

URBAN VISIBILITY CHANGES AS AN EFFECT OF THE  
REDEFINITION OF MINORITIES IN POLAND AFTER 1989*Davide ARTICO*University of Wrocław, plac Uniwersytecki 1, 50-140 Wrocław, Poland  
e-mail: artico.dawid@googlemail.com*ABSTRACT*

*The purpose of the article is to present selected study cases of the urban visibility changes which took place in post-1989 Poland as a result of the redefinition of population minorities. While the largest part of the analysis concerns Warsaw, other examples of large urban areas, such as Wrocław, were taken into consideration too. The relevant research was based on raw demographic and statistical data issued by state agencies, confronted with Polish scientific literature of a mostly sociological origin.*

*Keywords: urban visibility, inner migration, integration vs. assimilation, transversal minorities*

MODIFICHE NELLA VISIBILITÀ URBANA COME CONSEGUENZA DELLA  
RIDEFINIZIONE DELLE MINORANZE IN POLONIA DOPO IL 1989*SINTESI*

*Scopo dell'articolo è presentare specifici casi di studio delle modifiche intercorse nella visibilità urbana nella Polonia post-1989 e dovute alla ridefinizione del concetto di minoranza. Benché il grosso dell'analisi riguardi Varsavia, sono stati presi in esame anche altri esempi di aree urbane vaste, fra cui Breslavia. La ricerca si è basata su dati demografici e statistici prodotti dai relativi enti pubblici, messi poi a riscontro con letteratura scientifica polacca di ambito soprattutto sociologico.*

*Parole chiave: visibilità urbana, migrazioni interne, integrazione contro assimilazione, minoranze trasversali*

## INTRODUCTION

As Leonardo Benevolo first stated in the mid-Seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then underscored again in a recent interview, cities can be considered on a European scale as attempts to translate a peculiar concept into reality: A multi-faceted and self-sufficient community (Benevolo, 1975; Benevolo, 2011). Far from being universal, this concept appeared in a specific phase of the evolution of human societies, and in the future it may either undergo a major transformation or even disappear completely. Still, as far as this specific phase is involved, cities can be defined as a collective residential form taking shape through a growing concentration of handicraft, trade, manufacturing, communication, cultural and administrative activities. It can also be observed that, with time, cities have increased their dimensions, facing therefore infrastructural problems, but experiencing an accelerated transmission of cultural models too, with the coexistence of different lifestyles as their hallmark.

From this point of view, a binomial opposition between the peculiar residential form represented by the city on the one hand, and its surrounding countryside on the other hand, ended with implying, also in scientific literature, the existence of a great divide marking cultural and political differences between the two *topoi* – differences going far beyond the patent geographical and economical ones. Such a simplified interpretation has survived in today's historiographical contexts, though it fails to explain a few among the most recent changes in European society, those taking place after 1989 especially.

This is not the place to discuss those changes at large. Still, a quick and somewhat simplified summary ought to be made for the sake of clarity. One fundamental fact must be kept in mind especially when studying the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: The decline of socialism, not only as the main ideology authoritarian regimes were based upon, but as “an idea with the power to move men's minds” (Krugman, 2009, 10). The unraveling of the Soviet block in 1989, and of the USSR itself in December 1991, had worldwide effects which were definitely favourable not only to the political dominance of capitalism, but to its ideological primacy as well. For the first time since 1917, the most unpleasant aspects of a market system, such as inequality, unemployment and injustice, took to being largely accepted as unavoidable facts of life.

In Poland, a dystopian and ideologically distorted image of the former People's Republic contributed to the rise of a fresh binomial opposition, which partially replaced the old cultural demarcation between ‘advanced’ urban environments and the ‘backward’ countryside. Assuming the People's Republic was itself the embodiment of absolute evil, it became sufficient to state that those who opposed conservative transformations were nothing more than nostalgic freaks of sorts. By emphasizing their alleged communist heritage, they began to be not only shunned, but also exposed to public shaming as wrecks of history<sup>1</sup>.

As emerged from the papers delivered at the conference *Narrating the People's Republic of Poland*, organized in February 2011 by the Literature Research Institute (*Instytut Badań Literackich*) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, some of the practices of

---

1 On the social and political role of public shaming, see Nussbaum, 2006.

ideological indoctrination of the past regimes have been preserved up to the present day, albeit Poland has now enjoyed as many as 25 years of parliamentary democracy. Despite this relatively long time, today's mental attitude to real life in the former People's Republic continues to be strongly influenced by political propaganda, and it has led to many a distortion in popular culture. Since the days of Solidarity, stigmatising the People's Republic as a whole has constituted an integral part of Polish national self-consciousness. The years between the end of World War II and 1989 are not considered yet as a mere period in contemporary history, that is, a research subject for academic historians. They have become a sort of dystopia, a symbol of the absolute evil from which the Poles were eventually delivered. Self-identification, in other words, has taken place through a negative process. People assert their identity by underscoring what they are not, or what they are no longer. This, in turn, works as an uncritical legitimization of today's political and economic system, justifying the enforcement of the new economic and social order, and the imposition of new symbols from above.

The mainstream image of the People's Republic is therefore rendered mainly through undistinguishing stigmatisation and exorcising rituals which largely distort reality. According to a classic pattern that can be traced back to Mary Douglas, societies create a world of their own, banning what is deemed as undesirable. Thence, any identity narrative necessarily depends on the invention of "outsiders" arousing negative emotions. Fully legitimised (i.e. not only legal) citizenship depends in turn on the rejection of those "outsiders", to whom respectable community members never belong, but they stand out from them instead (Douglas, 2002).

It is interesting to notice in passing that the former regime followed exactly the same procedure in relation to interwar Poland, which was presented as a backward country as far as both material conditions in everyday life and social relations were concerned. Stereotypical images of matches split in four because common people could hardly afford them, and of barefoot children, mass illiteracy and the prison for political prisoners in Bereza Kartuska, were used by communist elites to depict Poland between the wars as a sort of "reservoir of evil". They can be compared to the images which present-day elites now give of the People's Republic: Stores on whose shelves nothing stood but bottles of vinegar, polystyrene beds on which the dissidents were forced to sleep while held in custody during the martial law in the early Eighties, "controlled conversations" on the telephone. The rhetorical devices are very similar. We are faced, in both cases, with the construction of an immanent image of the enemy, meant to legitimise revolutionary changes. In fact, in both cases, quite similar revolutions occurred, although they were of opposite sign.

One difference between the two is to be found in the fact that the social classes which had supported the former regime had subsequently expressed the bulk of the beneficiaries of the power system of the People's Republic, while the subsequent adoption by Poland of a market economy and a political system of parliamentary democracy after 1989 immediately led to the repression of dissenting voices among transformation supporters: Not only trade-union leaders, who would have dramatically slowed down the neoliberal economic transformations, but also civil rights activists. In the early 1990s, such civil

society expressions as civic committees were disbanded, and the statutory prohibition of abortion was symbolically imposed although over a million signatures had been raised against the relative bill.

This new divide between mainstream supporters of the new ideology of triumphant capitalism (and revived right-wing authoritarianism, going hand in hand with clericalism) on one side, and the “losers of the Polish transformation” (according to the definition given by a scholarly team of the Polish Academy of Sciences) on the other side, made the demarcation line between the city and the countryside less and less important (ISP PAN, 2005). Cultural and political differences are now definitely transverse to the two *topoi*, and they are no longer apparent from the place of abode in itself (city versus country) but from the relevance won by those population groups *inside* the environment they reside in, that is, from the visibility<sup>2</sup> they are respectively granted either in urban areas or in the countryside.

## WHAT MINORITIES?

This long introduction was needed for two purposes: First, to identify minorities, that is, what groups of Polish citizens are deemed not to belong in the national mainstream; and then, to understand the attitudes of the majority towards them and what effects those attitudes have in practice. The question of “what” minorities are to be found in post-1989 Poland, in other words, is to be answered on two distinct levels: What (*które*) groups of population are to be considered as “minorities”, and what (*jakie*) they are like, that is, what role they are meant to play in the majority’s self-narration about national identity. From this latter issue, another question proceeds: Which level of visibility should those minorities be allowed in their places of abode, be they in the city or in the countryside?

Since 1989, the two main lines of revolutionary changes have been market economy in its most extreme, neoliberal aspects (in fact a market, albeit limited in scope, had existed in the People’s Republic too, at least since the Seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though the postulate of the social function of private property was still paramount at the time), and clericalism understood as institutionalised hegemony of the Catholic Church. Both ideal types, as mentioned above, proceed from an identification in the negative, which hinges on charges of “communism” to all those who express criticism towards the new “revolutionary” or, indeed, reactionary postulates. A third ideal type is strictly ethnic, though not as strong and not as widespread as it could be, for example, in the Balkans. Here again, self-identification carries an opposite sign to rhetoric on proletarian internationalism of the Soviet era. Hallmark of this fresh rhetoric is the use of the term “independence” to exclusively denote Poland after 1989, as if the People’s Republic of Poland had not been itself an independent state, but a sort of additional Soviet republic like Georgia or Latvia. In this context, attempts are made to label as “communist” those who did not support Solidarity’s messianic rhetoric and, consequently, a xenophobic nationalism which even led up to acts of extreme physical and verbal violence in the past.

2 For a definition of “urban visibilities”, see Brighenti, 2010.

The effectiveness of this kind of nationalistic rhetoric has been greatly weakened thanks to the European integration process during Aleksander Kwaśniewski's double term as State President (1995–2005), and especially after Poland joined the Schengen Agreement and, as a consequence, Polish citizens gained unlimited freedom of travel in the countries of "old Europe". Nowadays, ethnocentric nationalism is no more than the prerogative of a hard core of supporters of extreme rightist parties, who can be quantified in no more than a fifth of the total adult population. Even long-term phenomena such as the inherent hostility towards Russia and congenital paternalism towards the Ukraine seem to be waning. In other words, the issue of "straight" national minorities, that is, those composed of immigrants from beyond the eastern border of the European Union, is not so different in today's Poland from what it is in the rest of the EU. What instead appears to be far from disappearing is Eurocentric xenophobia, from which the puny non-Caucasian (mostly Vietnamese and Black African) communities in Poland suffer the most.

Coming back to the issue of identifying minorities: The two main minorities are essentially transverse in their ethnicity, as opposition to (or uncritical acceptance of) the mainstream ideologies of neoliberalism and support for a Catholic confessional state are transverse themselves. One minority, until now branded as a wreck of the People's Republic, is composed of the population groups enjoying but fixed income in the form of low-level wages, and deprived of opportunities to develop microentrepreneurship. Retired workers and clerks with a low educational level, and therefore low-level salaries, also belong in this category, as well as non-EU immigrants who can be blackmailed because of the structural bureaucratic difficulties to obtain visas and permits of abode. With their unstable legal status as residents, they are much more prone to accept underpaid jobs and gruelling working schedules, and they are virtually unable to attain economic emancipation by establishing their own businesses.

The other minorities are essentially religious. A fundamental distinction is required in this respect, however: Not all non-Catholics are considered as minorities, but only those who do not accept the idea of a confessional state. "Historical" religious minorities such as Jews, Protestants from Upper Silesia and Warmia, Eastern Orthodox Church members, and even the indigenous Muslims (Tatars) are not faced with significant discrimination provided that they accept the principle of institutional support and public funding of religious activities in proportion to the numerical size of the community – a principle which obviously favours Roman Catholics. To be considered as aliens, and therefore potentially hostile, are rather those Jews who do not share the majority's mythopoiesis about the past but emphasise the undeniable anti-Semitic crimes committed by Poles during the Second World War (Czyżewski, 2009). