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# Changes in Social Structure, Class, and Stratification: The Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN)<sup>1</sup>

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We present an overview of the intellectual foundations and some major research questions and topics of the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN). Carried out since 1988 in 5-year intervals, with the latest in 2013, POLPAN is the longest continuously run panel survey on changes in social structure, class and stratification in Central and Eastern Europe. The 2018 round is in planning. POLPAN is strongly anchored in recent theoretical innovations surrounding analyses of social structure and its change, as well as in the most up-to-date survey methodology. As such, POLPAN has major substantive and methodological contributions. Substantively, POLPAN constitutes a breakthrough that stems from taking into account individuals' life courses in a long time span. Methodologically, POLPAN enhances knowledge about how to conduct long-term panel studies and how to assess the quality of this type of data. Social scientists interested in the dynamics of social structure, class, and stratification, as well as political attitudes and behaviors, have a wealth of data with which to address timeless and timely research questions from a variety of perspectives and fields.

## INTRODUCTION

This research note presents an overview of the intellectual foundations and some major research questions and topics of the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN). Carried out since 1988 in 5-year intervals, POLPAN is the longest continuously

run panel survey on changes in social structure, class and stratification in Central and Eastern Europe. With POLPAN, researchers can test hypotheses about the impact of intellectual and social resources on individuals' economic, political and cultural biographies, and more importantly, how these biographies shape the social structure.

POLPAN has major substantive and methodological contributions to the study of social structure, class, and stratification. Substantively, experience and knowledge gained through POLPAN constitutes a breakthrough that stems from taking into account individuals' life courses in a long time span. The leading hypothesis is that the changes in the social structure are "path dependent" in the sense that some inter-group differences in time  $t$  have a disproportionate impact on later circumstances in time  $t+k$ , producing more pronounced differences. In the "strong" form this means that the Matthew effect operates in various parts of social structure, even if it leads to inefficiencies. The hypothesis is extended to the correlates of social structure, including economic, political and cultural values.

Methodologically, POLPAN enhances the knowledge about how to conduct long-term panel studies and how to assess the quality of this type of data. POLPAN, to be updated for 2018, is the world's first study in which a representative sample of the adult population is followed for 30 years. The study is complex in terms of the questionnaire scheme and the population covered. The questionnaires contain both items common to all waves and items specific for each wave. In addition, POLPAN uses replacement subsamples of younger cohorts. In consequence, the structure of the data is manifold on the level of variables and units of observations and as such it requires solving methodological problems for substantive analyses – problems of inter-wave harmonization and functional equivalence of concepts.

### **Necessity of Dynamic Analyses**

To properly understand the functioning of social structure, a dynamic framework of analysis is necessary. Initially, in 1988, the survey was conducted among a national sample representing Poland's adult population (aged 21–65), with  $N = 5,817$ . In 1993, this sample was randomly reduced to 2,500 individuals, whom researchers tried to reach in each of the consecutive five-year waves. To ensure an adequate age balance, additional subsamples involving young cohorts have been supplemented later. For example, the 2008 sample comprises 1,825 respondents of whom 1,244 belong to the strict panel, while 581 cases consist of newly added individuals (aged 21–25). Many Polish and international researchers using POLPAN urged us to expand its sample size in the future to have enough cases for cohort analyses. We fully agreed with this assessment, and in 2013 we aimed at reaching all individuals who took part in any of the five waves of POLPAN. To

date, there is no other research worldwide, in which life histories of individuals from a nationally-representative sample of adults would be collected for such a long time span, reaching 25 years, while also opening the possibility of panel research on the renewal samples of the young.

The POLPAN study is unique also with respect to the substantive scope of the collected data. Socio-demographic information of respondents and their families is supplemented by items on socio-political attitudes (some of them included in various international survey projects). At the same time, POLPAN contains, in contrast to standard surveys, two tests: a nonverbal Raven test that captures intellectual flexibility, an essential IQ component; and the Nottingham Health Profile that measures certain aspects of physical and mental health.

