially when he has an outside job during the lockdown and the woman is left to herself, and by financial pragmatics: “It is his income that allows us to live, we have loans, he is under pressure too” (M, mother of a 5-month-old son). Situations in which both partners work from home only seemingly improve the sharing of responsibilities. It is not a matter of the husbands intentionally shirking their duties, but of the work schedule and the tight workflow imposed by the employer, as well as the fact that children, especially small ones, incessantly demand their mother’s attention. The coping strategies indicated constitute snatching a minute for oneself, i.e. for study or work, followed by remorse resulting from playing YouTube cartoons to the children. Toys and gadgets, such as rocking-toys, merry-go-rounds, to keep the child occupied for a while, are often mentioned. The elements indicated as helpful in combining learning, work, and care in the opinions of the respondents are slings, baby carriers and ultra-light and spill-proof tablet computer equipment.

I used to have time for proper concentration and learning during the child’s naps, but also when my toddler was crawling on the carpet and looking at things. Then you can turn on some short tutorials. Plus in the afternoon, when the husband comes back less tired. He drives a lot, so sometimes there’s a moment like that, but it’s all a drop in the ocean of needs (P, mother of 6-month-old son).

The most extreme examples of maternal multitasking documented in this study are articulated by mothers seeking to reinvent themselves.

Immediately after leaving the hospital I went back to my job in the home-office (half-time). Most of the day I am alone with the children, my husband works in the uniformed services. It is a demanding job, frequent trips, but it is paid moderately [...]. I work on the phone, usually holding one child in my arms and following the others from the corner of my eye, unless they are in kindergarten. And if they are not, because in autumn they are frequently ill, then if they are sleeping, the laptop/phone comes into play. I often don’t have enough energy to prepare application documents or put something on the GitHub (M, mother of a 4 month-old daughter).

For the interviewees, motherhood in the pandemic is like the Olympics, requiring a strong commitment on all fronts. It was the most difficult in lockdown because kindergartens and schools were closed, and face-to-face contacts with other people were reduced. “Aunting,” i.e. handing the children over to the care of a friend in order to use the time to look after oneself, was also out of the question. The option of sending the children to the park with their father did not work either.

The mothers surveyed set extremely high standards for themselves. Not only do they have to give their children a lot of tenderness and love, take care of their intellectual development (they feel obliged to give them clever toys and feel guilty about letting them watch videos), but at the same time it is necessary not to neglect any developmental opportunity for oneself, not to miss the moment, not to fall out of

the game. According to the respondents, this is more than exhausting, but it is difficult to let go without feeling guilty. This self-discipline seems to be rooted in wider social constructs of being a “good mother”, which refer to daily presence and involvement in raising children, but also not letting go of the pursuit of a career. Expectations of an equal partnership among respondents remain unchanged. During the most severe restrictions, it was not the agreements between partners that influenced the division of responsibilities, but financial pragmatics. The husband’s professional work, in the face of the uncertainty of unprecedented sanitary restrictions, was more important, but not so much as to give up dreams altogether for it. No lasting solutions were worked out, but the issues related to the division of responsibilities were better emphasised.

8. Conflicts, negotiation of roles

Despite the equal partnership model of the relationship declared by the respondents, the line of conflict turned out to be that of habits and tedious, endless housekeeping.

Jacek helps around the house, but not spontaneously. Sometimes I don’t have the strength to repeat over and over: »Don’t put your plates around the bed, put your shoes in the cabinet«. Sometimes I get mad because the kid, when he crawls into the hallway, puts everything in his mouth. I understand that he is tired, but I also work hard at home (A, mother of a 7-month-old son).

Conflicts are also fostered by overwhelming responsibilities. “Last night, out of tiredness, I argued with my husband, and it was his birthday. There was the proverbial spark and boom! Even the fact that I had prepared a present for him didn’t save the situation. We are both exhausted” (M, mother of a 4-month-old daughter).

Although the women interviewed are aware of the importance of negotiating the division of responsibilities, the practice of daily life in the pandemic can be unpredictable and fraught with hotspots that explode.

In May I rebelled. It can’t be that the child is solely my responsibility. He will play with his daughter sometimes, making a terrible mess, but when it is necessary to get up at night, it all comes down to me. I understand that my money from commissions is not enough to provide for my family, but I am also human and I want to rest. My husband doesn’t see that I help him a lot, even if only by keeping the house quiet when he has a call. Why can’t I count on mutual help? (A, mother of 3-month-old daughter).

Men, in the face of the pandemic, as admitted by the respondents, most often adopted the strategy of “intensifying activities” and “escaping into work”, implementing their image of the husband’s role as the one who provided for the family. While at the level of information exchange and decision-making the partners cooperated, the fathers did not participate as much as they could in household duties. The demand for equality and partnership was accepted, but economic

arguments prevailed, which translated into additional emotional labour for the women, who cared for their husbands' comfort by taking on additional responsibilities. In addition, the women interviewed felt a need to alleviate stress-related arguments and discharges. This was an expression of concern for the emotional stability of the marriage.

9. Fears and expectations

Concerns about health as well as high levels of stress and fatigue emerged in the respondents' statements. The sudden and unexpected limitation of social contacts, the accompanying sense of threat and anxiety, especially in the first weeks, as well as the incoming stream of often contradictory information, posed a considerable challenge to all the participants. All this did not eliminate their "old" fears about whether they would be able to find a decent job and whether they would not lose out on motherhood. One mother interviewed said, "I am afraid that this boom for IT professions will pass, and I will not succeed. I don't have much of an idea what I want to do and how to organise my professional life so that the work is exciting and productive. I seem to want to try many things, and IT seems attractive to me" (M, mother of an 8-month-old son). Those with more work experience emphasise financial worries and the fact that they finally want to do something that allows them to develop themselves. The current job does not give them satisfaction. The promise of a good salary and a job in which they can fulfil themselves is tempting, "because if not now, then when" (B, mother of a 10-month-old son).

10. Conclusions

Combining work and private life during the pandemic is not an easy task. The greatest difficulty is the unequal distribution of responsibilities in the household (lack of sufficient support from the partner), children getting ill frequently, quarantine, and the difficulty in finding a quiet place to perform professional duties or a moment to study. Coping with all the responsibilities is particularly difficult for mothers with little work experience who are just starting their careers. As women get more experience with family and work, their attitude changes. They start to share more responsibilities with their partner, but their expectations of themselves do not diminish. They negotiate roles, responsibilities, and duties, but they are more lenient towards their husbands, for reasons of financial pragmatism and fear for the well-being and financial upkeep of the family, as well as the general family atmosphere.

Overwhelming domestic responsibilities have not affected the professional aspirations of the respondents. None of the respondents gave up their plans. They stressed the financial attractiveness of the sector and the fact that higher earnings

would improve the family's livelihood and allow for financial respite. It would also give them more possibility of self-development. Those women who have accomplished their plans feel immense pride and emphasise that it is the children who motivate them to make such a huge effort.

In the pandemic, despite minor adjustments, typical patterns persisted. Mothers working or studying remotely were the ones responsible for most of the housework and childcare. The situation was more difficult when only one parent (the mother) worked or studied remotely (the other outside the home). The gender disparity in household responsibilities was much more pronounced here. The mothers who worked or studied at home took on almost all the additional work, while the fathers, justifying themselves by the pressure and fatigue resulting from the intensification of efforts to provide for the family, reported much less interest in additional household duties and childcare. They did not ignore these needs but allowed themselves more leeway. Domestic chores had to be solicited and reminded of or requested repeatedly. The domestic situation of the respondents did not change significantly when the restrictions were relaxed. Open kindergartens or nurseries were not a total relief. Children's illnesses and COVID-19-related quarantines again confined childcare to the home. Mothers were supported by grandmothers, but it can be seen in many statements that this generated conflicts, especially when the mother-in-law helped with childcare.

The pandemic experience did not change the mothers' career plans. It only corrected the timing of the expected success, even the small one. Future research, to provide a better understanding of the situation and how it unfolded, should consider the views of men, and compare them with the experiences articulated by women. Future studies could also explore the impact of remote working on broader cultural shifts regarding gender equality and gender roles, particularly in the IT sector, which is changing everyday life and requiring deep adaptations. This is important in an era of a digital economy that leads to inequality.

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WPLYW PANDEMII COVID-19 NA ORGANIZACJĘ ŻYCIA RODZINNEGO I REALIZACJĘ ASPIRACJI ZAWODOWYCH MATEK POSZUKUJĄCYCH PRACY W BRANŻY IT

Abstrakt. Artykuł porusza tematykę doświadczania pandemii COVID-19 i jej wpływu na organizację życia rodzinnego i realizację planów zawodowych matek chcących rozwijać się w sektorze IT. Punktem wyjścia podjętych rozważań jest uwzględniająca płeć i przeprowadzona w oparciu o dane zastane analiza kondycji sektora IT w Polsce, uzupełniona eksploracyjnym badaniem jakościowym przeprowadzonym dwuetapowo techniką Indywidualnych Wywiadów Pogłębionych (IDI). Badanie jest elementem realizowanego grantu POB HERITAGE „Kobiety do kodu! Mapowanie inicjatyw edukacyjnych wspierających kobiety. Badanie pilotażowe”.

Słowa kluczowe: home office, COVID-19, gospodarka cyfrowa, IT, podział obowiązków domowych.

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MEDIA AND TRUST. ON THE NEED TO SEEK INFORMATION IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES. CASE STUDY OF POLAND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused anxiety and uncertainty as to how to function “normally” to take over the place of routine. The greater reliance on social media, the encouraging of beliefs in conspiracy theories have all been linked with lower levels of preventative behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. The perpetual deluge of (true) information, misinformation and disinformation, whether man-made or bot-made, can be toxic, especially in combination with an unawareness of what news really is and how it affects us, both individually and collectively.

Therefore, the current pandemic is partly a challenge to filter (in real time) the sheer quantity of information published on a daily basis but also the inability of researchers, policy makers, journalists, and ordinary citizens to keep up with quickly changing facts.

I assume that in a situation of uncertainty people seek information in order to make the best decision. Accepted information is an expression of trust in their own sources of information, including trust in scientists and doctors or a lack of trust in government decisions, and a lack of trust in pharmaceutical companies. Political trust received attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Higher political trust led to higher compliance between behaviour and those government policies implemented to contain pandemics. The research’s intent is to illustrate which and how media sources of information constituted resistance to actions taken by state institutions and scientists in a situation of epidemiological emergency.

Keywords: COVID-19, uncertainty, vaccine, trust, media, disinformation.

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1. Introduction

In general, increasing knowledge of natural hazard-related risks ultimately leads to better understanding, improved management, and finally to risk reduction and adaptation.

However, knowledge is unique to an individual person's mind and is often confused with information, which is merely a means of documenting and sharing knowledge. The rapid increase in research-based knowledge has led to an increased fragmentation of knowledge. Knowledge fragmentation has advantages in that it means that advanced, specialised expertise in various fields exists. Additionally, there is the vast knowledge related to the experience of communities, families and individuals that is not always capitalised on. Till this day aspects of the complex interface between information sharing, knowledge-making and decision-making remain unexplored and a better appraisal is needed to effectively integrate information, knowledge, and expertise into efforts regarding mechanisms for positive exchange between science, policy, practice, and the public (Spiekermann et al. 2015). The spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in 2020 heightened uncertainty. The uniqueness of the pandemic situation was the inability to relate to past experience. Additionally, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lack of expertise to accurately determine the level of the coronavirus threat and to systemically minimize the risks of illness. The initial pandemic situation can be described as a state of informational uncertainty, that is, a shortage or complete lack of information necessary to take action (Greco, Roger 2001). However, the pandemic has shown that most communities are able and willing to respond drastically to crises during a period when they perceive a high level of threat and when they are supported by institutions in collective action to reduce the threat (Botzen et al. 2021).

The public discourse on the pandemic currently incorporates a panoply of topics including science, public health, social disruptions, political divisions, and the economic fallout: each of which can be a vehicle for misinformation—information that differs from expert consensus at the time it is shared (Schoch-Spana et al. 2021).

The problem is people have become increasingly reliant on social media as credible and useful sources for acquiring all kinds of information, including health knowledge (WHO 2016). In this crowded information landscape, the veracity of information can be difficult to determine and key messages can be lost. Risk perception in the midst of a growing epidemic can be influenced by several factors, including knowledge of the disease, information sources and emotional aspects (Zhong et al. 2021).

While many reasons exist for this flood of misinformation, including the widespread public adoption of social media platforms as a tool for information seeking itself, the uncertain nature around COVID-19 as a novel infectious disease, and the presence of disinformation campaigns aimed at deflecting blame and pushing false narratives around the global COVID-19 response, no easy solutions exist to stem the tide between blind trust and scepticism towards scientific knowledge.

2. Research background and theoretical foundation

Attitudes toward COVID-19 virus containment recommendations have been shaped as a result of varied information. The theoretical basis is the category of trust and uses and gratification theory. A chief tenet of U&G theory of audience behaviour is that media use is selective and motivated by a rational self-awareness of the individual's own needs and an expectation that those needs will be satisfied by particular types of media and content. The use and gratification approach postulates that media outlets compete with other sources of information to satisfy audience needs. A user is an active information seeker if he perceives his knowledge as insufficient. When there is a gap, i.e., a difference between the existing situation and the ideal situation, information seeking serves to minimize uncertainty, to find meaning, and communicating with others constitutes a bridge that connects information gaps, through narratives meaning is made, chaos is ordered, future events are controlled and predicted (Weick 1995). Information seeking in everyday life is all about paying attention to information relevant to the individual. Information is data that has been processed so that it becomes useful in making a decision (Martin, Powell 1992, after: Grabowski, Zając 2009). Making a decision produces specific consequences. The meaning of information is provided with the context and given by the receiver as a result of the observation of the external world. So information depends on the interpretive ability of the receiver. Knowledge, on the other hand, is information verified in practice, empirically verifiable information.

Narratives – individual and shared – are the evolving product of conversations with self and others. In this social practice, what counts are those shared stories that are treated as credible by the other participants. People prioritize credibility over accuracy in the descriptions of events and contexts because an obsession with accuracy seems fruitless and impractical in an ambiguous postmodern world, one saturated with politics and conflicting interests and populated by people of multiple and shifting identities. Kabat-Zinn (2020) shows that what circulates in the news are stories about what happened, i.e., a diversity of narratives that pass for news that are created and influenced by people and organisations with varying agendas. The perpetual deluge of (true) information, misinformation and disinformation, whether man-made or bot-made, can be toxic, especially in combination with an unawareness of what news really is and how it affects us, both individually and collectively.

The recent subject literature has identified explicit concerns about vaccine confidence – such as safety, potential side effects, efficacy, and trust in government, the medical industry and pharmaceutical companies as particular reasons that individuals provide for their uncertainty or unwillingness regarding the COVID-19 vaccination. Some explanation might be that any rapidly evolving situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic is

the rapid rate of new scientific information published and the inability of researchers, policy makers, journalists, and ordinary citizens to keep up with quickly changing facts. In other words, the current pandemic is partly a challenge to filter (in real time) the sheer quantity of information published on a daily basis [...]. Even a publication of a clinical study is not the last word and studies may be contradicted or proven wrong. In the early phases of a pandemic, “facts” are perhaps more accurately referred to as “BETs” (best evidence at the time). Facts are sparse and recommendations based on BETs are subject to change. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated this with examples such as mask-wearing recommendations, use of certain drugs such as hydroxychloroquine, and social distancing or school opening guidelines. The public health and medical evidence also needs to be integrated with economic and political considerations and may be subject to cultural variations and influences (Eysenbach 2020).

COVID-19 renewed long-standing concerns that “a misunderstanding of how science works and/or lead people to ignore scientific advice” (Dieckmann, Johnson 2019) and of engaging in “denigration of scientific expertise and harassment of scientists” (Scientists 2020, after: Friedman, Plumer 2020).

According Eysenbach (2020) “[t]he current infodemic is a crisis to distil the sheer quantity of information, which is occurring on four levels: (1) science, (2) policy and practice, (3) news media, and (4) social media. Disinformation and misinformation are neither new problems nor ones co-emergent with the birth and adoption of social media” (Krause et al. 2019, after: Scheufele et al. 2021).

Misinformation is understood as the unintended false meaning of (true) information. It means that misinformation is false, although it may be believed to be true by those spreading it in good faith. It can also be posted in bad faith, or with a political goal in mind, but still concurrently be credited as true. Misinformation can come in many forms going from so called conspiracy theories to false remedy claims, and may lead to overreaction (e.g., hoarding), under-reaction (e.g. lack of protective measures), and ineffective and potentially harmful actions such as using ineffectual remedies (Glasdam, Stjernswärd 2020).

According to Allington et al. (2021b) the more an individual relied on social media for information on COVID-19, the more likely that individual was to believe conspiracy theories related to COVID-19. Conspiracy theories or conspiracy beliefs are defined as “the tendency to assume that major public events are secretly orchestrated by powerful and malevolent entities acting in concert” (Douglas et al. 2019, as cited in Allington et al. 2021a). In addition, higher rates of conspiracy beliefs and greater reliance on social media were linked with lower levels of preventative behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic (Morales et al. 2022).

3. Trust in an emergency

According to a nationally representative survey of adults in the United States carried out by the Pew Research Center in 2016, public confidence in the scientific community appears to be relatively strong (Funk 2017). Public trust in scientists as sources of information is generally higher than it is for any of several other groups

in society. Far more people trust medical scientists to provide full and accurate information about the health effects of childhood vaccines than they trust information from pharmaceutical industry leaders, the news media, or elected officials. A year into the pandemic we are more aware, and trust that science is part of the solution (3M 2021). For 89% science gives hope for the future (vs. 86% in Poland), 91% agree that in order to contain the spread of COVID-19, people's actions should follow scientific evidence/advice (vs. 86% in Poland), 88% agree vaccines are an essential part of how science addresses public health concerns (vs. 77% in Poland).

91% declare "I trust science" (vs. 90% 2020 Pandemic Pulse, 85% 2020 Pre-Pandemic, 87% in 2019, 86% in 2018). 86% trust in scientists (vs. 86% 2020 Pandemic Pulse, 80% 2020 Pre-Pandemic, 81% in 2019, 79% in 2018). Only 35% declare that they believe science aligns with their personal beliefs (vs. 36% 2020 Pandemic Pulse, 42% 2020 Pre-Pandemic, 42% in 2019). In general, in Poland, trust in science is correlated with age and income. Women and men, 50+ with high incomes trust science the most (3M 2021).

4. Media sources

The reliability of the information obtained, especially in non-standard situations, appears to be a key consideration in making judgments. In terms of media sources, participants tend to consume news from a variety of sources, including traditional news outlets/legacy media (e.g., TV) and digital/social media (e.g., Google, social media platforms, alternative news media).

For 66% of respondents television is the source of information. 45% of respondents look for current information about Poland and the world in social media with the most popular social media platform being Facebook (89%) and YouTube (52%); while third place in terms of popularity was taken by Instagram (35%). Twitter is used by 25% of respondents. SpotData and Provident Polska conducted research on a representative group of adult Internet-using Poles, which shows that as a result of the pandemic as many as 41% of Poles declared that they spend more time online than before the pandemic, including almost every fourth (24%) – much more time. Every third respondent (33%) was more likely to use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) during the pandemic than before, every tenth respondent (10%) spent less time on them, and almost half (47%) as much as before (Defratyka 2020). Twitter users' interactions with epidemiologists and economists jumped in March and April 2020. One can see a great interest in reports on the development of epidemics and their interpretation by experts. At the same time, the slump in economic activity caused Twitter users to seek interpretations of economic phenomena (Defratyka 2020).

40% declare that they use alternative sources of information. Alternative media are always alternative to something. In this case, these are virtual media,

alternative to mainstream media. Mainstream media transmit officially accepted narratives, spread by state experts and power structures. Therefore, the main aim of alternative media is to produce content that is competitive to mainstream media. What distinguishes them additionally is the specific ideological purpose of their creation and functioning.

Respondents who use alternative sources of information are more susceptible than the general public to false health information. 30% of the Poles surveyed agree with the statement that the COVID-19 pandemic was pre-planned. Only 5% of respondents look for current information about Poland and the world in fact-checking services (Dezinformacja 2022).

Trust in science and the government has been extremely critical during the COVID-19 pandemic (Liang et al. 2020). A higher political trust led to better compliance between behaviour and government policies for pandemic containment (Matsushima et al. 2021). Many governments have introduced various recommendations and restrictions based on the best available scientific evidence, ranging from the use of face masks to strict movement restrictions. As some of these measures entail severe inconvenience for daily activities and an intrusion on individual freedom, achieving a high compliance rate requires that people trust what they are being told. Trust in scientific evidence, the medical community, government actions and policy experts are all crucial for achieving a high degree of adherence to public health instructions. However, a substantial number of people do not trust the government, science in general, or the medical community (O’Shea, Ueda 2021). The research shows that the decision which negatively influenced the level of trust in representatives of authorities and the uniformed services, as well as in Church representatives, was the introduction of “national quarantine” (Zychowicz, Halista-Telus 2021). The mistrust in politicians and science also resulted in vaccine hesitancy (Roberts et al. 2021). Additional factors resulting in vaccine hesitancy, particularly in the U.S., included vaccine safety, vaccine effectiveness, anxiety over potential side effects, and mistrust of the healthcare system and government (Khubchandani et al. 2021; Pogue et al. 2020).

5. Media and attitudes towards vaccination

Newspoint conducted an analysis of publications about vaccines that appeared online between March 2020 and April 2021. Newspoint’s media monitoring captured the gradual rise in the popularity of vaccines – from the first reports of ongoing research, through announcements of vaccine invention in late 2020, to a peak of interest in the topic in the first four months of 2021 and a gradual muting from May onwards, when vaccine availability noticeably increased. In terms of online sources for information about vaccines, the largest number of publications came from edited portals (76.59%). Second was Facebook (13.17%) and Twitter (8.32%).

Quite surprising was the prevalence of neutral and positive overtones in posts about vaccines that were published on Facebook and Twitter. This may indicate the existence of a high-profile but low-reach bubble of anti-vaccine circles (Sadowski 2021).

In December 2021, the website www.szczepimysie.pl conducted a sentiment analysis on the topic of vaccination online. The reference “we vaccinate” appeared 32.5 thousand times – a 30% decrease compared to the previous survey (Sentiment Analysis 2021a; Sentiment Analysis 2021b). Almost 27 thousand mentions appeared on social media. Only 16% of these had positive points of view, 47% had negative, although positive mentions had increased and negative decreased compared to the previous period. 75% of the mentions were published on Twitter. #vaccinate and #vaccination appeared 1267 times and #stopsanitariansegregation 767. Among the most active profiles (the highest number of mentions) the first 5 were anti-vaccine profiles. Among the most influential accounts, the first place was taken by a news account (tvn24) encouraging people to vaccinate, while the second and third places were taken by anti-vaccination accounts, including one account of a streamer on twitch.¹

Research conducted by the Center for Research on Prejudice shows that people who draw information from traditional media were more likely to declare a strong desire to be vaccinated than people who do not use such media at all. At the same time, people who obtain their information about the world from alternative media proved to be less willing to be vaccinated than people who do not use these sources (Soral et al. 2021). Mandatory or voluntary vaccination did not influence the willingness of the respondents to be vaccinated. Vaccine hesitancy was more common among those who frequently use social media and news websites and less common among those who obtain information about the world mainly from traditional media. In the study, it was the youngest and less educated who declared less willingness to be vaccinated – however, the relationship between education and willingness to be vaccinated was not large (Soral et al. 2021).

6. Alternative media as a source of information

Data for this analysis was obtained from sources indicated as alternative media by respondents in the report *Dezinformacja oczami Polaków* (Dezinformacja 2022). The most frequently consumed alternative media sources, according to the *DigitaPoland* report (Dezinformacja 2022), include:

¹ **Twitch** is an American video live streaming service that focuses on video game live streaming, including broadcasts of esports competitions, in addition to offering music broadcasts, creative content, and “in real life” streams. In August 2014 the service was acquired by Amazon. In March 2017, Twitch added an “IRL” category that allows users to stream videos on any topic, not necessarily gaming-related.

- Wolnemedi.net
- Wiesci24.pl
- Wrealu24.tv
- Warszawskagazeta.pl
- Odkrywamyzakryte.pl
- globalna.info.

Of the listed media, only wieści24.pl presents content that is consistent with mainstream recommendations by experts and politicians, although they are generally critical of the government. The most visited portal wolnemedi.net defines its profile with the slogan: *STOP to Mass Manipulation Media!* Most of the materials published on the site are reprinted from other portals. The first video about COVID-19 was published on 12th February of 2020 and has been viewed 646 times. But the conspiracy theories about chips being implanted in people along with vaccines were already appearing in the year before the COVID-19 pandemic was announced. Videos published on YouTube were linked to the content of the article (original source: NaturalNews.com), those videos are no longer available, they were removed by YouTube along with the account they heralded from.

Natural News is one of the Internet's oldest and most prolific sources of health misinformation and conspiracy theories: Natural News is a hub for climate change deniers and anti-vaxxers. While it poses as a news outlet, Natural News is actually a network of sites filled with bylined articles and flanked by ads for survivalist gear and dodgy health cures. The Internet trust tool NewsGuard reports that Natural News "severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency". Various fact-checking organizations have repeatedly flagged Natural News content as false.²

On February 22, 2017, Google delisted about 140,000 pages on Natural News, removing it from search results. It was returned soon after. The following year, on March 3, 2018, YouTube removed Natural News' video channel for terms of service violations, effectively removing its library of videos from the site. The channel was subsequently reinstated and the videos returned. In June 2019, Facebook removed Natural News from its website for violating its policies against spam.³

The wolnemedi.net portal also publishes information from www.dailyexpose.uk, which has a YouTube account (2.5 thousand subscribers), publishes on Telegram and gab.com. Gab.com is an American social network launched in 2016 whose users are considered to be extremist. The portal attracts users and groups that have been expelled from other social networks, including neo-Nazis, white supremacists and conspiracy theory enthusiasts.⁴

² <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/6/25/21293246/facebook-misinformation-natural-news-conspiracy-theory> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_News (accessed: 15.03.2022).

⁴ <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gab> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

One of many things we can read at www.dailyexpose.uk:

It must become clear to everyone that Pathogens and Putin are not a threat to mankind's existence – while parasites in human form are – and that a new Dark Age is imminent if they continue believing the government propaganda and behaving like everything it decrees is perfectly normal.⁵

The Bibuła portal is the most frequent source of information on Robert Malone. Published, and then made available by the website www.wolnemedi.net on its pages, was, among other things, a text entitled: “The Lancet: *Vaccinated people more vulnerable to various diseases than unvaccinated*”.⁶ And it describes: Vaccine Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – VAIDS. However, the article lacks a link to the original article, or even bibliographic data. The syndrome described has been identified by experts as fake news.⁷

What should be emphasized is the ability of new media to link. Wolnemedi.net, as the final recipient of information, makes the message credible by pointing to its source. By going to the source we find a link to another source. In this way we reach the original source: <https://ru.journal-neo.org/>; pl.SputnikNews.com.

Other sources of information about the pandemic and vaccinations are goniec.net, a weekly produced by Polish Canadians, and Liberty.News, with a national Catholic profile.

The wRealu24 television station was founded in 2015. The goal of the founders was to create an independent television with exclusively Polish capital. They declare: “We reliably present the most important information from the country and the world, especially that which is inconvenient and often even silent by the mainstream media”.⁸ Initially, it posted videos on YouTube, which was blocked by YouTube in August 2019.⁹ The channel is a television channel and has its own productions. It sets the tone by selecting commentators and experts who doubt the existence of the pandemic, referred to the “plandemic” on air. The main topic, though not exclusively, is the criticized economic lockdown.¹⁰ TV wRealu24 has channels on https://twitter.com/wrealu24_pl, Facebook, YouTube. In 2020, YouTube stopped the wRealu24 channel from publishing new content for a week and removed material about the epidemic, citing the “false medical information” contained in it, as the reason.

⁵ <https://dailyexpose.uk/2022/03/02/covid-putin-no-threat-to-freedom-gates-trudeau-are/> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

⁶ <https://www.bibula.com/?p=129732> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-vaids-fakes-idUSL1N2UM1C7> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

⁸ https://wrealu24.tv/o_nas (accessed: 15.03.2022).

⁹ <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/arttykul/wrealu24-tv-usuniety-z-youtube-za-mowe-nienawisci-marcin-rola-zyjemy-w-czasach-pelzajacego-totalitaryzmu> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

¹⁰ <https://spidersweb.pl/rozrywka/2020/12/15/wrealu24-marcin-rola-youtube-ban-covid> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

The most popular video on YouTube is “Braun Reveals Shocking FACTS About COVID-19 Vaccination in Poland! New MEGA financial scandal?” The video has been viewed 235k, has 17k likes and almost 2k comments. The channel was tagged by Google with the information: “Covid-19 – Check out MZ’s updates on Covid-19”. On Twitter, the TV channel encourages people to watch the videos on the Banbye channel, its own media platform, which has 12,000 subscribers. The Banbye channel has been dubbed the Polish YouTube by its creators, and the creators themselves explain the initiative this way: “The spark that brought our initiative to life was the widespread blocking by BIG TECH of »unwise« channels in all major social media. We too have become a victim of this ruthless censorship!”.

The portal www.OdkrywamyZakryte.pl, as reported by the authors, is censored on Google and Facebook “because we are not funded by the government to publish lies and propaganda”. The portal publishes on Telegram messenger. The published content is closer to a tabloid than a serious news portal. Example titles include: “Austrian brothel offers vouchers for services in exchange for Covid vaccinations”, or “New Zealand pays doctors to euthanize Covid patients”, and “Bill Gates and George Soros quietly join forces to control the Covid industry”. The site’s first post about vaccine harm and fake pandemics was published in 2017. Underneath the article is an update: “The fake coronavirus pandemic was not triggered without purpose. Scientists observing the growing public health crisis following the launch of a commercial 5G network immediately found a Plan B to cover up people’s reaction to the new technology”.¹¹

The publications are unsigned and do not cite sources for the information presented. It is unclear whether they are the property of the site’s editorial team or from outside sources.

7. Conclusion

The uncertainty that has surrounded humanity since the global announcement of the coronavirus pandemic has contributed to the production of an excess of information, including false information. The dissemination of false information was aided by reports of further waves of the pandemic and increasing numbers of deaths. The initial uncertainty resulting from the lack of information increased confidence in science and scientists as potentially being capable of ending the pandemic. In a short time, the production of false information flooded the Internet, making the selection of true information from disinformation downright impossible. Research reports, which were often contradictory and data selectively used by those questioning the pandemic, also contributed to a decline in trust in scientists and a decrease in willingness to comply. This fostered the development of conspiracy

¹¹ <https://www.odkrywamyzakryte.com/grypa-hiszpanka/> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

theories and strengthened the anti-Covid movement. A disturbing trend in medical misinformation in 2021, one at the same time lowering trust in medical professionals, was the actions of groups, associations, or societies of scientists and physicians presenting themselves as “independent” and proclaiming scientifically unproven theories about the pandemic and vaccination. Not only do its members reproduce false theses spread abroad, but the association’s social media profiles publish new, sensational, mostly scientifically unsubstantiated or simply false data on the pandemic and especially on vaccinations and here on a daily basis.

There is a significant relationship between beliefs about the pandemic and media consumption. Media consumption is correlated with age and these two variables, age and source of information, influence the evaluation of the pandemic and the adherence or rejection of epidemiological recommendations. The role of tracking false information has been taken on by fact checking organizations, and social media platform owners are actively involved in labelling information as false or blocking user accounts. For those spreading false claims, such actions are evidence of censorship and the existence of a transnational conspiracy.

Aversion and distrust of political power is positively correlated with the movement known as “Stop Sanitary Segregation”.

An analysis of the content of the so-called alternative media has revealed that anti-vaccine content was present within them long before the coronavirus pandemic itself. The recipients of alternative media often belong to well-defined subcultures, whose members share certain values and whose worldviews are at least similar. The motivation for alternative media creators is not only to provide information to audience, with a certain worldview profile, but also (and sometimes above all) to confirm the validity of shared views and values, to strengthen and broaden the ranges, in order to reach new recipients and there by strengthen and confirm the postulated attitudes, norms and values. Creators and recipients are united by distrust towards information provided by official media and power structures, as well as almost complete negation of the authority of science and scientists themselves, especially medics, epidemiologists, virologists and vaccine manufacturers.

However, while in 2020 disinformation about the fact that vaccines contain, for example, toxins or chips was spread, in 2021, when the campaign promoting vaccinations began, theses about the ineffectiveness and harmfulness of vaccinations had started to spread. As Dariusz Jemielniak believes, this disinformation is scientifically unverifiable, because it refers to the future, and at the same time evokes strong fear emotions (proclaiming, for example, that vaccinations are an experiment, vaccinations serve to exterminate the population).¹²

The analysis of the Internet indicates the marginality of information questioning the pandemic or spreading conspiracy theories about it, although at the same time

¹² <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl/swiat,109/trendy-w-dezinformacji-2021-roku-jak-przekroczono-kolejne-granice,1089944.html> (accessed: 15.03.2022).

they have great power to activate the Internet community. Similarities in the sources of this information are worth noting. Most often, these are portals or individuals attributing values to themselves: patriotism, nation, Catholicism, independence. The identity of the original source is often softened by the supply chain mechanism. The stripping away of intermediaries leads us to the original source, which usually turns out to be an extremist broadcaster or a pro-Russian one.

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MEDIA I ZAUFANIE. O POTRZEBIE POSZUKIWANIA INFORMACJI W CZASACH NIEPEWNOŚCI I JEJ SPOŁECZNYCH KONSEKWENCJACH. PRZYPADEK POLSKI W CZASIE PANDEMII WIRUSA COVID-19


Abstrakt. Pandemia COVID-19 wywołała niepokój i niepewność co do tego, jak funkcjonować normalnie. Luka informacyjna skłoniła ludzi do szukania rozwiązania w mediach, także społecznościowych. Z kolei poleganie na tych ostatnich zwiększa prawdopodobieństwo wiary w teorie spiskowe. Wszystkie te czynniki zostały powiązane z niższym poziomem zachowań zapobiegawczych podczas pandemii COVID-19. Nieustanny zalew (prawdziwych) informacji, dezinformacji i błędnych informacji, czy to wytworzonych przez człowieka, czy przez boty, może być toksyczny, zwłaszcza w połączeniu z nieświadomością tego, czym naprawdę są wiadomości i jak na nas wpływają, zarówno indywidualnie, jak i zbiorowo.

Dlatego obecna pandemia jest po części wyzwaniem związanym z filtrowaniem (w czasie rzeczywistym) ogromnej ilości informacji publikowanych codziennie, ale także niezdolnością badaczy, decydentów, dziennikarzy i zwykłych obywateli do nadążania za szybko zmieniającymi się faktami.

Zakładam, że w sytuacji niepewności ludzie poszukują informacji, aby podjąć najlepszą decyzję. Przyjmowanie informacji jest wyrazem zaufania do własnych źródeł informacji, w tym zaufania do naukowców i lekarzy lub braku zaufania do decyzji rządowych, a także braku zaufania do firm farmaceutycznych. Większe zaufanie polityczne prowadziło do większej zgodności zachowań z polityką rządu wdrażaną w celu powstrzymania pandemii. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, które medialne źródła informacji i w jaki sposób stawiały opór wobec działań podejmowanych przez instytucje państwowe i naukowców w sytuacji zagrożenia epidemiologicznego.

Słowa kluczowe: COVID-19, niepewność, szczepienia, zaufanie, media, dezinformacja.

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RISK IN THE BIOGRAPHIES OF INDEPENDENT CARE LEAVERS

Abstract. The article presents selected results of qualitative research indicating an attempt of self-construction by alumni of creating institutional and family forms of care in relation to experiences, autonomy and risk (including the risk associated with the COVID-19 pandemic). It appears that not the pandemic but adaptation to life outside institution affects the vulnerable life balance which, in light of lack of possibilities and resources necessary to overcome difficulties, sets the direction life course of the research participants. These difficulties lead to the implementation of certain functioning strategies which translate into life choices. The empirical data comes from quality in-depth interviews which make it possible to examine the world experienced and perceived by individuals.

Keywords: risk, biography, institution foster care leavers, quality research.

1. Introduction

Foster care leavers constitute a group that requires special attention. Even though foster care is more and more often mentioned in the public discourse, its voice focuses more often on foster family as the best alternative for upbringing children in need of support. This is undisputable. Less often we hear about adult leavers of both family and institutional care, requiring special support. If any, the message usually does not go beyond standard descriptions of dysfunctional behaviour.

It has to be emphasised that especially the leavers of institutional foster care are subjects functioning in the space of multi-dimensional risk. The latter is related to the trajectory experiences of being brought up in problematic families and in

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alternative to these forms of institutional care. It appears that the time of risk is not only the time of pandemic. In the first place it is the transition from the position of “a children’s home pupil”, to the position of an “autonomy person”. The change of status is associated with numerous difficulties that may cause numerous unwanted social consequences, including health ones. Struggles with everyday life seem to be constantly burdened by risk and require strategies that in case of foster care leavers are focused on survival. The subjective perception of risk by research participations is thus a permanent experience, inscribed in individual biographies.

The analysis focuses on individual histories, adaptation strategies and life choices of the research participants, undertaken both in the conditions of a pandemic and in the conditions of adaptation to life outside an institution. The article presents conclusions from research, conducted in the time of COVID-19 pandemic (May–July 2021) among adult foster care leavers who were or are the residents of the so-called training flat¹ in Lower Silesian Voivodship. As a part of the author’s own project in-depth interviews were conducted with young people aged 18–27. The conclusions from the narrative analysis suggest that one should look for an answer to the following question: How should we support the foster care leavers in order to reduce the feeling of risk and at the same time support them in recovering the ability to function in a society in accordance in line with society’s expectations of them fulfilling their social roles?

2. Theoretical and methodological basis for conducted research

The research of explorative and descriptive character was completed in a place well-known to the care leavers, i.e. in the training flat. The care leaver’s natural environment as space for gathering data encourages us to look for truth by being as close to the research participants as possible (Jemielniak 2012: 10). At the same time, it makes it possible to discover the perspectives of the research participants (Flick 2012: 35). Reaching the young people posed a great difficulty. Thus, in order to get to know and understand the world and way of constructing their fate by the research participants an attempt to “infiltrate” their natural reality was made. Exploration offers a possibility to get close to the world “distant” from the researcher’s subjective experiences, often heart-breaking but also focusing all attention on the reality which constitutes the context of human actions. At the same time, the reality in this perspective becomes an attributive construct of every research participants (see Blumer 2007: 34 n.). Thus, as theoretical basis for the conducted research the approach of symbolic interactionism was assumed since

¹ The training flat is an initiative of NGO aimed at supporting the care leavers outside the foster care system. The care leaver’s stay in the training flat is limited to maximally one year. What is important many care leavers reach the training flat right after leaving the care system, avoiding or suspending the status of a homeless person.

it focusses especially on meanings constantly awarded in the process of social interaction (Hałas 2006: 30).

The process of becoming independent is linked to the statutory transitions referred to in her post *A wobbly boat. The fate of alumni of care and educational institutions. Sociological analysis*, Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas (2016). This concept also appears to be useful for analysing the risk of independence faced by the interviewees.

Transitions to adulthood involve three transitions:

- (a) from the education system to the labour market (school-to-work-transition);
- (b) transition from the family of origin (including emotional family) to forming one's own family or stable relationship (domestic transition);
- (c) leaving the family home and looking for one's own (housing transition) (Skelton 2002: 101; after: Golczyńska-Grondas 2016: 28).

The researcher emphasises that the course of transitions into adulthood is subject to social control. The three transitions are model and duty. At the same time, those who are not able to meet these requirements are subject to pejorative social categorisation. Golczyńska-Grondas points to the social categorisation of unsuccessful transitions as retarded or maladjusted (Golczyńska-Grondas 2016: 28).

Importantly, categorisation begins the process of identity assignment. And the categories retarded or maladjusted contribute to the placement of the individual in the group of excluded or at risk of exclusion (Goffman 2007: 16). The structure of identity is also made up of life periods, such as the individual's background and the place in life that the person is currently in. Both factors influence the further functioning of the subjects.

One has to agree with Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas that the situation of a child in foster care differs significantly from that of peers from so-called good homes. The latter gain acceptance, economic and emotional support and the favour of their environment. The above-mentioned elements are social facilities that increase the possibility of fully functioning in society. Unfortunately, people in foster care experience a sense of rejection and lack of acceptance or respect. This lack of favour from the environment is described as a social handicap (Ziemska 1975: 14; see Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska 2020: 155).

Despite the fact that the researcher analysed the fate of adult wards in foster care between 1970 and 1990, the conclusions of the analyses cited in this paper in relation to the concept of transit are similar, although differences are also visible (Golczyńska-Grondas 2016: 87–110). Moreover, in order to emphasise the analytical usefulness of the concept, it is worth referring to the researcher's results by comparing them with her own results.

In both studies the basic form of transition was residential transit, which in relation to foster care wards became visible in the only pattern, which was "going nowhere".² Transition was associated with the need for the wards to leave foster

² The author of the notion of "independence to nowhere" is Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas.

care, usually when they reached the age of 18, without support from the institution's staff. In the analysed biographies, the respondents were saved by applying for a training flat, which was a transit route to a rented flat or involved returning to the family home (see Table 1).

Transitions from the education system to the labour market were unsuccessful for those interviewed. The educational level of the alumni was low. Similarly, as among those surveyed by Golczyńska-Grondas (2016: 100).

The analysis of the narratives indicated that no person had a regular source of income, which consequently translated into living, often in extreme poverty. Careers were not made visible, which is different from the researcher's analysis.

Transit to the family of procreation, confirms in both studies the pattern of bonding with a destructive partner, which is characteristic for the formation of relationships. This style in the case of analyses of foster care graduates concerns both young women and men. The results confirm the tendency to enter into relationships early noted by Golczyńska-Grondas (2016: 104).

The concept of transition requires a broader perspective that redirects attention to the nature of foster care support. The concept assumes that there is a transition from one state (relative acceptance of the family system/friendliness) to another. The latter should be a balance in the area of family, emotional, professional and living life. In the case of the respondents, difficulties in different areas of life may cause the individual to fail in his attempts to resolve them. Transitions are then made possible by the causal action of actors who are involved in strengthening the assisted person (Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska 2020: 153). Consequently, transitions require support.

In-depth, partially-structured quality interviews were used to gather the required empirical material. The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed, taking into account non-linguistic communications and other interview elements, e.g. pauses or non-verbal expressions (Kvale 2011: 158). It was explained to the research participants that the recordings would be used solely for research purposes. Participation in the research depended on the care leaver's consent. The research participants were also informed that they could quit at any stage of the conducted studies. In the end, from among the persons staying in the training flat (permanently or temporarily) 10 adult foster care leavers participated in the research. In accordance with the rules of anonymization, the names of towns quoted in the article were concealed or replaced with others. Similarly, all personal details quoted in the statements were changed (Gibbs 2011: 38).

Due to the research problem and specificity of the group the selection of cases for study was of purposive character (Flick 2012: 62). In accordance with the principle of maximum contrast, the factors taken into account when selecting the sample included:

- experience of the research participants of staying in foster care;
- the situation of the research participants (current/past stay in the so-called training flat).

The selection of cases was preceded by numerous meetings aimed at the creation of relation based on trust and feeling of safety. During the meetings the researcher also offered workshops aimed at increasing the participants' competences and their level of social functioning.³ All-day meetings commencing early in the morning with shared preparation of meals, cleaning, spending time talking to the care leavers and playing with children, ending in the evening made it possible to see the everyday world of the research participants. This everyday life means basic reality, discovering both the possibilities and limitations, created during interactions but also well-known to the research participants (Berger, Luckmann 1983: 53). Finally, the researcher's participation in everyday reality of the care leavers gave an occasion to watch the process of creation and maintenance of intersubjective world of interacting persons and to learn the rules governing this world (see Schütz 2008).

The goal of the conducted research was to reach information regarding the care leaver's biographical experiences as of leaving foster care to the present. Also, answers to the question regarding the meanings awarded to own experiences were sought; reasons for leaving foster care; support from others; meaning of risk, including the pandemics and its impact on the care leaver's functioning. Great flexibility characteristic for qualitative research made it possible to reach required information by adapting to the circumstances. The research is based on biographic method assumptions, referring to events and motives placed in certain time frames, revealing the ways of interpreting these events (Flick 2012: 52; see Włodarek, Ziółkowski 1990). The article quotes only those fragments that refer to the title risk.

The research participants include adult foster care leavers aged 18–27, staying at present or that have stayed in the last two years, in the training flat. These persons are outside the foster care system since upon reaching adulthood they left institutional or family care. The flat in which they are currently staying is for them the so-called lifebelt saving them from homelessness or the necessity to return to dysfunctional family environment and at the same time a transit path to the world outside the system. Within the support during the stay in the training flat, the care leavers may benefit from the help of psychologists and part-time tutors. To a great extent, however, the idea of the place is based on independent functioning of the research participants, who as flatmates have to participate in the costs of their maintenance. What is important the care leavers create informal relations between them, from which the children living with them come. The socio-demographic

³ It should be emphasised that the double positioning of the author of the study did not involve any methodological or ethical dilemmas. In the first instance, workshops were conducted for those willing to participate. Interviews were conducted several months later. And the research participants were also people who did not participate in the workshops. In each case analysed, people made an independent decision whether they wanted to take part in the research. Some asked if there would be an opportunity for such a meeting again. Presumably, during the interview they satisfied their need to be heard and at the same time to be unappreciated by the author. They emphasised that they felt fully accepted; with their advantages and disadvantages.

characteristics of the respondents are included in Table 1 in the Annex. During the meetings in total eight children aged from 1 month to 3 years were present. Thus, an additional difficulty in the research was organising care for the minor children for the time of interviews with their parents.

3. Becoming independent and what's next?

In the Act on family support and foster care system a person leaving the foster family or all-day care facility upon adulthood is defined as a person who became independent.⁴ As long as they continue education (maximally up to 26 years of age) the care leaver is offered financial aid, help in finding employment, help in finding suitable housing (e.g. social housing), help for setting up (i.e. material aid) and also social work is performed for their benefit. In case of the research participants systemic support ended upon adulthood. With the exception of one person, others upon leaving the foster care ended their education. Thus, the systemic help offered in accordance with the quoted art. 140 of the Act on family support and foster care system ended. We may assume that as of the end of systemic support becoming independent is a form of institutional biography management (Golczyńska-Grondas 2014).

The independence is understood as a type of autonomy that according to Maslow is necessary for the individual's self-fulfilment. In order to reach a level of self-realisation individual basic needs should be realised. The realisation of needs can be disturbed by the family environment, which imposes its own perspective. Then the individual fulfils social expectations at the expense of his/her own needs. As a consequence, the individual may have problems setting boundaries towards life, the external environment and towards himself.

An independent individual in this perspective looks for a compromise between the requirements of their surroundings and their own needs (Maslow 1990). Independence is also associated with the independence of making life choices understood as the individual's right to self-definition (Obuchowski 2000). At the same time, it was assumed that independence is characteristic for persons aware of their choices and their consequences for which the person becomes responsible (Branden 1999). Being independent is often identified with adulthood. It has to be emphasised that a person is not born an independent individual. A person becomes independent in the process of upbringing, due to impact of others and in result of life experiences. Independence is identical with the process of becoming independent and thus preparing a care leaver to be independent. A characteristic

⁴ The Act on family support and Foster care system of 9 June 2011, Art. 140, provides in detail that an independent person is a person leaving foster care or all-day care facility upon adulthood. The care leaver upon completion of education (maximally up to 26 years of age) ceases to be a care leaver and becomes an independent person.

element of this process is a strategy of volitional promotion focused on the idea of autonomy expressed for example in the care leaver making independent decisions (Schaffer, Kipp 2015: 593).

It has to be emphasised that entering the world of adults associated with independent life decisions is always connected with certain difficulties, related to going through one's life stages but also with difficulties occurring in result of leaving foster care.

I have left children's home at 18 since I did not continue my education. A carer from children's home asked me where she should give me a lift to. I could not go back to my family, because my grandmother rented a small flat. Earlier I was with my grandma until I was 15. Grandma for health reasons simply gave us to foster care. I told her to give me a lift to my friends' place because three days before that I had learnt that I could not go back to my family home. Since then my adventures with drugs started [W1K].⁵

Numerous researchers emphasised that adulthood characterised by developmental tasks is burdened with threats but also chances resulting from the developmental cycle (e.g. Smykowski 2004; Brzezińska et al. 2015). Unfortunately, a special challenge is posed by entering adulthood for care leavers who have no support from their close ones. The world of their resources is limited mainly to the resources they took from foster care. Outside the foster care a completely different world appears: dangerous and often requiring immediate redefinition of life and its sense (Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska 2020: 151).

Leaving family or institutional foster care leads to the change of status. This is the period when fostering activities end. The change of status is often a transition from the level of dependence on institution to autonomy, which in the case of foster care alumni is not negotiable (Salazar et al. 2016: 264). Autonomy requires numerous skills which can prove to be a challenge for young adults. Unfortunately, the transit may have different dimensions for care leavers: positive or negative (Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska 2020: 153). Thus, it may cause joy but also if one's chances for dealing with life's difficulties are judged to be insufficient, it can cause disappointment, anger and sorrow. Young care leavers in the process of transition from institutional care are confronted with the compulsion or necessity to perform the tasks of autonomy living (Strauss 2012: 532–533). These moments require special support and in case of their lack may lead to biographical trajectories.

I went to children's home at the age of 11, because my biological father raped me. We were taken, I was there for a year. Then I went to a foster family until I turned 18. It was not ideal because it was pathological family. They just had money from us. Police interventions occurred often. At 14 I started taking psychoactive drugs, everything, apart from heroin. We had no support. I was raised by the street. I do not know what home, love, and support mean [W2K].

⁵ The symbols next to quoted narratives mean: W – interview, digit – interview number, letter – sex: K – female, M – male.

The data indicate various life problems upon leaving the foster care system. These include problems with: finding a flat, unemployment, poverty, health, lack of support or addictions (Curry, Abrams 2015; Verulava, Dangadze 2021). Due to life difficulties and lack of support care leavers are exposed to the loss of health and psychophysical condition.

The statutory requirements posed to adult foster care leavers refer to many skills which are characteristic for independence. These are, for example, functioning in labour market, possessing social skills, mostly regarding the knowledge about safe relations, safe place of stay and protection of one's own health. These are also areas verified by social workers in environmental interviews. Failure to satisfy the requirements means lack of independence.

It is worth emphasising that the predictor of independence should become the care leaver's conviction about internal centre of control that is noticing the relation between actions and achievements (Drwal 1995). Unfortunately, in case of care leavers: lack of support, family and material resources, burden with suffering trajectory and insufficient possibilities to deal with difficulties become a barrier on the path to satisfying numerous needs.

Referring to the question in the title of the subsection, it has to be concluded that institutional support is largely limited as it focuses mainly on legal-material security. The ineffectiveness of systemic actions in the process of becoming independent is related for example to the lack of periodical assessments of the care leaver's independence and his/her resources and possible difficulties in the basic areas of everyday life. Chapter 4 of the Act on family support and foster care system has to be pointed out, since it refers to the assessment of the situation of a child placed in the system. In particular Art. 129 and Art. 136, which point to the purposes of assessments, do not include the level of resourcefulness and independence and thus the possibilities and limitations of the care leaver's functioning in the future. Another issue is that the Act's provisions refer to the assessments of a child, i.e. a person under 18 years of age. In consequence the burden of responsibility for becoming independent, upon reaching borderline adulthood, is shifted to the care leaver. And then, as in the case of the research participants, the care leavers may rely solely on themselves.

I went to children's home only because there was alcohol at my home, it happened they hit each other. I wanted to separate them but usually I would land on a chair. And then one day the District Family Support Centre came and took us from school and we went to a family children's home. It was difficult to get used to it at the beginning but I managed. I was there for 11 years. I remember it fondly but I turned 18 and I had to leave. Maybe not necessarily here (the training flat) but thanks to it I avoided wandering [W7K].

It is important for the assessments to be completed at every stage until the care leaver decides to leave the foster care system and even in the period after leaving the care system, i.e. within a one-year grace period which might have a prophylactic role. At the same time, the assessments are necessary to offer support in reply to the care leaver's individual needs. Financial aid for becoming independent is not

the same as reaching independence by the care leaver and does not guarantee his/her success in dealing with life difficulties. In light of the listed doubts the title question “What’s next?” remains open. The reply to it is difficult since it requires multi-dimensional analyses of the care leavers’ life situation but also support and cooperation from the social support system. The question indicates the direction of further reflection over the perspectives, including the resources of care leavers and limitations and undoubtedly requires thorough insight from social services into individual biography of each individual.

4. Risk in care leavers’ life and narratives

In his definition of risk, Beck indicates that a person lives in a society of risk for which the problem is functioning in a new, changing reality (Beck 2002). The impossible to predict consequences of both individual and social actions become the risk. The risk is also associated with the state of awareness which sets the direction of individual’s thinking (Giddens 2006). Aware of threats the individual may reach the state of safety. They may also normalise situations which used to be risky under the experience of a crisis (Giddens 2006: 247). And this unfortunately may contribute to the deepening of individual drama.

The risk categories characteristic for the group of independent young people refer in the biography to several important areas of life which require support.⁶ The most desirable form of support is help in the area of striving for own flat. This is an area which is not stable because as a result of the lack of own place it creates the greatest risk of degradation in other dimensions of life. Risks also appear in the area of the labour market (employment), as well as the related lack of skills to manage a budget. Shortcomings concern the lack of knowledge of the local labour market, i.e. job centres or access to job offers. Also deficits in the ability to present oneself in front of an employer and the knowledge of how to prepare application documents become a problem, but also the low level of education of the respondents. Importantly, the conditions that the labour market places on a potential employee can be a serious barrier to the professional activity of people coming from foster care.

A very important area is the dangerous relationships that young people get into. This is related to the need for acceptance and belonging to a family or group. As a result, young offspring stay in relationships even when they are harmful to them.

⁶ The results concerning the areas of support for those who become independent and the threats resulting from the failure to meet these areas come from qualitative research (85 individual interviews) conducted in August–November 2017, which was used to develop a programme for the development of foster care in the city of Wrocław: http://wrosystem.um.wroc.pl/beta_4/webdisk/196483/1209ru07z.pdf (accessed: 27.08.2022). Data analysis was also included in Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska (2020).

Young people in foster care are burdened with unfinished legal matters. These include, for example, debt settlement, tenancy issues, maintenance payments to parents, or legal issues concerning parental rights to their own children.

The risk of being brought up in a deprived environment should be borne in mind. Disturbances in the area of socialisation, present in biographical experiences such as: emotional deprivation, violence, addictions maintain the transmission of poor (including unfavourable) patterns, the influence of which often determines the place of an individual in the structure of “social inequality” (Szacka 2008: 309). The aforementioned areas of risk typical for the collective of empowered alumni can also be found in studies by other researchers: Monika Sajkowska (1999), Marta Abramowicz, Anna Strzałkowska and Tomasz Tobis (2012) and Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas (2016).

What is interesting, the risk defined by the care leavers usually acquires a different meaning when they relate it to the pandemic than in case of individual biographical experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly a factor that disturbed the internal balance of societies, bringing insecurity and numerous health, legal, social and psychological consequences. The statutory solutions aimed at the limitation of disease spread introduced restrictions and accompanying fear and insecurity. They affected also the scope of human freedom in various areas of life.

In case of the research participants a perceptible change in their functioning caused by the pandemic was a temporary loss of contact with their own children, often in foster care. And in consequence the pandemic was identified with the risk that a child in result of lack of relation will fail to recognise the parent.

Yes, there were restrictions, then I had no contact with children due to COVID [W1K].

But... no, only the little one, because I have not seen him because the ladies from the District Family Support Centre did not agree to holidaying. This hurt me the most, because I have not seen him for a long time. I was afraid he would forget me [W2K].

In light of difficulties that the care leavers have to deal with in everyday life the pandemic has no greater significance. To such an extent that they start to doubt the existence of the disease.

A lot has changed, masks, wearing mask while pregnant. I had to leave a shop because I almost fainted. Even drinking did not help. I had to leave and breathe fresh air. Also, I did not care that I had to wear a mask. They were only scaring us. I was not ill and the whole disease was a scam [W6K].

I do not care about the pandemic. I will get ill one day. Whether it is sooner or later I do not care. In any case I am getting vaccination on Tuesday, so. My life is more of a risk [W4M].

The pandemic did not turn the care leavers' life “upside down” for a few reasons. Probably the results of pandemic were not severe enough for the research participants to cause any disruption of balance in their lives. Certain areas affected by the consequences of pandemic did not concern the research participants directly

and thus were not the object of their direct care. Such an example is the professional sphere. No significant change in the organisation of the care leavers' everyday life occurred, even more so of mutual relations which were maintained in the internal, inaccessible to others world created by the care leavers. The research participants also do not mention experiencing fear about life or health in result of getting COVID-19, assuming more indifferent attitude towards possible illness.

A different meaning of risk is awarded by the research participants to their own experiences. The care leavers' entering the path of independent life is associated with risk which is identified with numerous factors. The research participants live in difficult conditions. No care leaver has a permanent place of residence which would give a feeling of safety and at the same time would allow them to take a break when looking for their own path. It is similar in the area of employment. Only two care leavers have part-time jobs at present. The care leavers who are mothers maintain themselves and the children from the 500+ benefit, family benefits and in certain cases alimony from biological fathers of the children. Deprivation is also visible in the context of education or social insurance. Four care leavers have no access to health benefits. In consequence young care leavers are in a constant "journey" which has no clear end. What is more, not only the journey but also its goal become impossible to predict in light of life deficits.

The lack of certainty and agency in one's life is associated with shifting the liability for one's fate onto others. The care leavers remain dependent on others, yielding control over their lives. Goals achieved by them are treated as a result of chance or fate (Rotter 1990). Usually such persons feel vulnerable towards live events. Thus, they do not undertake any initiatives meant to change their situation. In consequence subordination or passivity occur. What is important, the instability, the lack of feeling of certainty and safety set temporary character of the biography which increases life hopelessness and demotivation. It is not a linear process but a circular one, it may increase problems and thus increase risky behaviours.

The definition of risky behaviours refers to actions whose consequences are damaging to the physical and mental health both of the individual and their surrounding's (Kazdin 1996). These include: early alcohol, drug and sexual initiations, aggression or criminality.

The opposite of temporariness is continuity which fosters predictability and stabilisation. The continuity creates the feeling of individual's hope for a better life, activates resources and motivation. This is related to the feeling of safety.

The lack of stability which is characteristic for the research participants may lead to escapist attitudes (Tarkowska 1992: 29). The avoidance mentioned here assumes various forms, from withdrawal, ambivalence to rebellion and aggression, and even escape into addiction. We have to, however, emphasise that avoidance may be also a result of suffered traumas in relations with biological parents which in case of the research participants are of significance for their future functioning (Taylor 2020). Trauma and accompanying it trajectory of suffering from the past become a crucial risk factor for the future biography of the research participant.

Growing up in a dysfunctional family affects the functioning of every person. In the available research results analyses the impact of family environment on asocial child behaviour can be observed (Crick, Dodge 1994; George, Main 1979).

In accordance with this assumption a certain situational context or stimulus when associated with symbolically undesired behaviours are sufficient to cause a similar reaction in a child (Berkowitz 1989). Social environment (including family) is a space in which today's adults – models – become also teachers of children's negative behaviours (Bandura 1971).

The consequences of growing up in depraved environment are deeper. In result of bad treatment from the closest persons the care leavers have emotional difficulties expressed in anger or fear. Their cognitive functioning is also disturbed (Lipowska-Teutsch 1995; Herman 2004; Miller 2006; Miller 2007). Thus, the consequences may be short-term and remote in time. They refer not only to mental reactions but translate also into peer relations characterised by distance or avoidance of interpersonal contacts (Bragiel 1996). In consequence they may also affect the process of becoming independent and functioning in adulthood.

In case of the research participants a half of them had suicide attempts, problems with drugs, problems with law. Almost all persons had dramatic experiences related to alcohol intoxication. Eight care leavers experienced homelessness and wandering. In different points of their biographies the moments of hopelessness appeared and the dependence related thereto, being a part of everyday life trajectory, set by further ups and downs.

[...] when I was pregnant with Ala I had no place to stay. I lived in an allotment with my boyfriend, at his allotment. He helped me but there were moments when I had nothing to eat. I applied for a placement in this intervention one. They told me there were no premises for this, that is why I went to late care [...]. I asked them, crying, to allocate anything to me, because I was pregnant and I had no idea what to do next. Then they allocated me to a facility. Later when my due date was getting closer of course I could not stay there any longer so I called the single mother house. I was there for a while [WIK].

They brought me up all my life, but it was not too great at home. I respect most my grandmother, she was normal and grandfather as I always say only thought about drinking, benders, always something wrong, arguments. In the end one would always get provoked, these were stupid actions later there were blue cards, police. [...] My daddy, was in prison. He got eight, ten years, well you do not get conviction for nothing. My mum was in Italy. She went and I stayed in Poland. Then the grandparents became my foster family. I had to move out. At home there were persons who conspired against me a bit. So I simply left the house. [...] Of course it was not easy. I spent time in some homeless people houses, shelters, in forests, stops and all [W4M].

An important risk factor are the moments of transition, the so-called turning points, which undoubtedly include leaving foster care and starting independent life, but also moving pupils within foster care.

The listed issues associated with the risk of deepening biographical trajectories point one's attention to three dimensions of risk exposed in the narrative analysis.

On the one hand this is the individual dimension which is composed of dramatic events from the past, their consequences in the form of behaviour disruptions, and even personality disorders or genetic diseases. On the other hand, there is the social dimension characterised by constraints and institutional requirements. These include social interactions, also with significant others (Mead 1975: 224), social adaptation (Larson 1993: 287), social roles (Erikson 2000: 251) and social support (Hobfoll 2006). In the central point, overlapping both above dimensions, there are biographical choices. Burdened by individual and social factors they create a cumulated dimension of maintaining “chaotic” biographies. For the research participants the risk becomes a permanent experience, inscribed in their individual trajectory. The care leavers indicate the subjective meaning of what is risky in their lives.

When identifying the risk narrative certain segments were distinguished. They include certain thematic sequences which brought the researcher closer to the experienced world and made it possible to understand the risk and meanings it assumes for individual existences. In result of the analyses certain categories were separated which are the basis for the analysis of the research participants. The study will present only those categories which refer to the defined risk. These include: life outside the norm, dependency and escape.

4.1. Life outside the norm

The motifs of care leavers’ experiences categorised as “life outside the norm” refer mostly to experiences from not so distant past whose consequences undoubtedly affect the present lives of the research participants. The care leavers, however, create a clear temporal border between what happened in their lives and what is now and what will be. Maybe this is a kind of attempt at disconnection of behaviours defined as risky from their consequences and from self-defining in pejorative categories. Clearly, the future-oriented perspective causes the greatest uncertainty and is associated with the feeling of unpredictability of life.

The risk related to life outside the norm refers to behaviours which indicated problems in adaptation to functioning in the society. These are behaviours related to the violation of law, such as burglaries or theft, which apart from the legal consequences for the care leaver also have social consequences. In the literature these are defined as harmful behaviours leading to destruction (Podgórecki 1969: 25). They are often accompanied by alcohol or psychoactive drug addiction.

I do not have this risk zone. I used to. The risk, that I did everything to somehow maintain myself. I had such friends that I could not organise it all somehow. This life. Such a mess, well. Drugs surely were risky, often it was that it was really bad. Friends the same, or the theft, it was also risky. When I had nowhere to go I would break into a summer house. It was also risky. Many, many things like that [WIK].

There is always risk, there are ups and downs. I used to do things like that for a long time, theft, I would go and steal, initiate it. I do not want to be in touch with people who take, because

when one smokes in my presence, I never smoked, so this is not attractive for me. But if one takes heroine in my presence, I do not know if I will not do it. There is such a risk that I do not want for now [W2K].

It is important to emphasise that in none of the analysed cases of persons employing the “outside the norm” life strategy, retrospection was associated with auto-reflection about the consequences for one’s life. The research participants, by assuming passive attitudes, looked for justifications. Thus, they did not bear responsibility for their own conduct. At the same time, the lack of insight into one’s own experiences (see Schier 2021) and pointing to those guilty for their fate are associated with clear dependency of the research participants on the external world (Drwal 1995). Consequently, research participants adopt an attitude of non-culpability, remaining in the vortex of a biographical trajectory. What is interesting, the correlations available in the literature indicate a relation between the external feeling of control and creation of the feeling of lack of impact on the events, which in consequence leads to self-taught hopelessness (Seligmann 2011). Such persons are not independent in making decisions, they do not have a big need for achievements which would be a driving force to action and change of biography (Sęk 2007). Recalling after Branden that independence identified with adulthood is expressed in conscious, autonomous decisions and responsibility for their consequences (Branden 1999), we may conclude that the care leavers lack this characteristic. In result, the research participants reproduce the models known to them from childhood characterised by lack of personal borders, disappearance of responsibility and even violation of personal rights (Ryś 1998; 2011).

4.2. Remaining in dependency

The second analytical category referring to “dependency” is connected with individual factors such as feeling of control location, as mentioned before, but also with social factors, intensifying biographical trajectories. The narratives contain statements in which an individual says about dependent on others, mainly institutions, in which it stayed or relations with others. In the first case, the risk was identified with the anticipated change of status, loss of previous place of stay, that might contribute to the disruption of life and lead to the loss of feeling of stability associated with securing a shelter. Thus, the loss may cause a threat of homelessness. It is worth emphasising that homelessness is the most difficult manifestation of social exclusion (Czapiński 2005: 278). And in connection with poverty and life marginalisation it creates a triad dangerous for further existence of the research participants (Grotowska-Leder 2002: 273–274).

The risk is that once I leave here I will have no money and anything, no money at all to, I do not know, to rent a flat, to have a roof over my head. The risk is also such that I may end up in the streets. And I would not want that. That is why I am trying to study as much as I can. I do not want to but I have to. This is the risk for me [W3M].

The dependency understood that way becomes a biographical compulsion which to a certain extent protects against the consequences of social exclusion. This compulsion is expressed in staying in the care of supportive institutions or in returning to these institutions such as a training flat. The compulsion implies a loss of autonomy and independence and the need to conform to institutional rules.

Dependency is also related to the need to stay in a relationship with a partner and identified in the category of lack of life agency when living alone. The meaning of risk is interpreted by respondents only in case of having children. This is the risk of being a single parent which is also associated with the responsibility for upbringing minors. What is interesting, the risk does not appear and is not defined in the context of individual's danger to self. Even when they talk about their adventures with alcohol, they emphasise that it is not a threat to their lives. In case of having children, being in a relation and dependency becomes a strong need for young mothers. Even when the relation is failed and the woman experiences humiliations. A relation makes it possible to distribute the responsibility for upbringing to two partners. The risk is the loss of relation. It has to be added that the risk of loss of relation is associated with the attempt for self-categorisation in pejorative dimension. In the narrative one can see the lack of faith in one's abilities, low self-esteem and making educational successes dependant on a partner. This is an example of placing control outside an individual and affects his/her self-definition in a category of helpless, weak. Looking for empowerment and resources outside the narrator leads to helplessness towards life events (Pervin 2005: 86).

The risk was that I would be alone and fail to manage to take care of a sick child. I was afraid that I would not be able to look after three [...] and for the two years of my alcoholism there was no risk. I did not have children, who I would risk for, unless I would drink myself to death. But I was not this kind of alcoholic, from morning to night. I drank only in the evenings. I did not have to take care of anybody. I could go to sleep [W6K].

4.3. Escape

This category has three dimensions. Firstly, the escape refers to detachment from persons identified as encouraging to unacceptable behaviour and thus threatening one's functioning. In this meaning, the others pose risk for the research participants.

[...] I moved away from such persons. I do not live at my place in the city but here (place) so I do not have contact with such persons [W2K].

Secondly, the escape appears in a situation when the narrator becomes a victim of. Thus experiences of suffering and violence, usually from the partner, who is a threat to the care leaver but also to her children.

I was in an abusive relation. If I stayed with my boyfriend I do not know how it would end. It was a risk. They could take my child away. I left him [W5K].

Thirdly, the escape is also an attempt to end one's life. In case of lack of feeling of stability and loss of hope for improving one's life, suicide thoughts or an attempt to end one's existence are to contribute to the elimination of suffering (Aronson et al. 2004: 260). The lack of acceptance of one's fate in an extreme form constitutes withdrawal from life (Merton 1982: 248).

Also, a risk is sleeping at stops, when it really was that it was cold and in general of course it is better at home, in bed. [...] There were moments that I wanted to freeze, that when I had something to drink, or something I wanted to freeze, to end it all [W4M].

I wanted to swallow some pills and wash it down with alcohol. But I did not take them. I had such thoughts but concluded that there was still a lot ahead of me [W6K].

Every dimension was characterised by the experience of affect, such as fear. It was fear of homelessness, violence and also loss of life.

The undertaken attempts to define life risk by researchers indicate two mental worlds in which they balance, choosing concepts of themselves. One choice is to make an effort to adapt to the reality, which is characterised by functioning in accordance with applicable standards. On the other hand, the choice encourages to escapist behaviours through addictions and auto destructive decisions. The third choice is an attempt to exist in both realities at the same time (Oettingen, Thorpe 2006 after: Bańka 2009: 336).⁷ None of the possibilities give a guarantee of creating a consistent and stable concept of oneself. The first world, even though desired, usually is not internalised to such an extent as to protect an individual against world's temptations. In consequence, the care leavers remain in the so-called trajectory potential loop which is known to them from childhood experiences (Schütze 1997: 24; see Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska 2015). Thus, the past trajectory extends to present life and leads to the destabilisation and multiplication of everyday problems.

5. Conclusions

An attempt to present and describe the reconstructed concepts of oneself by foster care leavers was aimed at bringing the reader closer to the world of experiences and biographical dramas by indicating the dominant role of the risk.

It has to be articulated that leaving the care leavers dependant on the social support system which performs a control function for them, does not exhaust the characteristics of necessary support. The care leavers become elements of a broader system, subject to institutional, previously set models of behaviour which are important for their functioning and independent choices. On the one hand, such

⁷ The idea to divide the reality into three areas based on which an individual creates concepts of oneself is taken from Oettingen and Thorp (2006) after: Bańka (2009) but virtual reality was replaced with escape into addictions.

anchoring may affect the dependency on the source of support. However on the other hand, the planned character of institutional support often fails to take into account the individual needs of care leavers and in consequence it may lead to the withdrawal of young adults from the possibility to benefit from the available resources even when they need it. Also, when recurring life events (addictions, conflict with the law, homelessness, lack of support) cease to affect an individual, then adaptation to conditions that an individual is exposed to takes place (Brickman et al. 1978). This may be associated with avoidance style and even self-taught hopelessness. It can be depicted by relations of dependency, life decisions or escapist behaviours to which the research participants award the meaning of risk. As it appears the risk defined in relation to biographical difficulties is experienced as greater threat than the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of the above the process of becoming independent becomes especially important, particularly when it becomes a priority to counteract social exclusion.

The recalled analyses encourage a conclusion that preparation to independence requires knowledge and understanding both in the area of life experiences of the care leavers' functioning and individual needs. It is also important to take into account the context in which the care leavers are at present. Thus, research conducted in this area should include the broadly understood external (situational) and internal (e.g. related to personality) factors.

Annex

Table 1. Characteristics of study research participants in foster care

Interview number, sex and year of birth	Education/training	Marital status, family procreation	Source of revenue	Place of residence	Foster care
W1K, 1997	middle education	single/cohabiting relationship, 3 children (two of them in foster care)	alimony, social benefits	previously a training flat/currently a rented flat	from 6 to 15 years of age – in kinship care (with grandmother), then until 18 years of age in institutional care (DD)
W2K, 1994	gymnasium education	single/cohabiting relationship, 2 children (one of them in foster care, currently with mother)	alimony, social benefits	previously a training flat/currently a rented flat	from the age of 11 for a year in institutional care (DD), then until the age of 18 in a related RZ (with the mother's sister)
W3M, 2003	attends primary school	single	money to continue education from the OPS	training flat	from age 7 to 18 in RDD
W4M, 1999	gymnasium education	single	none (looking for a job)	training flat	he does not remember since when he was placed with a related RZ (grandparents); he informs that "his grandparents raised him all his life"
W5K, 2000	vocational education (cook)	single/cohabiting relationship, 1 child (family under guardianship – suspected child abuse)	alimony, social benefits	previously a training flat/currently a rented flat	from 11 to 18 years of age in institutional care (DD)

W6K, 1993	primary education	single/cohabiting relationship 2 children (including one with cleft lip and palate); family under the care of a family assistant	alimony, social benefits	previously a training flat/currently a rented flat	she ran away from home before the age of 17 and was placed in institutional care before the age of 18
W7K, 2003	vocational education (cook)	single	money to continue education from the OPS	training flat	from age 7 to 18 in RDD
W8K, 1989	middle education	divorcee 2 children, living with father due to mother's alcohol addiction (mother in treatment)	contract work	previously a training flat/currently rents a room	from 15 to 18 years of age in institutional care
W9M, 2000	primary education	single	casual work	previously a training flat/currently back to biological parents with alcohol addiction problems	from 12 to 18 years of age in institutional care (DD)
W10M, 1999	gymnasium education	single/cohabiting relationship 2 children (including one with cleft lip and palate); family under the care of a family assistant	casual work/ social benefits	previously a training flat/currently a rented flat	from 10 to 18 years old in institutional care (DD)

Source: own study.

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RYZIKO W BIOGRAFIACH USAMODZIELNIONYCH WYCHOWANKÓW PIECZY ZASTĘPCZEJ

Abstrakt. W artykule zaprezentowano wybrane wyniki badań jakościowych wskazujących na próbę konstruowania siebie przez wychowanków pieczy instytucjonalnej i rodzinnej w relacji do doświadczeń, samodzielności i ryzyka (w tym ryzyka związanego z pandemią COVID-19). Okazuje się, że nie pandemia, ale adaptacja do życia poza instytucją wpływa na stan chwiejnej równowagi życiowej, która przy braku możliwości i zasobów niezbędnych do poradzenia sobie z trudnościami wytycza kierunek dla prawdopodobnej biografii jednostek badanych. W konsekwencji trudności uruchamiane są strategie funkcjonowania przekładające się na życiowe wybory. Dane empiryczne pochodzą z jakościowych wywiadów pogłębionych, które umożliwiają badanie sposobu doświadczania i postrzegania świata przez jednostkę.

Słowa kluczowe: ryzyko, biografia, wychowankowie instytucjonalnej pieczy zastępczej, badania jakościowe.

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DIFFICULT EVERYDAY LIFE OF PANDEMIC VOLUNTARY SERVICE (RESEARCH REPORT)

Abstract. In 2020, as part of the municipal “mikroDOTACJE”, we conducted a study of the #SzczecinPomaga campaign on how local government and non-governmental institutions dealt with helping the inhabitants of this city during the lockdown forced by the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the elements of this research were interviews with coordinators of institutions involved in aid activities undertaken as part of this campaign. Most of the questions that we’ve asked our respondents concerned broadly understood volunteering. We asked about the methods of searching and recruiting volunteers and the methods of organizing their activities in the difficult coronavirus reality. In May 2021 (exactly one year later), we repeated these interviews and found out how the coordinators assess the situation of Szczecin’s voluntary service after two consecutive waves of the pandemic and holiday “lockdowns”. We look at the problem from the point of view of the practice of coordinating aid activities, relations with volunteers, as well as opinions on their commitment and willingness to help.

Keywords: COVID-19, local government organizations, NGOs, aid activities, volunteering.

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1. Introduction

From May to July 2020, we participated in the project “How does #SzczecinPomaga help? Researching the needs caused by the coronavirus epidemic”. The project was implemented under the municipal program “mikroDOTACJE”.¹ The research we are discussing looked at how local government and non-governmental institutions dealt with helping the city’s inhabitants during the first “lockdown” caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, we repeated the interviews to find out about the post-pandemic relief situation.

#SzczecinPomaga is a municipal aid campaign organized during the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020² by the City of Szczecin and Szczecin aid organizations (including the Senior Center, the Municipal Family Assistance Center and the POLITES Association). The Regional Volunteer Center (lead by POLITES) was involved in the campaign, responsible for cooperation with over three hundred people who volunteered under the #SzczecinPomaga program. Recruitment for volunteer work took place via the form available on the website of POLITES and the City Hall, and then the information contained therein was verified in an interview with one of the project coordinators. The main task of the volunteers was to provide direct, remote and specialized help to those residents of Szczecin who, as a result of the pandemic, were unable to meet their basic life needs on their own.

The need to investigate the method of providing aid appeared after only a few weeks of operation of #SzczecinPomaga. It turned out that although some of the reported needs actually resulted directly from the presence of the coronavirus, others had already occurred before, and during the pandemic they were additionally exacerbated (e.g. those resulting from disability, old age, lack of contact with others, loneliness and isolation or lack of sufficient material means). Relevant activities were coordinated on an ongoing basis, institutions shared tasks (volunteering, cash benefits, food packages, care services or psychological support). However, in the longer term, providing effective and adequate help to all those in need, on the one hand, required the systematization of information on reported needs, and on the other, a well-planned process of verification of the information received, as well as coordination of activities and management of available resources. Moreover, it turned out to be important and interesting from the point of view of the cooperation of all organizations involved in helping the inhabitants of Szczecin to get to know and better understand the volunteers of #SzczecinPomaga (identifying their motivation, level of commitment, examining the level of satisfaction related to working as a volunteer during the pandemic and – possibly – in the future). An important aspect with a practical dimension was getting

¹ Program #mikroDOTACJE2020 [microSUBSIDIES] “Ad hoc support”. The campaign is co-financed by the City of Szczecin. Type of project: “Activities in the field of health protection and promotion; promotion and organization of volunteering”. The mikroDOTACJE operator is Fundacja Sektor3. Applicant organization: POLITES Association, contract number: 79/MD/2020.

² Since autumn 2020, the #SzczecinPomaga campaign has been launched again.

to know and describe all mechanisms of cooperation of organizations involved in the campaign to help the inhabitants of Szczecin (functioning correctly and incorrectly). We conducted in-depth interviews with employees of organizations cooperating under the hashtag #SzczecinPomaga (Senior Center, Municipal Family Support Center, POLITES Association, Municipal Police, City Hall).

2. Methods and approach

The program as a whole #SzczecinPomaga was an enormous team effort consolidating over 256 voluntary workers traveling across the city to provide help and support; 42 coordinators spread across the voivodeship gathering submissions and managing all efforts; and over 116 families with a need for a daily contact.

The largest number of submissions came from neighbourhoods located in the downtown area, where old tenement houses and pre-war residential buildings are located. That district is inhabited widely by elderly, senior citizens, and have had the largest submission ratio reaching over 60%. No wonder over 75% of all requests for support came from seniors of 66 years of age and more (where 48% were submitted by 76 years old and older). All requests were reported during a phone conversation when needy people were describing their needs while volunteers were taking detailed notes.

Voluntary workers joined #SzczecinPomaga answering broad recruitment call (Centrum Wolontariatu 2008: 33) made by NGO's. The promotion of the program was published online on social medias, POLITES's web page, billboards, radio announcements, tv commercials, and with word of mouth or snowball effect being the most valuable source. All were dedicated to their duties, declaring need for help and support, empathy are crucial motivation and values among all in their work attitude. They were providing not only help with hot meal preparation, prescription fulfilment, grocery shopping but also, supporting with warm conversations, understanding and devoting their own time for those in need. Profiling volunteers we've spotted 18–45 was their age range, all being active (working or studying) and 95% originating from town of 500k of citizens, and others from outside town.

Talking to coordinators we've used In-depth Interviews as a method to provide valuable insights that were later put through content analysis techniques. Controlled usage of scientific methods allows to gather information that were further analysed by evaluation techniques (Szarfenberg 2010: 32). To our research we've invited coordinators who had the greatest number of volunteers to work with, and not all of them were available due to work duties, and not balanced work-life equilibrium (just twelve of them were able to find time for meeting). While trying to find suitable time for them we've realized the pandemic period resulting in changing key work habits (namely remote work or splitting time between remote and office) is still a consequence our interlocutors face. The next consequence is that work-life balance idea became more and more blurred, fading.

3. Coordinators of the #SzczecinPomaga campaign

As part of the study, we conducted in-depth interviews with representatives of organizations involved in helping the inhabitants of Szczecin during the first “lockdown” caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents were asked primarily about (1) the scope of duties and activities during the “lockdown”; (2) cooperation with volunteers; (3) cooperation with coordinators from other institutions; (4) needs most frequently reported by residents; (5) preparing the city and aid institutions for the second wave of the virus; and the further organization of the functioning and cooperation of aid institutions beyond the epidemic.

Local government and non-governmental organizations in Szczecin undertook unofficial preparations for the “lockdown” a few weeks before its announcement.

We were preparing for it because we were watching what was happening abroad, especially in Italy, and it seemed inevitable. Anyway, Szczecin made some decisions ahead of the government decisions [Interview 5].

Despite these actions taken earlier, at the time of the official announcement of the lockdown, there was organizational chaos, panic, “nervousness”, and “improvisation”.

[...] it really was as if someone had thrown us into a new reality [Interview 8].

My work? How my life was? My life used to be all about work. [...] I am an advocate of being prepared for the worst rather than later finding yourself in a helpless situation. [...] And these were incessant thoughts, incessant phone calls. And I must admit that it was very stressful. Very stressful [Interview 4].

The work of aid institutions has been moved online as much as possible. If possible, the employees stayed at home. On the other hand, in offices, employees were divided into teams that worked shifts (if in one of them someone becomes ill and the entire team has to go into quarantine, the other may continue to work).

Everyone worked very hard in the scope they could and in the area they dealt with and were responsible for. And I don't think anyone of us has the impression that something went wrong along the way [Interview 3].

The daily work of the organization consisted primarily in accepting applications from residents, entering them into the database, coordinating work by telephone contact, sending a volunteer to those in need (who is closer to the reporting person), analyzing the situation and preparing reports (also from other organizations), monitoring if residents follow sanitary recommendations. The respondents pointed to the extended, irregular working hours, from morning to night, also on weekends. So this is when the work-life equilibrium fails, and people start to move their energy towards work, help mostly forgetting or putting aside their own life, wellbeing, health and relations to those close to them.

On the other hand – volunteers were positively surprised by the reactions of the residents: empathizing with them, complying with the announced restrictions, and mutual support. They also emphasized concern for people in quarantine, the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, including those under the influence of alcohol.

In the first period, our friends brought us more things, from hygiene products to some mattresses, which were possibly needed, but certainly masks and disinfectants, more than the voivode gave us in the first period. Because in the beginning, you couldn't buy anything, it was not that easy [Interview 4].

The most important issues mentioned by the respondents were: masks (sewing campaign, distribution among residents, free masks from the city for seniors – over 8,000 masks were issued, which were delivered to 300–400 addresses daily); food packages for people in quarantine; providing hot meals, daily shopping for people staying at home; medicaments; assistance in walking dogs; psychological help and support (conversation, contact with other people); gestures of solidarity with health workers, people working at the border (delivering meals).

There were a lot of reports... “I'm in quarantine, I can't go to the store”, we went there... we shopped, we carried it to people's houses, we helped the elderly, but also younger people who were in quarantine [Interview 3].

In the opinion of the coordinators, the volunteers did not have access to the database describing those in need and the types of needs. The most common volunteers were people who had downtime at work, or students. The most important questions for them were: what to do and what not to do as a volunteer; where is the limit of commitment to help. A volunteer is not and should not be someone who will do everything, e.g. renovate the house, bring new furniture from distant places. Sometimes it was necessary to refuse to process the request (e.g. window cleaning is not the most urgent action for such time). New volunteers were trained remotely over the phone (for safety reasons). Among the advantages of the #SzczecinPomaga volunteering program, the respondents noticed, first of all, the fact that many people volunteered with a clear and strong intention to provide help to others.

[...] We are very grateful that they were there, that they were willing, [...] because there was a lot of interest in volunteering, a lot of people wanted to help. [...] Overall, they did a great job [Interview 6].

[...] both the young, the adults and the seniors wanted to help very much [Interview 7].

The disadvantages indicated by our interlocutors are: poor or lack of method to verify people who were requesting for support (contact information was added to the request, name and last name as well but there were many situations where others were calling on behalf of someone in need and in this case they were not leaving their own contact info); too high expectations for volunteers from people who required assistance; problems with coordinating the work of volunteers. Furthermore

all interviewees, in their responses, emphasize extremely intense, everyday contact (e-mails, phone calls, online meetings) with people being in different conditions, approaches to problem solving. It seemed it required huge openness, empathy, patience, and willingness to cooperate no matter the case.

We were in contact all the time. All the time on phones, e-mails. We were in contact and cooperation was very good. There are no problems here [Interview 3].

We made the assumption right away that we are shortening the paths and that if we want to survive and cope, the most important thing is that we must be able to communicate. Communicate, that is, we must take into account that we will all have different moods, emotions, so that we can talk about it and I think we managed to do it [Interview 4].

The positive sides of the cooperation, according to the interviewees, were: the fact that the activities ran smoothly, there were no major problems, if they arose, they were resolved on an ongoing basis, and the inter-institutional cooperation proved successful. The problems we heard about in the interviews were: (1) lack of experience in coordinating the activities of volunteers from different organizations; (2) lack of prior cooperation between aid institutions; (3) misunderstandings resulting from the lack of a clearly defined area of activities of individual institutions; (4) lack of communication.

[...] an interesting experience, because we didn't know each other before, we didn't see ourselves physically, we didn't know our way of speaking, we didn't know the tone of our voice, we didn't know our jokes. Well, we were just strangers and suddenly we had to work together. [...] It was certainly instructive, in the sense that each organization certainly wanted to be the best in a positive sense that everyone wanted to prove to themselves and to others that we could cope with this task. Only that none of them spoke about it directly, I think there was a little lack of humility in all of us that we thought we were the most important, they thought they were the most important, but in general everything is fine. [...] There was no such meeting [Interview 2].

So, there were such different clashes. We've never talked about it outright either. There was no such conversation between us as to clarify something. But I think there were some flips out there, but it was emotional, stressful, it was a new situation for everyone [Interview 2].

According to the respondents, "if the next c19 wave occurs": we will enter it naturally, we are prepared, we need to act calmly, cool down our emotions and manage our resources. Besides, there are hygienic materials for masks and gloves, disinfectants for future use.

If there is a second wave, we are prepared for it. First of all, it will be easier for us emotionally [...]. Because this time it was a new surprise for everyone, and everyone had to find their way in it [Interview 1].

I think first of all, you have to talk about it and not say "it won't" [...] not to give people illusory hope and not to say: no, everything will be fine, no no... just to say it outright, that there may be such a risk, to prepare them so that they can hear about the fact that it may happen... No scaring, because this is obviously not what it is about [...]. Only to show various possible scenarios [Interview 2].

Well, unfortunately we are waiting for the next wave. We'll see what it will be like [Interview 7].

According to the answers provided, there is no need to create a single superior unit in Szczecin to coordinate aid and voluntary activities. However, there was an idea to create one database for all organizations (although opinions were divided there).

If someone wants to help another person, he will always find a way to do it [Interview 7].

It's important for this help simply to work and where there are gaps, really, for these people to know where to turn. So there has to be one place everyone can turn to: both a volunteer that wants to help and a person in need that needs that help, or someone who sees that someone else needs this help can simply report the situation [Interview 5].

The respondents indicated, first, the need to (1) open the conversation between aid institutions on the creation of a cooperation network or superior coordination of their activities (also beyond the time of the epidemic); (2) creating a single, inter-institutional database of notifications of residents' needs; (3) and to try to formally establish who the volunteer is and what his or her functioning in Szczecin should look like. More frequent meetings between coordinators of cooperating institutions was the second important topic that appeared in the interviews. The need for a real meeting of coordinators in a time when there is no epidemic, discussing the issue of cooperation between organizations also outside the time of "closure" is another real need of the organizers and coordinators of the campaign. It is they who notice that each city development, e.g. through its seniors club, could create a network thanks to which seniors could turn to their local club for help. E-prescriptions have worked very well (though it's a pity that you have to continue shopping at the same pharmacy where you started). An important aspect, emphasized by many interlocutors, was the aspect of information chaos in the media, which gave misleading information: that everyone deserves a food package, a mask, that everyone will receive funds (a lot of time was spent explaining to the callers what the situation is in reality).

The media crossed us a lot, it was also a big problem, unfortunately we couldn't deal with it, I don't think anyone could. As you can see, there was one thing in the media, and another in life, and later, we had to explain that this is not the case at all [Interview 1].

And that was the worst that was possible, because there is no way to explain to these people that it is not so, that it is not because it does not work that way [Interview 2].

Organizations that do not use voluntary support in their daily activities could start using their potential. For example, the Municipal Family Support Center (MOPR) could use the help of volunteers to do shopping, and a sitter could take care of the child during this time. Promotion of the campaign could be more "bottom-up": small shops, mailboxes, pharmacies could inform about the existence of the campaign and the possibilities of joining it, both as a person in need and as a volunteer.

This is the time that should give us Poles a lot of food for thought, to focus on what is most important in life, that is, ask yourself what gives me happiness, appreciate it and take care of it [Interview 8].

There are definitely a few things we would like to improve, but overall I think we did a great job. Really [Interview 6].

4. A year since the pandemic's beginning

Respondents noticed that in 2021, the coordination of assistance activities is much calmer: the telephone rings much less frequently and these are most often reports of people residing who cannot cope without outside help. There are also fewer reports of seniors requiring help, but there are questions about what a given organization can offer them.

Fewer pandemic-related, rather something like I'm a senior, I heard about you, someone told me, I called to ask [Interview 9].

Distribution of help (that is, directing the person in need to a specific institution that can and should provide this help) is centralized. There is one telephone number (in Warsaw), from which reports are sent to the Szczecin MOPR, and then further. Unfortunately, this procedure is not fully known. The inhabitants of Szczecin are used to functioning in a pandemic.

People are slowly getting used to certain things, there are no reports like: I'm afraid to leave the house because there is a pandemic. However, the practice of calling all available numbers with the same problem remained [Interview 9].

Help for residents in quarantine is still provided by volunteers reporting via the form. The database includes over 400 people, there are definitely fewer applications, but there are still weeks in which another 10 people willing to help are registered. You can also see that service companies or shops have also adapted to the new situation and now you can do more things yourself practically without leaving your home. Pharmacies remain a problem, but volunteers do their shopping there. There are also many help groups, support groups, neighborhood groups that organize help on their own, e.g. by walking the dogs of people in quarantine.

Our interlocutors also emphasize the greater awareness of the volunteers with whom they cooperate. There is still a willingness to help, but the thinking of people who help has changed. There are those who wanted to act only as an action, but stayed because it turned out that it was possible to combine professional and everyday life with volunteering. It is also about the way of providing help and its meaning. Volunteers contact the coordinators themselves: for example – asking where you can rent a wheelchair to go for a walk with someone who has mobility problems. They take the initiative themselves. The protective kits were left over from the previous wave, volunteers get them along with an ID (which sometimes allows them to make purchases without queuing). These are masks made by residents, because at the beginning of the pandemic, nothing could be bought and you had to deal with it yourself.

Mentally we are better prepared. Although sometimes people's expectations are surprising, they are too high if we rely on the voluntariness of people who can help in their free time, and not right now [Interview 10].

The statements of the coordinators also included reflections on the beneficiaries of the aid provided. Most of the activities are focused on the elderly, which led to neglect of children and adolescents. There is a clear need to come back to helping students, especially those who will fall behind after studying remotely. The respondents also lack direct contact with volunteers and charges. Coordinating is more difficult remotely, especially emotionally.

The problem remains the confusion related to the messages conveyed by the media (especially public) and the resulting information chaos. People who do not really need help, but want to get something that they deserve, according to media information, come to aid organizations more and more often. In addition, communication between coordinators from different organizations is still difficult, and so are the resulting competence disputes. But despite these inconveniences, we will be able to cope with the next wave of the pandemic more efficiently than in the previous ones, based on the *modus operandi* we have developed.

It is not known if there will be another wave. But if anything, we'll be fine. Pandemic is a school of life. It showed problems in the city that are worth solving, regardless of the situation in which we currently live [Interview 9].

5. NGO's in pandemic period

Polites similarly to other non-governmental organizations faces a lot of challenges in pandemic era. COVID-19 changed the way NGO works, posed new problems, required more flexibility and agile working habits. Especially implementation of new sanitary procedures, remote work, need to quickly upgrade IT skills (Gumkowska, Charycka 2021) were difficult to happen quickly and effectively. This happens where from one day to another part of the team works remotely, part is on call in bureau, and these teams needs to change the roles (remote workers would move to bureau and office workers change to remote – which is a standard procedure when you want to minimize the risks of people getting infected by reducing their face-to-face meetings).

Although our research focuses mostly on the way cooperation between coordinators and voluntary workers for obvious reasons it touches daily concerns and issues all research participants faced during pandemic times. That is how we know that lack of direct contact between all parties (coordinators – volunteers, volunteers – volunteers, coordinators from different organizations) but especially with recipients of the activities (volunteers) resulted in lower satisfaction with the tasks undertaken which was pointed out by all to whom we talked to. At the same

time the feedback provided by people in need of help – when that help arrived with volunteers – was a source of good energy, and additional motivation to all in Polites.

Like other NGOs (Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor 2021) Polites also sees that pandemic times worsened their overall situation, where they've faced the reduction in voluntary workers. But these obstacles forced them to act quickly and efficiently to find new people with willingness to help. So they've acted, they've posted a lot of news and invitations reaching to social media, local radio stations, tv commercials, billboards, targeting local communities as they seems to be checked before as strength in pandemic (Dąbrowska 2020). That is how many volunteers answered the call for help within four few weeks' time. Unlike others Polites did not face bureaucracy of public administration, competition (even though there were 7416 NGO in Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship according to Sejmik Województwa Zachodniopomorskiego 2021) or excessive control of state bodies (Interia.pl 2021).

6. Conclusion

Our research project was aiming to provide the feedback to NGO named Polites from coordinators who were engaged in the pandemic wave support to people who requested help in pandemic times. This study provided the basis for further evaluation process that is not included in this report.

The first interviews with the coordinators of the aid activities of #SzczecinPomaga (carried out in 2020) showed that all cooperating organizations (NGO, City Social Welfare Centre, City Hall of Szczecin) were prepared for the next wave of the epidemic. However, it was important to tone down the aid activities (“cooling down enthusiasm”) and adequately recognize what the actual need of a particular notifier is and how it can be best satisfied. Detailed analysis of what is needed against what the NGO showed the significant gaps. The volunteers' capabilities needed to be validated each time the support is provided (painting the flat, renovating furniture, psychological support – are the kinds of help that needed more professional engagement that volunteers could provide). That particular practice (validation) in a future will have the two positive effects. One on people requiring support (they will know what they can expect from NGO), two on volunteers (they will become better prepared to what is expected from them – and they will be able to estimate better the scope of their duties).

Coordination of all activities requires rational resource management and identification of barriers. However, the long-term organization of the functioning and cooperation of aid institutions during and outside the epidemic requires: a broader discussion on the creation of a cooperation network or superior coordination; preparation of a single, inter-institutional database of residents' needs; answer to the question of who the volunteer is and how their functioning in Szczecin should

look like. Interviews conducted a year later (2021) confirmed these observations. Aid organizations dealt with successive closures and the resulting problems.

Furthermore coordinators pointed to some “novelties” that appeared compared to the previous year (2020): becoming accustomed to the pandemic, changing the nature of reported needs (more seniors, fewer people in quarantine), increasing the base of people willing to help, taking the initiative by the volunteers themselves. They also pointed to the problems that, despite the passage of months, could not be avoided. These were: flexibility of grantors, reliable information from government (Gumkowska, Charycka 2020), and information chaos existing in media, plus unclear financing methods. They also emphasized the constant need for open conversations and consultations between coordinators from different organizations. Which leads us to dilemma: whether centralized or local coordination centers are needed for pandemic volunteer actioning?

With that in mind there has to be changes in the way NGO’s work. Namely: ways the processes are organized, scope of services provided, communication sources, key partnership and assurance on who is the one that anyone can lean on in specific areas (IT, logistics, financing, delivering sanitary equipment, etc.). That description makes Polites experience of pandemic times really similar to what other organizations were going through in this period (Waniak-Michalak 2021).

The overall conclusion is that each research findings needs to be carefully communicated and explained widely to local authorities. After Polites presented their findings, shared their ideas, and justified the conclusions – some of them were included in the cooperation program between Zachodniopomorskie Voivode and NDO’s – that is to say constant support for NGO’s during pandemic times (Wojewoda Zachodniopomorski 2021).

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TRUDNA CODZIENNOŚĆ WOŁONTARIATU PANDEMICZNEGO (RAPORT Z BADAŃ)

Abstrakt. W 2020 roku w ramach miejskich „mikroDOTACJI” przeprowadziliśmy badanie kampanii #SzczecinPomaga dotyczące tego, jak instytucje samorządowe i pozarządowe radziły sobie z pomocą mieszkańcom Szczecina podczas blokady wymuszonej przez pierwszą falę pandemii COVID-19. Jednym z elementów tego badania były wywiady z koordynatorami instytucji zaangażowanych w działania pomocowe podejmowane w ramach tej kampanii. Większość pytań, które zadaliśmy naszym respondentom, dotyczyła szeroko rozumianego wolontariatu. Pytaliśmy o metody poszukiwania i rekrutacji wolontariuszy oraz metody organizacji ich działań w trudnej koronawirusowej rzeczywistości. W maju 2021 roku (dokładnie rok później) powtórzyliśmy te wywiady i dowiedzieliśmy się, jak koordynatorzy oceniają sytuację szczecińskiego wolontariatu po dwóch kolejnych falach pandemii i wakacyjnych „blokadach”. Patrzymy na problem z punktu widzenia praktyki koordynowania działań pomocowych, relacji z wolontariuszami, a także opinii na temat ich zaangażowania i chęci niesienia pomocy.

Słowa kluczowe: COVID-19, organizacje samorządowe, organizacje pozarządowe, działania pomocowe, wolontariat.

VARIA

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DZIECI I MŁODZIEŻ JAKO INTERESARIUSZE REWITALIZACJI NA PRZYKŁADZIE PROGRAMU REWITALIZACJI ŁODZI 2026+

Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie, jaki obraz dzieci i młodzieży jako mieszkańców i użytkowników rewitalizowanej przestrzeni miejskiej wylania się z przykładowego dokumentu wyznaczającego ramy procesu miejskiej odnowy. Teoretyczne tło moich rozważań stanowi koncepcja dzieciństwa wypracowana w obszarze nowych interdyscyplinarnych studiów nad dzieciństwem (*new childhood studies*). W odniesieniu do dokumentu pt. *Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+* zastosowałam jakościową analizę treści. Analiza zapisów dokumentu ukazuje dzieci i młodzież jako pasywnych członków społeczności, potencjalnych beneficjentów działań naprawczych, „nosiciele” problemów społecznych. Dokument wydaje się bazować na tradycyjnej, socjalizacyjnej wizji dzieciństwa, które polega na dorastaniu do roli osoby pełnej i znaczącej. Dzieci i młodzież postrzegani są głównie jako przyszli pracownicy, których trzeba wyposażyć we właściwe kompetencje, aby mogli zająć odpowiednie miejsce na rynku pracy i przyczynić się do sukcesu i rozwoju miasta. W dokumencie nie ma mowy o aktualnych potrzebach dzieci i ich jakości życia „tu i teraz”.

Słowa kluczowe: dzieci, młodzież, rewitalizacja, nowa koncepcja dzieciństwa.

1. Wprowadzenie

Przestrzeń, w której funkcjonujemy, oddziałuje na nas: wpływa na nasze samopoczucie, stan zdrowia, jakość naszego życia, może zwiększać lub zmniejszać nasze życiowe szanse. Dla większości mieszkańców naszego kraju otaczająca przestrzeń to przestrzeń miejska – według danych Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego w miastach zamieszkuje 60,1% populacji Polski (GUS 2019: 214). Współczesne

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miasta w swojej obecnej formie nie są uważane za dobre miejsca do życia, pracy i spędzania czasu. Do problemów miast należą m.in. bieda, nierówności społeczno-ekonomiczne i dyskryminacja, zanieczyszczenie powietrza, niekontrolowana produkcja odpadów, niewydolne gospodarki, chaos lub wręcz paraliż komunikacyjny, degradacja zabytkowej zabudowy, opustoszałe tereny przemysłowe, gettyzacja i gentryfikacja, wykluczające, nieprzyjazne dla wielu grup społecznych przestrzenie publiczne, komercjalizacja usług społecznych, pomijanie stanowiska mieszkańców w procesie podejmowania decyzji o budowach, remontach i inwestycjach, a w krajach i miastach o niższych dochodach również brak dostępu do wody, podstawowych dóbr i usług, tworzenie się slumsów, przestępczość zorganizowana, łamanie praw człowieka. Dostrzeżenie tych problemów doprowadziło do powstania koncepcji odnowy miasta (*city renewal*). Jednym z nurtów odnowy miasta jest rewitalizacja, w kontekście europejskim obejmująca działania inicjowane, projektowane, nadzorowane i współfinansowane przez władze publiczne. Zakłada się, że współczesne miasto powinno odpowiadać na potrzeby swoich mieszkańców i użytkowników, gwarantując im odpowiednią jakość życia. Dokumenty określające kierunki światowej i europejskiej polityki miejskiej szczególną uwagę poświęcają konieczności realizacji potrzeb mieszkańców i użytkowników miast należących do nieuprzywilejowanych kategorii, grup społecznych i społeczności, do których zalicza się m.in. dzieci i młodzież (por. *Karta Lipska 2007; Nowa Agenda Miejska 2016; Nowa Karta Lipska 2020; Ljubljana Agreement 2022*).

Artykuł jest rezultatem mojego zainteresowania miejscem osób niedorośliych i znaczeniem kwestii związanych z jakością ich życia w procesie odnowy miasta. Teoretyczne tło moich rozważań na ten temat stanowić będzie koncepcja dzieciństwa, wypracowana w obszarze interdyscyplinarnych nowych studiów nad dzieciństwem (*new childhood studies*) (np. James, James 2012; Corsaro 2015; Gabriel 2017). Celem artykułu jest naszkicowanie obrazu dzieci i młodzieży (niedorośliych mieszkańców i użytkowników miasta, interesariuszy działań rewitalizacyjnych), który wyłania się z zapisów przykładowego dokumentu określającego cele i działania podejmowane w obszarze rewitalizacji. Aby zrealizować tak sformułowany cel, zastosowałam jakościową analizę treści *Programu Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+*, traktowanego przeze mnie jako przykładowy dokument wytyczający ramy kompleksowego przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjnego, które uznaję za element szerszego procesu odnowy miasta. Moje główne pytanie badawcze brzmi: jaki obraz dzieci i młodzieży jako mieszkańców i użytkowników rewitalizowanej przestrzeni miejskiej wyłania się z analizowanego dokumentu? Pytania szczegółowe dotyczą następujących kwestii: jakie problemy dotyczące dzieci i młodzieży zostały zdiagnozowane w ramach przygotowania działań rewitalizacyjnych? Jakie są cele i kierunki działań, które są/mają być podejmowane na rzecz dzieci i młodzieży lub z ich udziałem? W jakiej formie i w jakim zakresie są/mają być realizowane te działania? Jak zaprezentowani zostali niedorośli mieszkańcy i użytkownicy rewitalizowanego obszaru w dokumencie oraz czym/jakie jest ich dzieciństwo?

2. Nowa koncepcja dzieciństwa – dziecko w przestrzeni publicznej – dziecko w mieście

Klasyczne ujęcie dzieciństwa w naukach społecznych, oparte na teorii socjalizacji i psychologii rozwojowej, uznaje dziecko za istotę niedojrzałą, niekompetentną, asocjalną, akulturalną, nieracjonalną i pasywną (za: Zdanowicz-Kucharczyk 2015). Z socjalizacyjnej koncepcji dziecka wynika dychotomiczna relacja między dziećmi a dorosłymi, „prywatyzacja” dzieci (dzieci sytuowane są niemal wyłącznie w domenie życia rodzinnego), „infantyilizacja” dzieci (ograniczona zostaje zdolność dzieci do partycypacji) oraz podejście „futurolologiczne” (dzieci widziane są głównie przez pryzmat ich przyszłej wartości jako dorosłych) (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2014: 24). W nurcie nowych studiów nad dzieciństwem (*new childhood studies*) osoby niedorośle traktowane są jako aktywni, pełnowartościowi aktorzy społeczni, kompetentni interpretatorzy świata społecznego, posiadacze własnej kultury (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2014: 24; por. Jenks 2008), podmioty zdolne do kreowania rzeczywistości społecznej. W nowym paradygmacie dzieciństwa dziecko jest kimś, kto „jest” (*human being*), a nie kimś, kto dopiero „staje się” (*human becoming*) (za: Zdanowicz-Kucharczyk 2015). Dzieciństwo uznaje się za ważną i w pełni przeżywaną fazę życia, a nie jedynie okres przygotowania do dorosłości. W konsekwencji sytuację dzieci analizuje się z punktu widzenia ich aktualnych stanów i potrzeb (jak się czują, czego doświadczają, co myślą, co przeżywają), a nie jedynie przez pryzmat ich przyszłego znaczenia jako dorosłych członków społeczeństwa. W teoriach i badaniach nowych studiów nad dzieciństwem osoby niedorośle uważane są za podmioty, które powinny mieć wpływ na otaczającą je rzeczywistość, w tym na organizację przestrzeni i miejsc, w których przebywają, nie tylko w sferze prywatnej, ale również w przestrzeni publicznej (za: Zdanowicz-Kucharczyk 2015).

Przykłady realizacji idei dziecięcej obywatelskości przybierają formy projektów partycypacyjnych, w ramach których dzieci mogą wypowiadać się lub aktywnie brać udział w planowaniu pewnych działań jako ich interesariusze. Takie działania często dotyczą projektowania przestrzeni miejskiej, a w jej ramach – przestrzeni dla dzieci lub przestrzeni publicznej przyjaznej dzieciom. Dzieci uzyskują wpływ na sposób wydatkowania części budżetów obywatelskich (jak w Newcastle w Wielkiej Brytanii, w Barra Mansa w Brazylii), uczestniczą w przygotowaniach planu zagospodarowania przestrzennego dla miasta (Krynica Zdrój), projektują place zabaw i współuczestniczą w ich budowie (Małopolska), współprojektują przedszkole (Warszawa) (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2013). Przykładem innowacyjnego podejścia do włączania dzieci w proces odnowy miasta jest inicjatywa miasta Trnava na Słowacji, które zaprosiło dzieci do współpracy w zagospodarowywaniu przestrzeni miejskiej poprzez udział w konkursie. Dzieci poproszono o zaprojektowanie fragmentów miasta z użyciem popularnej

gry komputerowej Minecraft, w której można konstruować budowle za pomocą trójwymiarowych bloków¹.

Z nowego sposobu konceptualizacji dzieciństwa wynika idea obywatelskości dzieci, w myśl której osoby niedorośle uzyskują status pełnoprawnych członków społeczeństw i obywateli. Dziecięce obywatelstwo rozumiane jest jako prawo do szacunku, uznania i aktywnego udziału w życiu społecznym (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2014: 11). W praktyce życia publicznego dostrzega się brak dostatecznego upodmiotowienia dzieci; zgłaszane są postulaty wzmacniania obywatelskości i partycypacji dzieci w sferze publicznej. W procesie odnowy miasta podkreśla się rolę i znaczenie dzieci i młodzieży jako mieszkańców, obywateli i użytkowników, których potrzeby powinny być brane pod uwagę. Zakłada się, że niedorośli powinni mieć możliwość udziału w procesie projektowania i tworzenia przestrzeni miejskiej. Tworzenie programów i usług mających zagwarantować dzieciom i rodzinom dobrą jakość życia w mieście promuje inicjatywa UNICEF *Miasto przyjazne dziecku* (MPD) (*Child-friendly city*, CFC). Celem programu jest „wsparcie miast w zapewnieniu lepszej jakości dóbr i usług dla dzieci i praktyczna realizacja zapisów Konwencji o prawach dziecka”². Program ma na celu włączanie samorządów, lokalnych partnerów, ale też samych dzieci w życie społeczne miasta. Według UNICEF miasto przyjazne dzieciom to takie miasto, które „dba o swych najmłodszych obywateli, jest świadome ich potrzeb i praw. Stara się zagwarantować im optymalne warunki życia i rozwoju, zdając sobie sprawę, jak ogromny wpływ na ukształtowanie dorosłego człowieka ma dzieciństwo”³. Idea partycypacji dzieci jest wpisana w koncepcję „miasta przyjaznego dzieciom, ponieważ głosy, potrzeby, priorytety i prawa dzieci są integralną częścią publicznych polityk, programów i decyzji” (tłum. PBM). Miasto przyjazne dzieciom według UNICEF powinno spełniać następujące warunki:

- (1) dzieci są chronione przed wykorzystywaniem, przemocą, molestowaniem; (2) dzieci mają szansę na dobry start w życiu, mogą dorastać w zdrowiu, są objęte opieką; (3) dzieci mają dostęp do wysokiej jakości usług społecznych; (4) dzieci uczestniczą w wysokiej jakości włączającej, partycypacyjnej edukacji; (5) dzieci wyrażają swoje opinie i mają wpływ na decyzje, które ich dotyczą; (6) dzieci uczestniczą w życiu rodzinnym, kulturalnym, społecznym; (7) dzieci żyją w bezpiecznym i czystym środowisku, mają dostęp do przestrzeni zielonych; (8) dzieci mają przyjaciół i miejsca, w których mogą się bawić; (9) dzieci mają równe szanse życiowe bez względu na pochodzenie etniczne, dochody rodziny, płeć i poziom sprawności⁴ (tłum. PBM).

W Polsce jedno miasto (Gdynia) zostało włączone do programu (od 2017 r., w fazie pilotażu). Obecnie o status „miasta przyjaznego dzieciom” ubiega się Kraków.

¹ <https://www.childinthecity.org/2020/06/12/slovak-city-challenges-children-to-model-the-city-in-minecraft/> (dostęp: 10.07.2020).

² <https://www.unicef.pl/Miasto-przyjazne-dzieciom/Miasto-przyjazne-dzieciom> (dostęp: 16.08.2020).

³ Tamże.

⁴ <https://childfriendlycities.org/what-is-a-child-friendly-city/> (dostęp: 16.08.2020).

3. Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+ jako projekt odnowy miasta

Łódź, nazywana „miastem marzeń” (Ciarkowski 2016), posiada długą historię niezrealizowanych przedsięwzięć urbanistycznych i architektonicznych. Formułowane w XX i na początku XXI stulecia ambitne plany miały przyczynić się do przekształcenia powstałego w latach 20. XIX wieku ośrodka przemysłowego w nowoczesną metropolię, rozpoznawalną i pełniącą ważne funkcje w skali krajowej i międzynarodowej (Gryglewski et al. 2009). W pewien sposób kontynuacją tych zamierzeń jest *Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+*.

Rewitalizacja w Polsce interpretowana jest jako reakcja na pozostałości po gwałtownej industrializacji, czyli na obecność często nieczynnych i popadających w ruinę obiektów przemysłowych w centrach miast (Rogatka 2019: 71). Rewitalizację postrzega się także jako porządkowanie miasta po dwóch falach intensywnej urbanizacji (Mergel et al. 2013). W obecnym polskim kontekście rewitalizacja to przedsięwzięcie z zakresu odnowy miasta, będące wyrazem zintegrowanego podejścia do rozwiązywania problemów występujących na obszarach miasta znajdujących się w kryzysie. Rewitalizacja wpisuje się w nowe podejście do kształtowania miasta, programowo odwołując się do tworzenia dobrych przestrzeni gwarantujących wysoką jakość życia, rozwój gospodarczy przy zabezpieczeniu interesów grup najsłabszych społecznie oraz zastosowaniu zasad partycypacji społecznej i inkluzji społecznej. Szczególnie akcentowanym (w warstwie deklaratywnej) wymiarem rewitalizacji jest rewitalizacja społeczna, dotycząca budowania (lub odbudowywania) relacji międzyludzkich w ramach jednostek sąsiedzkich (renesans związków sąsiedzkich; Rogatka 2019: 56).

Rewitalizacja jest procesem regulowanym aktami prawnymi na poziomie centralnym (ustawa o rewitalizacji z 9 października 2015 r.⁵) i lokalnym (Gminny Program Rewitalizacji), planowanym i koordynowanym przez władze lokalne, realizowanym z udziałem różnorodnych podmiotów reprezentujących sektory publiczny, prywatny i pozarządowy. Rewitalizacja w założeniu ma prowadzić do ponownego ożywienia zaniedbanych, zdegradowanych części miasta oraz poprawić jakość życia ich mieszkańców. Zgodnie z ustawą o rewitalizacji jest to proces

wyprowadzania ze stanu kryzysowego obszarów zdegradowanych, prowadzony kompleksowo, poprzez zintegrowane działania na rzecz lokalnej społeczności, przestrzeni i gospodarki, skoncentrowane terytorialnie, prowadzone przez interesariuszy rewitalizacji na podstawie gminnego programu rewitalizacji (art. 2 ust. 1).

Działania rewitalizacyjne są elementem przemian współczesnego miasta i przyczyniają się do tworzenia nowych praktyk miejskości.

Pierwsza wersja *Programu Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+* została przyjęta 28 września 2016 r. przez Radę Miejską w Łodzi uchwałą nr XXXV/916/16. Dokument

⁵ Dz.U. z 2015 r., poz. 1777.

był już dwukrotnie aktualizowany. 5 lipca 2018 r. Rada Miejska w Łodzi uchwałą nr LXXIII/1980/18 zatwierdziła II wersję Programu. Obecnie obowiązuje jego III wersja, przyjęta uchwałą nr XXXIV/1122/20 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi z 24 grudnia 2020 r. Zgodnie z postanowieniami ustawy o rewitalizacji za koordynację i odpowiednie programowanie procesu rewitalizacji w mieście odpowiedzialny jest Urząd Miasta Łodzi. Gminny Program Rewitalizacji realizowany jest na obszarze rewitalizacji, wytyczonym na podstawie zapisów ustawy o rewitalizacji. Obszar rewitalizacji powinien być częścią obszaru zdegradowanego. Obszar zdegradowany to, zgodnie z ustawą, „fragment terytorium gminy, który znajduje się w stanie kryzysowym z powodu koncentracji negatywnych zjawisk”, do których należą np. bezrobocie, ubóstwo, przestępczość, niski poziom edukacji lub kapitału społecznego, niewystarczający poziom uczestnictwa w życiu publicznym i kulturalnym. Oprócz negatywnych zjawisk społecznych na obszarze zdegradowanym muszą zachodzić równolegle negatywne zjawiska o charakterze gospodarczym, środowiskowym, przestrzenno-funkcyjnym i technicznym. Obszar rewitalizacji to część obszaru zdegradowanego spełniająca dwa warunki: po pierwsze, koncentracja negatywnych zjawisk jest na niej szczególnie; po drugie – ma istotne znaczenie dla rozwoju gminy. W przypadku Łodzi obszar zdegradowany i obszar rewitalizacji pokrywają się. Obszar rewitalizacji w Łodzi obejmuje 1783 ha (6,08% całkowitej powierzchni miasta), jest zamieszkiwany przez 152 292 osób (22,83% populacji jego mieszkańców) (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 7), składa się z 55 kwartałów.

Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+ zawiera opis powiązań z dokumentami strategicznymi, część diagnostyczną odnoszącą się zarówno do problemów, jak i potencjału obszaru rewitalizacji, część planistyczną obejmującą wizję obszaru rewitalizacji, cele operacyjne i szczegółowe rewitalizacji oraz wynikające z nich kierunki działań, a także katalog działań rewitalizacyjnych, przewidzianych do realizacji przez różnorodne podmioty. Ostatnia (zarządcza) część Programu określa strukturę zarządzania realizacją Gminnego Programu Rewitalizacji, prezentuje harmonogram działań, przedstawia mechanizmy integrowania przedsięwzięć, źródła ich finansowania, a także system monitorowania, oceny i wprowadzania zmian.

4. Dzieci i młodzież w *Programie Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+*

W celu naszkicowania obrazu niedorośliwych mieszkańców i użytkowników miasta oraz wizji dzieciństwa wyłaniających się z dokumentu będącego podstawą działań rewitalizacyjnych w Łodzi zastosowałam jakościową analizę treści, której przedmiotem był tekst dokumentu pt. *Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+*. *Gminny Program Rewitalizacji* (z 2016 r., ze zmianami wprowadzonymi w 2018 r.). David Silverman (2008: 84) definiuje tekst będący przedmiotem analizy w badaniach jakościowych jako „słowa i obrazy utrwalone bez intencji badacza”. Analiza tekstu to „rozumiejąca, usystematyzowana, w zamierzeniu badacza [badaczki] analityczna

lektura tekstu” (Tomanek, Bryda 2015: 55). Karolina Szczepaniak (2012: 96–100) proponuje następującą procedurę metodologiczną jako schemat jakościowej analizy treści. Formuła ta obejmuje pięć kroków: (1) wybór materiału badawczego; (2) wielokrotną lekturę tekstów, które weszły do próby; (3) tworzenie klucza kategoryzacyjnego; (4) definiowanie kategorii w kluczu; (5) budowanie tabel z cytatami.

Inspirując się powyższym podejściem, zastosowałam nieco zmodyfikowaną procedurę: po wyborze materiału badawczego (którym jest dokument pt. *Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+*. *Gminny Program Rewitalizacji*, wersja I z 2016 r. i wersja II z 2018 r. z rozszerzonym katalogiem przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych) oraz wielokrotnej lekturze analizowanego tekstu skoncentrowałam się na identyfikacji wszystkich fragmentów tekstu, które (w sposób bezpośredni lub pośredni) dotyczą dzieci i młodzieży. W celu uporządkowania materiału zbudowałam tabele z cytatami (a w pewnych przypadkach, gdy cytowane fragmenty byłyby zbyt długie – z krótkimi rekapitulacjami dłuższych fragmentów tekstu), z podziałem na kolejne analizowane przeze mnie części dokumentu. Budowanie tabel z fragmentami tekstu umożliwiło mi kategoryzację – zidentyfikowanie głównych tematów, wokół których projektuje się działania nakierowane na niedorosłych mieszkańców i użytkowników miasta, a następnie odpowiedź na pytania badawcze oraz interpretację zebranego materiału w świetle zrekapitulowanej przeze mnie pokrótce we wcześniejszej części artykułu nowej koncepcji dzieciństwa.

Jednocześnie, za Hanną Pałską (1999), chciałabym zaznaczyć i podkreślić, że jakościowa analiza treści dokumentu jest w zasadzie interpretacją rzeczywistości społecznej ze strony dokonującej/dokonującego jej socjolożki/socjologa.

Jak wskazuje diagnoza obszaru rewitalizacji z 2016 r., wbrew potocznym przekonaniom udział seniorów wśród mieszkańców centrum Łodzi jest niższy niż średnio w mieście, a obszar rewitalizacji okazuje się demograficznie młody: grupą wiekową nadreprezentowaną wśród mieszkańców są dzieci i młodzież w przedziale wiekowym 8–25 lat (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 81–82). Dzieci i młodzież są zatem istotną grupą mieszkańców i użytkowników rewitalizowanych obszarów oraz interesariuszy rewitalizacji.

Poniżej prezentuję rezultaty poszukiwań zapisów *Programu Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+* odnoszących się (bezpośrednio lub pośrednio) do osób niedorosłych: dzieci i młodzieży będących mieszkańcami i/lub użytkownikami obszaru rewitalizacji, w celu odpowiedzi na sformułowane na początku tekstu pytanie główne i pytania szczegółowe. Analiza obejmie część diagnostyczną Programu (problemy i potrzeby dzieci i młodzieży, które dostrzeżono), sformułowane w części planistycznej cele oraz zapisane w niej przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne (nie obejmuje pierwszej części dokumentu wskazującej powiązania Programu z dokumentami strategicznymi ani ostatniej, zarządczej części dokumentu). Wyróżnienia (pogrubienia) w tabelach są mojego autorstwa i mają za zadanie ułatwić czytelnikom artykułu zorientowanie się w zawartości tabel.

W części diagnostycznej Programu określono problemy występujące na terenach przeznaczonych do rewitalizacji. Zapisy dotyczące dzieci i młodzieży (pośrednio lub bezpośrednio) zaprezentowano w Tabeli 1.

Tabela 1. Problemy występujące na obszarze rewitalizacji, dotyczące dzieci i młodzieży

Zapis w PRŁ 2026+ (2016)	Nr strony
„Bardzo istotnym i silnie zauważalnym problemem obszaru rewitalizacji jest poziom osiągnięć edukacyjnych , zarówno średnio niższe wyniki edukacyjne w zlokalizowanych w obszarze rewitalizacji szkołach, jak i zauważalnie niższe wyniki zamieszkałych w obszarze rewitalizacji uczniów [...]. Niemal cały obszar rewitalizacji jest zwartą enklawą wyników słabych i bardzo słabych ”.	43
„Problem obniżonych szans edukacyjnych uczniów z obszaru rewitalizacji jest w świetle diagnozy nabrzmiały i połączony współzależnością z procesem dziedziczenia ubóstwa : problemy edukacyjne są przeszkodą dla wyższych zarobków w przyszłości, co generuje ubóstwo, zaś z kolei ubóstwo osłabia w rodzinie potencjał wsparcia edukacyjnego dzieci w kolejnym pokoleniu”.	45
Na obszarze rewitalizacji występują: „ znaczący deficyt usług społecznych , które powinny najintensywniej działać właśnie w obszarach ubóstwa: placówek wsparcia dziennego, świetlic i innych form pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą, oraz instrumentów wsparcia rodziny [...]” oraz „ brak wystarczających form wsparcia dla dzieci i młodzieży zagrożonych dziedziczeniem ubóstwa i wykluczenia społecznego ”.	39
Na obszarze rewitalizacji stwierdza się „ wyjątkowo dużo zatrudnienia niskiej jakości , związanego z bardzo niskimi płacami”, w strefie rewitalizowanej zamieszkują „ pracujący ubodzy ” oraz „ osoby praktycznie bez szans na znalezienie pracy ”.	34
Na obszarze rewitalizacji występuje „oczekiwanie mieszkańców urozmaicenia przestrzeni, szczególnie wewnątrzkwartałowych czy pobocznych względem głównych ulic i osi, które spełniałyby potrzeby różnych grup (młodzieży, dzieci, seniorów)”, mieszkańcom nie podoba się standard projektowania terenów rekreacyjnych i placów zabaw , co może być spowodowane „ brakiem głębszego przyjrzenia się specyficznym potrzebom różnych grup wiekowych i osób o różnym stanie sprawności ”; zatem „ należy włączyć grupy mieszkańców w różnym wieku, różnej sytuacji życiowej i zdrowotnej do wypracowania łódzkiego standardu przestrzeni rekreacyjnej ”.	42, 68, 69–70
Przekwaterowywanie mieszkańców, w tym dzieci , podejmowane w związku z prowadzonymi w ramach działań rewitalizacyjnych remontami oraz porządkowaniem stanu zasobów mieszkaniowych gminy, wiąże się z zagrożeniami. W wyniku przeprowadzki dzieci mogą doświadczyć zerwania więzi, dyskryminacji, pogorszenia szans edukacyjnych i rozwojowych . Wskazana jest organizacja wsparcia pedagogicznego w nowych miejscach nauki, przeszkolenie wychowawców i pedagogów z tematyki antydyskryminacyjnej, wspieranie utrzymywania sieci kontaktów ułatwiające powrót do pierwotnego miejsca zamieszkania po remoncie.	45–46

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie PRŁ 2026+ (2016).

Zapis na s. 34, głoszący, że na badanym terenie jest „wyjątkowo dużo zatrudnienia niskiej jakości, związanego z bardzo niskimi płacami”, a strefę rewitalizacji zamieszkują „pracujący ubodzy” oraz „osoby praktycznie bez szans na znalezienie pracy”, w pierwszej chwili wydaje się nie mieć związku z sytuacją dzieci i młodzieży. Po lekturze całego tekstu widoczna jest jednak relacja tego fragmentu diagnozy ze sformułowaną następnie potrzebą zwiększania szans edukacyjnych młodych mieszkańców (potrzeba 3 w Tabeli 2) oraz „kreowania postaw przedsiębiorczych wśród dzieci i młodzieży”

(potrzeba 5 w Tabeli 2). Dlatego zdecydowałam się włączyć, pozornie niezwiązany z osobami niedoroslými, problem niskiej jakości zatrudnienia do istotnych z punktu widzenia prowadzonej analizy rezultatów diagnozy dotyczących najmłodszych.

Sformułowane również w części diagnostycznej dokumentu potrzeby związane z poprawą sytuacji niedoroslých mieszkańców i użytkowników obszaru rewitalizacji zestawiałam w Tabeli 2.

Tabela 2. Potrzeby związane z poprawą sytuacji dzieci i młodzieży

Potrzeby w zakresie przywracania spójności społecznej (PRŁ 2026+ wymienia ich ogółem 5)		
Potrzeba 2	Konieczność zmniejszania skali narażenia na ubóstwo, zahamowania procesu dziedziczenia ubóstwa oraz odbudowywania i wzmacniania sieci wzajemnego wsparcia w środowiskach dotkniętych ubóstwem; wynikająca z powyższych potrzeba różnorodnych form pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą, nakierowanych na przerwanie cyklu dziedziczenia ubóstwa, wspierania wszelkich form animacji społecznej, w tym animacji kultury i sportu, pracy animatorów w terenie.	s. 86
Potrzeba 3	Potrzeba zwiększenia szans edukacyjnych młodych mieszkańców obszaru rewitalizacji, w szczególności na poziomie szkoły podstawowej, polegająca nie tylko na „mechanicznym ukierunkowaniu na wzmocnienie edukacji w układzie przedmiotów szkolnych, ale poszukiwanie kierunków edukacji zwiększających szanse życiowe”.	s. 86
Potrzeby w zakresie pobudzania przedsiębiorczości i ożywienia gospodarczego (ogółem 7)		
Potrzeba 5	Potrzeba „kreowania postaw przedsiębiorczych wśród dzieci i młodzieży” (przy czym „przedsiębiorczość” to nie tylko „prowadzenie przedsiębiorstwa”, ale także „postawa bycia przedsiębiorczym, samostereowność, gotowość wyznaczania sobie celów i podejmowania ryzyka”).	s. 87
Potrzeby w zakresie poprawy jakości obszaru zamieszkiwania (ogółem 6)		
Potrzeba 4	Potrzeba włączania mieszkańców w różnym wieku, sytuacji życiowej i zdrowotnej w wypracowywanie łódzkiego standardu przestrzeni rekreacyjnej dostosowanej do potrzeb łódzian, w szczególności – zgodnej ze standardami projektowania uniwersalnego i zasadami przestrzeni przyjaznej seniorom.	s. 88

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie PRŁ 2026+ (2016).

W części operacyjnej programu określono misję (cel główny), „którą jest wyzwolić potencjał centrum Łodzi i jego mieszkańców” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 92). Osiągnięciu celu głównego ma służyć realizacja czterech celów strategicznych i przyporządkowanych im dwudziestu jeden celów operacyjnych (czyli celów szczegółowych – PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 92). Zapisy dotyczące dzieci i młodzieży jako grup docelowych działań podejmowanych w ramach realizacji poszczególnych celów odnalazłam w opisach pięciu celów operacyjnych. Pochodzące z nich zapisy dotyczące dzieci i młodzieży zestawiałam w Tabeli 3 (w cudzysłowach zapisano dosłownie cytowane fragmenty tekstu, zwykłą czcionką fragmenty skrócone i sparafrazowane przez mnie).

Tabela 3. Cele operacyjne i możliwe do zrealizowania w ich ramach „pozostałe dopuszczalne przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne” dotyczące rozwiązywania problemów/zaspokajania potrzeb dzieci i młodzieży

Cel operacyjny 1.2 – „Zmniejszyć skalę narażenia na ubóstwo, zahamować proces dziedziczenia ubóstwa, w tym – poprzez animację społeczną”	
Kierunki działania:	„Pozostałe dopuszczalne przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne”:
„intensywnie wspierać wszelkie formy pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą nakierowane na przerwanie cyklu dziedziczenia ubóstwa” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 95); preferowane są modele pracy środowiskowej z rodziną ukierunkowane na profilaktykę, a nie wyłącznie działania interwencyjne (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 95); zaleca się rozwijanie usług społecznych w postaci placówek wsparcia dziennego (świetlice środowiskowe, socjoterapeutyczne, inne formy pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą) oraz instrumentów wsparcia rodzin (w tym rodzin opiekujących się osobami zależnymi niebędącymi dziećmi, np. osobami starszymi) (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 96)	„Typ 7 – Formy pracy z młodzieżą nakierowane na przerwanie cyklu dziedziczenia ubóstwa” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 282)
Cel operacyjny 1.3 – „Zwiększyć szanse edukacyjne młodych mieszkańców obszaru rewitalizacji”	
Kierunki działania:	„Pozostałe dopuszczalne przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne”:
Podjęcie współpracy ze szkołami w celu maksymalizowania szans uczniów (za istotny element tego działania autorzy dokumentu uznali zmianę sposobu oceny efektywności nauczania w szkołach, polegającą na odwołaniu się zamiast do wartości średnich wyników egzaminu szóstoklasisty lub egzaminu gimnazjalnego do Edukacyjnej Wartości Dodanej); objęcie „szczególną uwagą” dzieci i młodych osób przekwaterowanych z obszaru rewitalizacji poprzez objęcie wsparciem pedagogicznym w nowych miejscach nauki, wspieranie w utrzymaniu sieci kontaktów ułatwiających powrót do pierwotnego miejsca zamieszkania po zakończeniu remontów, przeszkolenie pedagogów i wychowawców szkolnych z tematyki antydyskryminacyjnej ; rozwijanie kierowanego do dzieci i młodzieży programu edukacji na rzecz budowania tożsamości lokalnej, wspierającego lokalny patriotyzm i poczucie zakorzenienia w historii z wykorzystaniem rozwiązań wypracowanych podczas projektu pilotażowego (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 96–97)	Typ 14 – projekty przedszkoli i szkół, zwiększające szanse edukacyjne uczniów Typ 15 – inicjatywy edukacji pozaformalnej i nieformalnej Typ 15.1. – programy edukacji prozdrowotnej i profilaktyki chorób, między innymi edukacji o zagrożeniach uzależnieniami, edukacji seksualnej i profilaktyki ryzykownych zachowań seksualnych, profilaktyki zaburzeń łaknienia, profilaktyki chorób psychicznych, w tym depresji, edukacji antydyskryminacyjnej i antyprzemocowej Typ 17 – Przedsięwzięcia edukacyjne na rzecz odbudowy poczucia tożsamości lokalnej (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 283)

Cel operacyjny 1.6 – „Budować pomostowy kapitał społeczny”	
Kierunki działania:	„Pozostałe dopuszczalne przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne”:
„szczególne wsparcie programów dla młodzieży, których celem jest budowanie osobistej sieci kontaktów ponad barierami własnego środowiska i otwieranie się na wzory zachowań, normy i style życia spoza tego środowiska” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 98)	Typ 25 – programy skierowane do młodzieży, których celem jest budowanie właściwych relacji z rówieśnikami ponad barierami własnego środowiska, w tym poprzez sport Typ 25.1 – programy antydyskryminacyjne i przeciwdziałające przemocy w szkole (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 283–284)
Cel operacyjny 3.4 – „Rozwijać postawę przedsiębiorczą, szczególnie wśród dzieci i młodzieży”	
Kierunki działania:	„Pozostałe dopuszczalne przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne”:
„kreowanie postaw przedsiębiorczych, innowacyjnych i kreatywnych wśród dzieci i młodzieży poprzez programy aktywizacji i edukacji pozaszkolnej, nastawione na wzbudzenie i utrwalanie takiej postawy z inkubacją młodzieżowych inicjatyw” oraz „wspieranie rozwoju edukacji i promowanie kształcenia zawodowego i technicznego wśród dzieci, młodzieży i osób dorosłych, w tym na poziomie akademickim” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 102)	Typ 45 – projekty kształtujące postawę przedsiębiorczą, innowacyjną i kreatywną wśród dzieci: programy aktywizacji i edukacji, nastawione na wzbudzenie i utrwalanie takiej postawy Typ 46 – projekty kształtujące postawę przedsiębiorczą, innowacyjną i kreatywną wśród młodzieży: programy aktywizacji i edukacji, nastawione na wzbudzenie i utrwalanie takiej postawy (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 286)
Cel operacyjny 2.3 – „Uspójnić i wzbogacić krajobraz kulturowy obszaru jako fundament tożsamości lokalnej”	
Kierunki działania:	brak uszczegółowienia zapisów sformułowanych w celu operacyjnym w postaci charakterystyki typów działań z zakresu pozostałych dopuszczalnych przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych, które odnosiłyby się do kwestii potrzeb grup wieku w kontekście tworzenia przyjaznej przestrzeni miejskiej
„budowanie współczesnej atrakcyjności obszaru rewitalizacji w oparciu o odważny, twórczy dialog z historią”; „przestrzeń ma być urozmaicona, spełniająca potrzeby różnych grup (młodzieży, dzieci, seniorów)” (PRŁ 2026+ 2016: 100).	

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie PRŁ 2026+ (2016).

Spośród 107 przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych zapisanych w Programie wyodrębniłam 10, które w różnym zakresie adresowane są do dzieci i młodzieży, bezpośrednio lub pośrednio. Tabela 4 zawiera ich zestawienie oraz krótką charakterystykę.

Tabela 4. Przedsięwzięcia rewitalizacyjne adresowane bezpośrednio lub pośrednio do dzieci i/lub młodzieży (wybrane spośród 107 przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych ogółem)

Nr przedsięwzięcia, nazwa	Opis	Strona
21 – Program kształcenia zawodowego i ustawicznego	Celem przedsięwzięcia jest wzrost jakości kształcenia zawodowego i ustawicznego , zakłada przebudowę, adaptację, rozbudowę, remont i modernizację istniejącej infrastruktury szkół zawodowych, wyposażenie lub wyposażenie ich w odpowiedni sprzęt, materiały techno-dydaktyczne, narzędzia.	185–187
22 – Program edukacji ogólnej	Program ma na celu zwiększenie dostępu do wysokiej jakości edukacji dla dzieci i młodzieży zamieszkujących obszar rewitalizacji poprzez przebudowę, adaptację, rozbudowę, remont i modernizację istniejącej infrastruktury oraz zakup wyposażenia, sprzętu i oprogramowania dla szkół i placówek prowadzących kształcenie ogólne.	187–189
23 – Program podnoszący jakość edukacji przedszkolnej	Program ma na celu rozszerzenie oferty placówek edukacji przedszkolnej, doskonalenie zawodowe nauczycieli, wsparcie w poprawie jakości i oferty zajęć, tworzenie nowych placówek.	189–191
24 – Program podnoszenia jakości nauczania w zakresie kształcenia ogólnego	Program ma wprowadzić nowe metody nauczania (eksperymentalne) , oferujące możliwość doskonalenia umiejętności i kompetencji zawodowych nauczycieli ; akcentuje się tu potrzebę zwiększenia wydajności w nauczaniu przedmiotów przyrodniczych, technologii informacyjno-komunikacyjnych, rozwijania kompetencji cyfrowych uczniów, indywidualizacji pracy z uczniem i wspierania uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.	191–195
26 – Program poprawy zdolności do zatrudnienia absolwentów kształcenia i szkolenia zawodowego oraz dostosowania kierunków kształcenia i szkolenia zawodowego do regionalnego rynku pracy we współpracy z otoczeniem społeczno-gospodarczym	Program zakłada „ kreowanie mody ” na szkoły zawodowe , których ukończenie zdaniem autorów Programu „daje niemal natychmiastowe zatrudnienie” i „zapewnia finansową samodzielność”.	197–200
29 – Program wsparcia usług społecznych i zdrowotnych finansowanych w ramach ZIT	W ramach programu oprócz rozwoju usług medycyno-opiekuńczych dla osób starszych i z niepełnosprawnościami oraz mieszkań chronionych zakłada się rozwój usług placówek wsparcia dziennego i innych form opieki dla dzieci powyżej 3. roku życia i młodzieży służących integracji społecznej oraz zapobieganiu „patologiom”.	206–207

33 – Racjonalizacja zużycia energii – termomodernizacja obiektów edukacyjnych Łodzi, etap I	Działanie o charakterze technicznym polegające na dociepleniu budynków szkół , co oczywiście może wiązać się z większym komfortem użytkowania i oszczędnościami, które z kolei mogą przełożyć się na inwestycje związane z podnoszeniem jakości nauczania.	214–216
97 – Powołanie Miejskiego Centrum Aktywnego Seniora	Jednym z zadań MCAS jest prowadzenie działań międzypokoleniowych, w tym wolontariat seniorów na rzecz dzieci oraz wymiana doświadczeń podczas warsztatów prowadzonych przez seniorów i młodzież.	306–307
106 – Tworzenie przyjaznej przestrzeni sportowej poprzez rewitalizację hal sportowych przy ul. Północnej 36	Odrestaurowanie hali sportowej klubu „Społem”, która ma pełnić społeczne funkcje zwiększania szans edukacyjnych młodzieży z zaniedbanych środowisk oraz hamowania procesu dziedziczenia ubóstwa poprzez animację społeczną.	258–259
107 – Prace konserwatorskie i restauratorskie w dawnym zespole pałacowo-parkowym Karola Poznańskiego w Łodzi – odrestaurowanie budynku Akademii Muzycznej przy ul. Gdańskiej 32	Przedsięwzięcie ma przyczynić się do upowszechniania kultury wysokiej poprzez koncerty i działalność Muzycznej Kawiarni, a zajęcia edukacyjne mają być kierowane m.in. do dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i szkolnym.	259–261

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie PRŁ 2026+ (2018).

5. Wnioski

Program Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+ jest dokumentem proponującym wizję miasta, określającym kierunek jego rozwoju i programującym zmiany, które w najbliższych latach (a nawet dekadach) mają zajść w Łodzi, na obszarze rewitalizacji stanowiącej nieco ponad 6% obszaru miasta oraz zamieszkiwanej przez prawie 23% jego populacji. Udział dzieci i młodzieży wśród mieszkańców rewitalizowanych obszarów jest stosunkowo wysoki, co oznacza, że działania podejmowane w ramach projektów rewitalizacyjnych w znacznym zakresie oddziaływać będą na niedoroślonych interesariuszy rewitalizacji.

W części diagnostycznej zidentyfikowałam sześć problemów, bezpośrednio lub pośrednio dotyczących niedoroślonych mieszkańców miasta. Należą do nich: (1) niski poziom osiągnięć edukacyjnych w szkołach usytuowanych na obszarze rewitalizacji i uczniów zamieszkujących obszar rewitalizacji, będący konsekwencją nierówności społeczno-ekonomicznych, ale również nieadekwatnych – zdaniem autorów dokumentu – sposobów mierzenia osiągnięć szkolnych; (2) zjawisko dziedziczenia ubóstwa; bieda doświadczana jest przez kolejne pokolenia rodzin mieszkańców obszarów miasta przeznaczonych do rewitalizacji; niekorzystna pozycja społeczna podlega międzygeneracyjnej transmisji; (3) deficyt usług społecznych,

które mogłyby zatrzymać lub ograniczyć proces dziedziczenia biedy i wykluczenia społecznego; przede wszystkim brak placówek i form wsparcia – kierowanych do dzieci i młodzieży – o charakterze profilaktycznym, a nie ratowniczym; (4) niska jakość zatrudnienia, która znacznie ogranicza szanse posiadania stałej pracy z wynagrodzeniem umożliwiającym niezależne życie (np. bez wsparcia ze strony instytucji pomocowych), co stanowi złą prognozę, jeżeli chodzi o przyszłą jakość życia młodych ludzi na terenie rewitalizacji; (5) przestrzeń publiczna tworzona bez uwzględnienia potrzeb osób zróżnicowanych pod względem statusu, płci, wieku, stanu zdrowia, a więc nieodpowiadająca na potrzeby dzieci; (6) zagrożenia związane z przekwaterowywaniem mieszkańców, w tym dzieci, do którego dochodzi w rezultacie prowadzonych w ramach działań rewitalizacyjnych remontów oraz „porządkowania stanu zasobów mieszkaniowych gminy”; dzieci mogą doświadczyć szeregu negatywnych konsekwencji przeprowadzki, np. zerwania relacji z dotychczasowymi przyjaciółmi i sąsiadami, dyskryminacji w nowym miejscu nauki i zamieszkania, a w konsekwencji pogorszenia szans edukacyjnych i rozwojowych.

We fragmencie dokumentu katalogującym potrzeby w odniesieniu do sytuacji osób niedorosłych wskazano następujące: (1) konieczność istnienia na obszarze rewitalizacji różnorodnych form pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą (w tym w formie animacji społecznej, również pedagogiki ulicy, a także angażowania dzieci i młodzieży w aktywności o charakterze sportowym i kulturalnym), będących odpowiedzią na zjawisko ubóstwa i jego dziedziczenia, oraz budowania sieci wsparcia wśród mieszkańców obszaru rewitalizacji; (2) niezbędność zmiany formuły pracy pedagogicznej w szkołach, wytyczania i realizowania nowych kierunków i inicjowania nowych form pracy z uczniami, szczególnie w szkołach podstawowych, aby „zwiększyć szanse życiowe” dzieci; (3) potrzebę pracy nad postawami dzieci i młodzieży, aby młodzi ludzie byli „przedsiębiorczy”, co według autorów dokumentu oznacza również „samosterowni” oraz „gotowi do wyznaczania sobie celów i podejmowania ryzyka”; (4) zasadność włączania osób w różnym wieku, a więc i dzieci, w projektowanie przestrzeni rekreacyjnych dostosowanych do ich potrzeb.

Kierunki działań dotyczących dzieci i młodzieży, określone w ramach celów operacyjnych, odpowiadają wskazanym wyżej potrzebom. Obejmują: (1) współpracę gminy i szkół na rzecz zwiększania szans uczniów, ze „szczególną uwagą” zwróconą na „dzieci przekwaterowywane”, którym powinno zostać zaoferowane wsparcie pedagogiczne w nowym miejscu nauki, wsparcie w utrzymaniu sieci kontaktów ułatwiających powrót do poprzedniego miejsca zamieszkania, a kadra pedagogiczna powinna przejść szkolenie z zakresu przeciwdziałania dyskryminacji; (2) budowanie pomostowego kapitału społecznego młodzieży, polegające na wspomaganie w tworzeniu sieci kontaktów wychodzących „poza granice własnego środowiska” i „uczenie się zachowań, norm i stylów życia charakterystycznych dla innych środowisk”, co prawdopodobnie oznacza dostosowywanie się przez dzieci i młodzież ze środowisk defaworyzowanych do społeczno-kulturowych norm klasy średniej; (3) rozwijanie postaw przedsiębiorczych, innowacyjnych i kreatywnych

wśród dzieci i młodzieży, a także zachęcanie do udziału w kształceniu zawodowym i technicznym; (4) tworzenie atrakcyjnej przestrzeni odpowiadającej na potrzeby różnych kategorii mieszkańców, w tym dzieci i młodzieży.

Do dzieci i młodzieży (bezpośrednio lub pośrednio) skierowano dziesięć ze stu siedmiu opisanych w Programie przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych. Ponad połowa z nich (sześć) dotyczy poprawy jakości i warunków edukacji oraz kształcenia zawodowego na różnych poziomach, jedno koncentruje się na zwiększeniu dostępu do opieki dziennej dla dzieci, a trzy dotyczą tworzenia lub wsparcia podmiotów, których działania dla dzieci, młodzieży i ich rodzin podejmowane są niejako przy okazji głównej działalności (Miejskie Centrum Aktywnego Seniora, Akademia Muzyczna im. Grażyny i Kiejstuta Bacewiczów, klub sportowy „Społem”). W opisach planowanych w ramach przedsięwzięć działań kierowanych do dzieci i młodzieży szczególnie podkreśla się ich rolę integracyjną wobec dzieci i młodzieży ze środowisk nieuprzywilejowanych. W opisie Przedsięwzięcia nr 23 znajdujemy dłuższe uzasadnienie, w którym przedstawione są korzyści płynące z edukacji przedszkolnej dla dzieci, rodziców, lokalnej społeczności, rynku pracy, szczególnie w przypadku rodzin defaworyzowanych; autorzy podkreślają tutaj włączający potencjał uczestnictwa w edukacji przedszkolnej dla dzieci z rodzin zagrożonych wykluczeniem społecznym. W opisie Przedsięwzięcia nr 24 zwraca się uwagę na potrzebę dostosowania funkcjonowania szkół oraz programów i działań edukacyjnych do potrzeb i możliwości uczniów z rodzin o niskim statusie społeczno-ekonomicznym i rodzin dysfunkcyjnych, autorzy dostrzegają „opresyjny charakter” szkoły wobec uczniów pochodzących z rodzin z problemami; podkreślają rolę przyjaznej przestrzeni (sale, korytarze, boiska szkolne) dla integracji uczniów, wymieniają również korzyści płynące z tworzenia pozytywnego klimatu szkoły. Przy okazji opisu Przedsięwzięcia nr 26 oferta szkół zawodowych została przedstawiona jako propozycja dla młodych ludzi doświadczających wykluczenia społecznego, zamieszkujących obszary zdegradowane i pochodzących z rodzin będących klientami pomocy społecznej.

Dzieci i młodzież w *Programie Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+* to przede wszystkim przedstawiciele środowisk defaworyzowanych, członkowie rodzin o niskim statusie społeczno-ekonomicznym lub rodzin dysfunkcyjnych, mieszkańcy obszarów śródmiejskich zagrożeni wykluczeniem społecznym i międzygeneracyjną transmisją ubóstwa. Z lektury ponad trzystu stron dokumentu, jakim jest Program, wyłania się obraz dzieci i młodzieży jako pasywnych członków społeczności. Najmłodszy mieszkańcy rewitalizowanych części miasta zostali zaprezentowani przede wszystkim jako potencjalni beneficjenci działań naprawczych, głównie w obszarze usług społecznych i edukacyjnych. Są nosicielami problemów społecznych, jednostkami zagrożonymi wykluczeniem społecznym, odgrywają rolę transponderów ubóstwa z pokolenia na pokolenie. Młodsze dzieci należą do kategorii osób zależnych, którym trzeba zapewnić opiekę, ponieważ stanowią przeszkodę dla aktywności zawodowej swoich opiekunów (przede wszystkim matek). Starsze dzieci i młodzież przedstawiane są głównie w kontekście trudności w szkole, których doświadczają,

lub problemów, których są źródłem. Zdobywają niskie wyniki na egzaminach, stanowią grupę potencjalnie bierną zawodowo i życiowo, w której trzeba wykształcać postawy aktywności, przedsiębiorczości i kreatywności.

Z zapisów dokumentu tworzy się obraz dzieciństwa oparty na socjalizacyjnej koncepcji dziecka, które musi dojrzeć, aby osiągnąć w przyszłości status osoby pełnej i znaczącej. Dzieci i młodzież postrzegane są w Programie głównie jako przyszli pracownicy (lub bezrobotni), których trzeba wyposażyć we właściwe kompetencje, aby mogli zająć odpowiednie miejsce na rynku pracy. W dokumencie nie ma mowy o ich aktualnych potrzebach, o ich jakości życia (*well-being*) „tu i teraz”. Dzieci i młodzi ludzie traktowani są jako przyszli dorośli mieszkańcy, którzy powinni przyczyniać się do sukcesu i rozwoju miasta. We fragmencie Programu dotyczącym zagrożeń wywołanych wymuszoną przeprowadzką u „dzieci przekwaterowywanych” autorzy stwierdzają, że sytuacja przymusowej przeprowadzki może pogorszyć szanse rozwojowe i edukacyjne tych dzieci. Konsekwencje potencjalnie negatywnego doświadczenia widziane są tu przez pryzmat zmniejszenia zdolności do nauki i „prawidłowego” rozwoju, czyli czynników predestynujących do bycia dobrze funkcjonującym dorosłym w przyszłości. W zapisach dokumentu nie znajdujemy wzmianki o możliwym stresie, dyskomforcie lub cierpieniu doświadczanych przez dziecko tu i teraz w sytuacji wymuszonej zmiany miejsca zamieszkania i szkoły.

Oczywiście nie można nie docenić faktu, że autorzy Programu przywiązują dużą wagę do rozwiązywania problemu biedy i wykluczenia społecznego oraz zahamowania zjawiska ich dziedziczenia. Na uznanie zasługuje także zwrócenie przez autorów dokumentu szczególnej uwagi na kategorię „dzieci przekwaterowywanych”. Godne dostrzeżenia jest również to, że Program skupia się przede wszystkim na problemach i potrzebach dzieci i młodzieży już zamieszkujących obszar rewitalizacji. Oznacza to, że – przynajmniej w warstwie deklaratywnej – działania prowadzone w ramach łódzkiej rewitalizacji koncentrują się na dotychczasowych mieszkańcach. Program nie nosi zatem znamion strategii rozwiązywania problemów społecznych obszarów centralnych miasta poprzez przyciąganie do centrum rodzin z dziećmi z klasy średniej, które to zjawisko bywa identyfikowane w badaniach programów rewitalizacji w miastach zachodniej Europy (van den Berg 2013), a które jest krytykowane za uruchamianie procesu gentryfikacji pod pozorem działań rewitalizacyjnych.

Po szczegółowym zapoznaniu się z *Programem Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+* i prześledzeniu jego treści pod kątem zapisów dotyczących dzieci i młodzieży uważam, że ciekawym i wartym eksploracji obszarem badawczym byłoby sprawdzenie, w jaki sposób dzieci zamieszkujące i/lub chodzące do szkoły na obszarze rewitalizacji, w tym „dzieci przekwaterowywane”, doświadczają przemian zachodzących w mieście. Badania takie, prowadzone metodami jakościowymi, w ramach paradygmatu nowych studiów nad dzieciństwem, umożliwiłyby poznanie perspektywy dzieci i ich sposobu postrzegania procesów zachodzących w ich otoczeniu w ramach miejskiej odnowy.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS STAKEHOLDERS IN REVITALISATION. THE EXAMPLE OF THE REVITALISATION PROGRAMME OF LODZ 2026+

Abstract. The aim of the article is to answer the question about how children and youth as inhabitants and users of urban spacer are represented in a document setting a frame for the process of city renewal. Theoretical background for my investigation is the concept of childhood developed within the area of new interdisciplinary childhood studies. I apply a qualitative content analysis approach to work with the text of *Revitalization Programme of the City of Łódź 2026+*, which is an example of a document setting framework for a complex revitalization venture. The analysis shows that in the *Local Revitalization Program* children and youth are presented as passive community members, potential clients of helping institutions, and the “carriers” of social problems. The document refers to traditional, socialization-based concept of childhood perceived as a gradual process of becoming a fully-formed and valuable, i.e. adult, person. Children and youth are treated as future employees who need to become equipped with proper skills and competences necessary to participate in the labor market, and who are expected to contribute to the future success and development of the city. The document does not refer to current children’s needs and their well-being “here and now”.

Keywords: children, youth, revitalization, new childhood studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Iwona Taranowicz , Uncommon daily life/daily uncommonness. Everyday life under conditions of risk and uncertainty.....	5
– Niecodzienna codzienność/codzienna niecodziennosc. Życie codzienne w warunkach ryzyka i niepewności.....	13
Renata Dopierala , Simplifying life during the COVID-19 pandemic	15
– Upraszczenie życia w pandemii COVID-19.....	30
Agnieszka Karoń , The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the organisation of family life and the pursuit of career aspirations of mothers seeking IT jobs.....	31
– Wpływ pandemii COVID-19 na organizację życia rodzinnego i realizację aspiracji zawodowych matek poszukujących pracy w branży IT.....	45
Irena Wolska-Zogata , Media and trust. On the need to seek information in times of uncertainty and its social consequences. Case study of Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic	47
– Media i zaufanie. O potrzebie poszukiwania informacji w czasach niepewności i jej społecznych konsekwencjach. Przypadek Polski w czasie pandemii wirusa COVID-19	60
Monika Wiktorowicz-Sosnowska , Risk in the biographies of independent care leavers.....	61
– Ryzyko w biografiiach usamodzielnionych wychowanków pieczy zastępczej	82
Kalina Kukielko, Krzysztof Tomanek , Difficult everyday life of pandemic voluntary service (research report)	83
– Trudna codzienność wolontariatu pandemicznego (raport z badań).....	94
VARIA	
Paulina Bunio-Mroczek , Dzieci i młodzież jako interesariusze rewitalizacji na przykładzie Programu Rewitalizacji Łodzi 2026+	95
– Children and young people as stakeholders in revitalisation. The example of the revitalisation programme of Lodz 2026+	112

