

Book review

Paweł Ruszkowski, Andrzej Przystalski, Paweł Maranowski,
Polaryzacja światopoglądowa społeczeństwa polskiego a klasy i warstwy społeczne [Worldview polarization of Polish society and social classes and strata], Warszawa: Collegium Civitas:
2020; ISBN 978-83-66386-075

The monographic publication of four authors deals with the issue of 'polarization of consciousness': divisions of value systems within Polish society. These divisions are related to the change of the Polish political system in the second decade of the 21st century, consisting in 'replacing liberal mechanisms with centralist mechanisms in managing the state'. However, the premise of the divisions is not the mechanism of exercising power, but the competition of liberal and conservative worldviews. The authors hypothesize that 'the division into supporters and opponents of competing worldviews ... is conditioned by the belonging of individuals to specific social strata and classes'.

The subject of the reviewed work is, apart from the issues mentioned above, also the model of social structure by Ruszkowski. This model is the culmination of many years of empirical research and theoretical work. I will refer to this part of the book at the end of the review.

The authors make an original division of the class-layer structure into its segments that were shaped under the conditions of the socialist system ('old') and shaped in the process of transformation after 1989 ('new'). In the context of this division, a hypothesis is put forward that the members of the first segments 'tend to be more inclined to conservative values', while the classes and strata that developed during the process of system transformation 'more often constitute liberal values'. An original conceptual distinction is introduced: classes and strata formed after the 1989 system

breakthrough are designated by the term 'classes', while those formed during the period of state socialism – by the term 'strata'.

As part of the conceptualization, the authors analyze the features of conservatism and liberalism with reference to the functional Parsons schema and with reference to the achievements of Mannheim and Szacki. The authors refer to Mannheim's thesis, important in this context, that modern conservatism (as a clearly articulated worldview) is born when it is threatened by liberalism in social practice. In turn, liberalism is a threat not only to conservative values, but also to social democratic ones.

The authors distinguish several dimensions of social awareness, within which views are measured using the conservatism-liberalism scale (it includes indicators of democracy, the level of economic development, customs, political views and preferences, religion). This tool is used to measure the proportions of conservative and liberal orientation among members of separate segments of the social structure (class and stratum, in accordance with the distinction indicated above). The analyzes were carried out on existing data (CBOS data sets), which were subjected to secondary analysis and recalculated in terms of the adopted hypothesis (socio-professional groups were crossed with a variable relating to ownership sectors). A new two-dimensional variable was obtained, including, in accordance with the terminology proposed by the authors, social classes (socio-professional groups relating to the private sector) and social strata (socio-professional groups relating to the remaining ownership sectors). Ultimately, 15 categories were distinguished. I would like to add that we adopted a similar division in our team in the study 'Poles working and the Fordist crisis' (using a different terminological convention and other theoretical assumptions). economic awareness (visions of a well-organized economy). It turned out then that the 'ownership sector' was a significantly differentiating variable.

The authors conducted a solid conceptualization by analyzing a number of classical theoretical perspectives relating to conservatism and liberalism: as I mentioned, with the main emphasis on Mannheim's achievements, but also referring to the systematization of Parsons and Polish humanists, including those with a right-wing and conservative orientation. The culmination of this part of the work was the categorization of the values of the conservative and liberal worldview in the form of a scheme with nine dimensions. They illustrated comprehensively and at the same time synthetically the main axes of differences between world views.

In the following chapters, the authors do a solid job of developing an appropriate indicator, which is then subjected to statistical analysis, allowing for the description of the orientations existing both within class and stratified categories.

In Chapter IV, the authors analyzed democratic values. Based on the variables taken from CBOS research, they constructed an original democracy index. In my opinion, the construction of the index was successful, the index's creators proved that it is possible to extract a lot of new, original information using the existing data. I especially bear in mind the data on changes in the average level of the democracy index in 2010–2017 and the conclusions regarding the class of small and medium-sized business owners who have moved from the category characterized by a high level of support for democratic governments to the category of average support for this type of government, and thus 'the scissors opened' between business owners and a class of senior specialists and managers. In the conclusions, the authors emphasized the positive verification of the hypothesis that the respondents belonging to the socialist strata accept democratic values to a lesser extent than the respondents from the classes formed in the transformation process.

Subsequent shorter or longer chapters discuss economic awareness (V), moral awareness with an interesting indicator of conservatism-liberalism, based, among others, on 'attitudes towards gays and lesbians' (VI), political and religious diversity of Poles (VII).

As I mentioned, the reviewed work has a two-dimensional character: apart from the issues discussed above, it includes the 'original model of the social structure'. The discussion of this model begins with a critique of the well-known proposal by Waters and Pakulski on the death of classes – it was rightly emphasized here that this proposal refers to the concept of a 'class for itself', which no one is advocating at present (perhaps except for supporters of radical neo-Marxist concepts).

On this basis, the author's concept of social structure is developed, adopting specific assumptions and criteria, inspired mainly, but not exclusively, by the ideas of Marx and Weber. They provide the basis for distinguishing the already mentioned classes and layers. In the case of classes, the authors distinguished 5 classes of owners and 5 classes of employees, in the case of layers, five layers of employees and three layers of 'public rentiers'. I consider the authors' proposals a valuable contribution to the debate on the structure, which will be worth further, in-depth empirical verification on a broader material than CBOS can provide.

The book contains a very important summary and current development of the conservatism-liberalism debate with references to the research of other researchers. The authors formulated insightful conclusions regarding the dysfunctional social divisions of Polish society.