In the tradition of empirical research in sociology, the position of individuals in the social structure is usually considered an independent variable explaining individuals' intellectual resources and attitudes. Analyses of panel data allow researchers to turn around the direction of this relationship and test hypotheses about how intellectual resources and attitudes determine individuals' achievements and their placement in the social structure. POLPAN 1988–2013 provides a unique opportunity for testing such hypotheses; this will continue for the 2018 wave.

## **INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLPAN**

POLPAN is strongly anchored in recent theoretical innovations surrounding analyses of social structure and its change, as well as in the most up-to-date survey methodology. The literatures on both are vast, since POLPAN considers sources from sociology, but also from political science, social psychology, economics and demography. Below we focus mainly on sociology and emphasize selected studies bearing directly on the substantive focus and methodology of this project.

The work of Blossfeld and Prein (1998, Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001), Mayer (2009), Heinz Kruger (2001), Goldthorpe (2007), diPrete (2006, 2007), Hout, Brooks, and Manza (1993) and Breen (2010) considers social structure in the framework of rational action and the life course, giving due attention to the methodological problems of longitudinal studies. Weeden and Grusky (2012), Rose and Harrison (2010), Mayer (2009), Yuval-Davis (2011), Atkinson (2010), Standing (2011), Stephens, Markus, and Phillips (2014), Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Taylor, Li, Le Roux, Friedman, and Miles (2013), provide important insights into conceptualizing social structure in terms of social classes and biographies, and addresses the topic of how to operationalize such concepts in a panel study. Blossfeld, Skopek, Maurice, and Bayer (2015) propose innovative solutions as they evolve in large scale survey practice, concerning, among other things, data quality and data management on a large-scale basis.

POLPAN integrates the rich tradition of Polish sociology (represented by Stanisław Ossowski, Julian Hochfeld, Jan Szczepański, and the research program of Włodzimierz Wesołowski) with the classical empirical research on social structure in Poland (by Wesołowski, Adam Sarapata, Stefan Nowak, Stanisław Widerszpil, Jan Malanowski, and Michał Pohoski), discussed in Wesołowski and Słomczyński (1977). For the far-reaching analyses of POLPAN 1988–2018, the studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s (by Krzysztof Zagórski, Marek Ziółkowski, Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, and Jacek Wasilewski) are of great importance, as indicated in Słomczyński and Tomescu-Dubrow (forthcoming). We will also use the most recent work of Polish sociologists (e.g., Domański 2015, Żuk 2008, Gdula and Sadura 2012, Cebula 2013, and others).

Relying on theories that emphasize “structure” but also “agency” (Giddens 1984, Archer 2003), and applying these theories to data that include up to three decades in the lives of the panel respondents, represents one of the main innovative aspects of POLPAN. It enables scholars to analyze distinct features of societal segmentation in which individual biographies play an active role. Instead of debating the primacy of “structure vs. agency,” analyses can focus on the capacity of individuals to act and make their choices that are reflected in biographies, and determined, to some extent (which can be measured), by structural conditions.

With respect to segmentation, POLPAN further develops the conceptual and operational distinction between economic classes and other forms of social differentiation. We adopt an extended interpretation of processes of production and distribution, which includes not only economic but also political and cultural goods; thus, the notion of class is multi-dimensional (Słomczyński and Dubrow 2009). The economic dimensions of class is real economic ownership expressed in the power of control over the uses of the means of production and the labor, and over other resources important for the functioning of the labor market. Assuming that the dimensions of class relations are relatively independent, scholars can also use the broad conceptions of classes based on non-economic criteria, following the classical article *What makes a social class?* (Bourdieu 1987).

To properly understand the functioning of social structure – that is, how individuals influence social structure while being influenced by it – a dynamic framework of analysis is necessary. POLPAN offers this unique opportunity to assess, for at least 25 years, the extent of *within-person variation* (i.e. the change within people over time) in relation to the *between-persons variation* (i.e. differences between people over time). In addition to treating the position of individuals in the social structure as a determinant of their intellectual resources and attitudes, researchers are able to use POLPAN data to test hypotheses about how these very resources and attitudes impact people’s achievements and their placement in the social structure.

In the core of the POLPAN project we study the dynamics of individuals' jobs, focusing on both structural opportunities and individual determinants. We build on the technical definition of job-trajectory, as a time-ordered set of states (values) of a dynamical system. In practical terms, we define this trajectory to be a set of values of status (S) as a function (dependent) of time:  $S = S(t)$ .

Job trajectories characterize social inequality in a dynamic manner. We focus on predicting mean values of status for each of specified points on the trajectories of selected groups. Each person's job receives its score according to the scale applied, such as socio-economic index (SES), skill requirements (ESR), complexity of work (COM), material remuneration (MRE), and occupational prestige (PRE; for a review, see Domański, Sawiński, and Słomczyński (2009).

Approaches to study job trajectories have been diverse, involving (1) Optimal matching analysis that uses an iterative minimization procedure to find the distance between every pair of sequences in a sample, and then applies cluster analysis to ascertain if the sequences belong to distinct types drawn from a typology; and (2) Event history analysis utilizing event-count models and duration models. Both of these approaches are summarized and compared in Arosio 2004.

In addition, there is dynamic modeling using differential (or difference) equations. The purpose of this approach, as applied to occupational trajectories, is to predict scores of occupational scales through time. This approach originated with the paper "A Model for Occupational Careers," which Sørensen published in 1974 (for more recent work in this framework, see Brown 2007). When representing trajectories one should consider that for individuals SES is stable for a given job but it can change with each new job. Hence, individual trajectories are usually smoothed; the mean values of SES, with its standard deviation, are analyzed. The model considered in the literature (e.g. Brown 2007; Słomczyński, Krauze, and Peradzyński 1986; Słomczyński, Sawiński, and Tomescu-Dubrow 2011) is contained in the following equation:

$$d(S - M)/dt = -\alpha (S - M) + \sigma dM/dt$$

where S denotes observed status, M refers to the status imputed by its determinants, the parameter  $\alpha$  is the rate of convergence of actual status S to an equilibrium enforced by M, and parameter  $\sigma$  is a correction factor, which increases or decreases the impact of changes in the recalibrated imputed status. Presence of  $\sigma dM/dt$  makes the model flexible, allowing for a decrease in status at the end of career. One could expect that parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\sigma$  differ among groups. Sociologists should explain the reasons for these differences.

Differential equations are particularly well suited to studying changes since they involve the concept of derivative. A derivative can be thought of as how

much a quantity is changing at some given point. Differential equations can describe the rate of change of SES at any point in the career trajectory. Of course in this framework the rate of change is not limited to SES and it can refer to other important variables related to individuals' characteristics such as state of health or self-evaluation of one's position in the social structure.

POLPAN is governed by the basic assumptions that there is a need for integration of the two approaches to social structure: *relational* and *distributional*. In accordance with sociological tradition, an analysis of social structure in terms of social relations, particularly the relations of control and subordination of certain social groups to others, can be identified as the class approach. The other is the stratification approach that concentrates on the analysis of the distribution of commonly desired goods; this addresses the central question of who gets what, through what channels, and with what consequences. Both approaches are interrelated.

### **OVERARCHING RESEARCH THEME: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ADJUSTMENT TO SOCIAL CHANGE**

The Polish Panel Survey POLPAN pursues the following goals:

- to provide an overall profile of the social structure of the Polish society – including subjective perceptions and objective conditions – updated every five years;
- to analyze – from a long-term perspective and in a multi-dimensional way – the dynamics of social structure in Poland, with a particular emphasis on adaptation to the ongoing economic, political and cultural change.

The intellectual foundations of POLPAN lead to its major research questions in class, stratification and social structure research generally: How did the composition of social classes change? What are the main patterns of social mobility and how do they change in recent years? How is social stratification reflected in the standard of living? How does a location in the social structure influence political behavior, including support for political parties? To what extent does a perception of social conflicts correlate with inter-group relations?

Some questions are specific to the Polish, post-Communist, and European contexts: What social divisions have been generated by technological, economic, and political transformation? What social groups gain and what social groups lose – in both objective and subjective terms – during a construction of democratic regime and a market economy? What segments of the social structure form a base of support for further European integration?

Research problems implied by the above questions are important since they pertain to individuals' allocation (*who and where is located in the social structure?*)

and distribution of goods (*who gets what and why?*). Both the individuals' allocation and the distribution of goods can be more or less effective. Allocation of individuals is effective if (a) all relevant attributes of persons correspond to the requirements of their positions, and (b) ascribed attributes are disregarded in the process of assigning people to jobs. Distribution of goods is effective if goods are distributed according to merit. In our analyses, we would like to assess allocative effectiveness (a level of deviation from the ascriptive model) and distributional effectiveness (a level of meritocracy). Although the need for such analyses is well expressed in the literature our research is a serious candidate to be the first in which this assessment will be conducted in a comprehensive manner.

## RESEARCH TOPICS IN POLPAN

POLPAN can be used to examine, in-depth, major issues raised in sociology concerned with social class and stratification (Słomczyński 2000, 2002, Słomczyński and Marquart Pyatt 2007, and Słomczyński and Tomescu-Dubrow 2011, Słomczyński and Tomescu-Dubrow 2012, Słomczyński and Tomescu-Dubrow 2013). The list of research topics of the POLPAN project is extensive. It includes the old and new elements in the social structure; specific changes in class composition and class inequalities; social mobility and status attainment; the formation of post-communist meritocratic society, including the effects of intellectual abilities on economic success; various elements of the standard of living; the impact of individuals' location in the social structure on their support for Poland's transformation; the relationship between social structure and political behavior, especially voting behavior; perception of social conflicts; and determinants of support for Poland's joining the European Union. These diverse topics are not motivated by a single overarching theory or theoretical perspective on the transition period from communism to democracy and capitalism. On the contrary, the scholars involved in the project at its various stages have represented different theories and perspectives in analyzing specific problems. We provide, for illustrative purposes, selected examples of research topics that illustrate different theoretical approaches

### Changes to the Social Structure

POLPAN can identify both the "old" elements of social structure (in particular, those causing the backward development of the country), as well as its "new" dimensions (in particular, those facilitating the development of the country in a new direction). Here are the main "old" elements: (1) the *nomenklatura*, being the structural implementation of directive-distributive management at both the

national and the regional levels; (2) the *heavy-industry working class*, initially being a political slogan but soon becoming a distinct segment of the population and an important political force in the communist state; (3) the *peasantry*, defined by their individual ownership of arable land, yet dependent on state-controlled access to agricultural equipment and involved in the state distributive system of agricultural products; (4) employees in *redundant bureaucratic positions*, actually representing *hidden unemployment*; (5) active *organizers of the informal economy*; and (6) *semi-institutionalized opposition* to the mainstream, communist-regime-supported, organization of life. What has happened to those segments of the social structure? How have they “adjusted” to the current conditions?

Major changes in the social structure result not only from the transformation of “old” elements but also from the emergence of “new” elements, mainly stemming from the implementation of democracy and capitalism. The main new categories are: (1) career politicians, (2) full-fledged capitalists, (3) financial and managerial specialists, and (4) professionals in banking, public relations, and electronic information management. POLPAN can address how people reach positions in these categories.

### **Dynamic Class Structure**

The issue of whether class divisions are still important in contemporary capitalist countries continues to be debated (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992; Breen and Rottman 1995; Grusky and Weeden 2008, Weeden and Grusky 2005; Sørensen 1991). The question of whether class “had died,” or remained alive, was also addressed in terms of post-communist societies. Słomczyński and Shabad (1977) presented this discussion and revealed data on the evolution of social classes in East Central Europe. Taking their presentation, we propose to use a class schema adjusted to the post-communist transformation. We distinguish the following classes: (1) employers, (2) managers, (3) experts, (4) office workers, (5) first-line supervisors, (6) self-employed, (7) skilled manual workers, (8) unskilled manual workers, and (9) farmers. In *Social Patterns of Being Political* (2000), Słomczyński and Shabad rejected the hypothesis about the death of class (see also, Domański, 2000). However, in order to test this hypothesis in a comprehensive way, can measure three other class schemes: (1) Goldthorpe, (2) Wright, and (3) Esping-Anderson (see Grusky, 1994).

### **Social Mobility, Homogamy, and Friendship Ties**

Goyder (1984) compared two approaches to the study of social mobility: the categorical analysis of the mobility table and the regression analysis of status

attainment. These two approaches, still dominant in the literature on social mobility, should be considered as complementary rather than alternative (see Mach and Wesołowski, 1986; see also Morgan, Grusky, and Fields 2006; Breen 2005).

POLPAN can be used to distinguish between two types of mobility: (a) structural mobility that results from closing old positions and creating new positions, and (b) exchange mobility that occurs among positions existing at the origin and destination. It would be useful to examine these two types of mobility in a dynamic manner, during a recession period in particular. What happens to people who are forced to move out due to bankruptcy of firms – do they find jobs in new firms, assume old positions, or become unemployed? What happens to those who resign from relatively stable positions? We are prepared to answer such questions since we know how to gather information about the history of positions.

Social mobility is one of the most important indicators of the openness of society: high degree of inter-class movements signifies greater openness or fluidity and less ascription. Other measures of the openness of society deal with cross-class marital choices and differentiated friendship patterns. POLPAN contains a battery of the questionnaire items devoted to these issues.

### **Standard of Living**

With regard to the standard of living, POLPAN has been used to understand spending on food and luxury goods. In particular, POLPAN has been used to test two hypotheses. The first hypothesis says that as the overall economy in Poland improves and the country progresses from the communist and post-communist organization of economic life, individuals' spending on food decreases. The second hypothesis postulates that as the overall economy in Poland improves, spending on luxuries increases on the expense of savings. Both these hypotheses pertain to the rising standard of living. In addition, we studied housing conditions – usable floor area per family member in square meters. POLPAN also includes a number of variables related to interpersonal communication and information management, including such durable goods as a cell phone and computer. Does the new technology diminish inter-group divisions?

### **Social Psychological Adaptation**

The question “which segments of social structure have been the main sources of support for the post-communist transformation and which segments, have been the main sources of opposition” is still open (Klebanium 2007). In an earlier study, we found that four groups of variables influence the extent of approval for the systemic change: (a) age-dependent location of the individual on the job

market, (b) the individual's economic status involving a subjective evaluation of income attainment, (c) social and cultural capital consisting of, but not limited to, educational resources, and (d) personality characteristics. Generally, persons who were younger and better located in the job market, were economically advantaged, had cultural and social capital, and expressed more support for the systemic change than did the persons who were older and worse located on the job market, materially disadvantaged, and less educated. In addition, the persons who scored highly on the scales of authoritarianism and anxiety, and those with low self-esteem expressed strong disapproval of the systemic change.

Subsequent studies revealed that the rise in economic status resulted in reducing negative attitudes toward the systemic transformation when other factors remained controlled. These studies also demonstrated the role of personality factors—combined with structural factors—in shaping the approval of the post-communist transition in Poland. Thus, we are well prepared to identify and to analyze a relatively extensive set of variables influencing the support for a market economy.

### **Political Attitudes and Behavior**

Recent studies featuring POLPAN has focused on political biographies, party preferences and voting, and support for democracy. One of the most interesting results is that both personal economic hardship and macroeconomic conditions determine *protest voting*, defined as switching one's vote to an opposition party. This result is interesting since it bridges variables defined on micro level (personal economic hardship) and macro level (unemployment by regional units, voivodships). The unemployment rate in the voivodship of residence directly increases the probability that an individual will engage in protest voting, showing some interaction with individual income. The effect of this interaction differs across social classes. We will explore it not only with respect to protest voting but also with respect to support for democracy and other political attitudes. We also intend to examine whether the hardship plays a key role in “throwing the rascals out.”

### **Democratic Values and Individual Freedoms**

Since the seminal work of Amartya Sen, *Development and Freedom* (1999), all research on social structure should include freedom as an important dimension of human existence. Sen demonstrates that a large portion of social inequality stems from conditions limiting economic decisions of individuals. Our analyses of a political context of social inequality—presented in *Social Patterns of Being Political* (2000)—form a solid basis for considering allocative and distributional effectiveness together with political and economic liberties. We intend to extend

these analyses to be able to discuss Sen's problem of the relationship between social structure and broadly understood freedom.

### **Social Conflicts**

In previous research, we examined the perception of conflicts between rich vs. poor, non-manual workers vs. manual workers, supervisors (managers) vs. supervisees (ordinary employees), and rulers (authority) vs. the ruled (the rest of the society). This extends to political orientations and ethnicity. The latter should be studied in the context of generational cohorts, and the attitudes toward the past (e.g., an assessment of the impact of minorities on Polish culture) and the future (e.g., orientation toward immigrants).

In 1989, compared to the initial phase of the transformation, normally important stratification variables, such as education, or occupation, lost their impact on conflict perception. The impact of psychological variables – the evaluation of the pre-1989 period, in particular – increased. Does this trend continue even 25 years after the fall of communism?

### **Beliefs about Income Distribution Fairness**

An important part of research on social stratification deals with popular opinions regarding what is, and what is not, fair. In POLPAN respondents were asked what they think members of certain occupations do earn and what they think people in these occupations should earn. Thus, the responses to these questions provide a researcher with individual estimates of perceived actual earnings, and assessment of fair earnings, also called “just” or “deserved” earnings. The research problem is whether consistency in regard to evaluation of earnings is increasing or decreasing through time. Is it true that low-status occupations tend to be perceived as increasingly *under-rewarded*, and high-status occupations as increasingly *over-rewarded*?

In POLPLAN opinions on the fairness of income distribution could also be assessed on the basis of respondents' with some statements presented to them, such as “Income differences are too large” or “Inequality continues to exist because it benefits the rich and powerful.” The answers to such questions can then be combined to obtain some summary measure of fairness in the minds of the respondents.

### **European Integration**

Some social groups gain from the post-communist transformation while others stand to lose. Winners are more likely than losers to be supportive of further political changes. Insofar as individuals are made aware that there are winners

and losers in the European integration process, support for Poland's joining the European Union is based primarily on utilitarian calculations of costs and benefits. We plan to analyze the economic bases for gains and losses in the context of the European integration.

### **Stratification and Health**

POLPAN's original sample, the one from 1988, is aging: in 2013 the youngest respondents were 46 years old and the oldest 90 years old, respectively. Since 1998 we collect the data on the subjective evaluation of physical and mental health. In 2008 we applied the Nottingham Health Profile test. This provides an opportunity to study the relationship between the locations of individuals in the social structure in a dynamic manner. Do the effects of education, occupation, and income on health increase over the life course? In what segments of the social structure these effects are particularly strong?

### **Allocative and Distributional Effectiveness**

The research issues POLPAN can address should be treated as interrelated, and can be analyzed together in order to answer the basic question: How does both the allocative and distributional effectiveness change over time? Generally, all indicators of allocative effectiveness deal with lowering the level of ascription – that is with lowering the impact of demographic and social-origin characteristics. In analyzing research issues about old and new elements of social structure, changes of social classes, social mobility, or differentiation of standard of living we focus on the impact of ascription. Indicators of distributional effectiveness refer to the relationships between individual investments and rewards. Our analyses indicate that during the post-communist transition the level of meritocracy has increased. Political attitudes and behavior, perception of social conflicts, and attitudes toward European integration form a new context for meritocracy – the main dimension of distributional effectiveness.

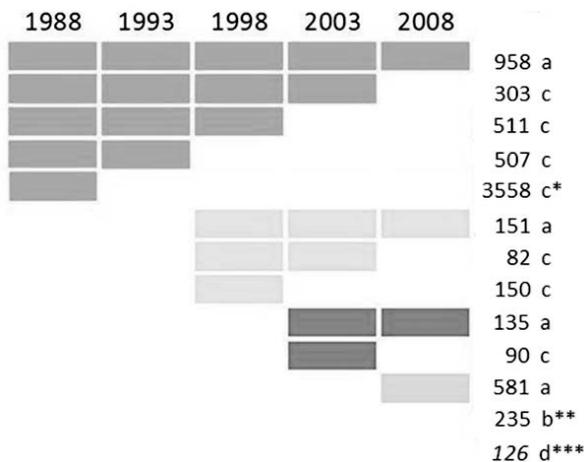
### **STRUCTURE OF THE DATA**

The data for a comprehensive description of social structure and its changes are drawn from a survey. In the main part the survey includes the POLPAN panel, approached in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2013. POLPAN could also be treated as a cross-sectional survey for 2013 since we add samples of younger people in each wave. A cross-sectional survey will be representative for the adult population aged 21 and older; the core of the sample will be the panel sample of the POLPAN study.

In the case of POLPAN the data for comprehensive analyses of the dynamics of social structure originate in the 1988 research. (Słomczyński, Białecki, Domański, Janicka, Mach, Sawiński, Sikorska and Zaborowski, 1989). From that time, the total number of respondents who participated in at least one wave of POLPAN before 2013 is 7,026.

In POLPAN 2013, we aimed at including (a) all respondents who participated in the 1988 wave (N = 1,825), and (b) a youngest cohort, aged 21–25 (N = 235). Both these categories were approached with face-to-face interviews. From a demographic point of view it would be very useful to get information on POLPAN respondents who were not covered in the 2008 wave. This is a very large category (c), with N = 5,201. Interviewers went again to the addresses that we have on our files to try to gather information where these former respondents could be reached. In the case of establishing a contact with our former respondents, we will try to interview them by phone or through the Internet. The purpose of this interview is to gather information on what these people do – do they work, are they on a retirement pension, or still in another situation? In addition, we also asked questions about their households and health conditions. Note that among people in category (c) over one hundred emigrated mainly to Western Europe. According to our data, 126 or more from our 1998 sample; this was the separate category to be contacted (d). Figure 1 presents the initial POLPAN sample for 2013, with respondents of categories (a) to (d).

**Figure 1** Initial Sample for the POLPAN 2013 Wave



\* Only 2,422 addresses were usable; it was assumed that among them around 50% could be invalid and around 25% could refer to people who died during the period 1988–2013.

\*\* Without overrepresentation of the cohort 21–25.

\*\*\* This is a special category within category (c).

In the 2013 wave the total number of interviews completed is 2 780, with 2581 respondents interviewed *face-to-face* using full, standardized questionnaire. Within this group, 2581 respondents, there are:

- 1699 respondents who participated in the survey at least once after 1988,
- 497 new respondents sampled in 2013 (composed of 235 respondents of regular sample and 262 respondents oversampled),
- 385 respondents who took part in the study only once, in the 1988 wave (among them 295 respondents, filled out the short mail questionnaire before the *face-to-face* interview).

In addition 199 respondents who took part in the study only once, in the 1988 wave, and in 2013 use of the mail questionnaire only. The structure of this sample is presented in Figure 2. The total number of respondents in this figure does not include 17 respondents resided abroad in 2013 or for other reasons could not be interviewed *face-to-face*, and thus they were interviewed using CATI or the questionnaire sent by post or email.

**Figure 2** The Composition of the Complete interviews in the POLPAN 2013 Wave

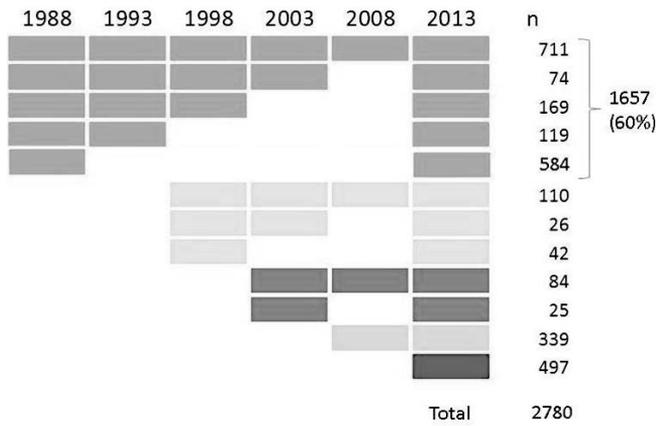
Sample ID	Category	Age	Sample size	Interviews	Response Rate
MM-13	NEW panelists 2013	21-25	795	497	63%
PM-08	New panelists 2008	26-30	540	339	63%
PP-08	OLD panelists 2008	31-70	863	713	83%
PP-03	Panelists 2003	31-70	280	110	39%
PP-98/93	Panelists 1993/1998	36-70	608	267	44%
PS-88	Panelists 1993-2008 aged 71+	71-91	546	270	49%
1988	Panelists 1988	47-91	2422	584*	24%
TOTAL			6054	2780	

\*This category can be divided into the following subgroups: (1) respondents interviewed only *face-to-face*, using the standardized questionnaire, version 98/93 or PS-88 (90 respondents); (2) respondents who first filled out the mail questionnaire, and then were interviewed *face-to-face* using the standardized questionnaire – version PP-98/93 or PS-88 (295 respondents); and (3) respondents who filled out only the mail questionnaire (199 persons).

These weights are built into the user data file. Figure 3 shows the numbers of respondents participating in specific waves of POLPAN. Among all POLPAN 2013 respondents (N = 2,780) around 60% were interviewed in the 1988 wave, and

around 20% are newcomers. For the POLPAN 2013 sample to be representative, the post-stratification weights are necessary. These weights are built into the user’s data file.

**Figure 3** Respondents’ Participation in the POLPAN 1988–2013 Waves



POLPAN 2018 will initiate a new line of research, devoted to the relationship between economic, political and cultural classes, and their connection to individuals’ life stories. To what extent are the three class dimensions independent of each other, and to what extent do they overlap is one of the essential new questions that can be addressed once the 2018 data are collected. Another crucial question concerns consistencies and inconsistencies in peoples’ biographical trajectories, given the possibly reciprocal relation of economic, political and cultural aspects of trajectories. To address these issues, POLPAN 2018 data are essential.

## CONCLUSION

Research on social structure, belonging to the basic research of sociology, is particularly important for two reasons. First, the theory of social structure – supported by empirical evidence – is necessary for construction of other theories, including a theory of the post-industrial post-modern societies. A comprehensive theory of societal transition must address the question how specific segments of the social structure react to the social change and how the social structure influences this change in its way of responding.

Second, empirical research on social structure is needed since a number of sociological subfields use stratification variables – examples being sociology of religion, sociology of medicine, sociology of the family, or sociology of youth. Moreover, research on public opinion needs a reference pertaining to the social structure. POLPAN has been prepared after consulting both the governmental (e.g., Ministry of Economy) and non-governmental (e.g., Institute of Public Affairs) organizations with respect to the needs for information about social inequality. POLPAN is a truly interdisciplinary dataset that links different social science disciplines. The core belongs to sociology but the project is also related to demography (e.g., family composition, retention of marital status, number of children in the family), economics (e.g., household income and its components, income elasticity of expenditure for food and culture), psychology (e.g., measurement of IQ by Raven test, measurement of authoritarianism and self-image), and political science (e.g., voting behavior, opinions about political parties, democratic values).

Since its inception, POLPAN has produced over 150 publications in Polish and English. Many of the most recent publications, and some of the classic works, are freely available for scholarly use at [polpan.org](http://polpan.org).

## NOTES

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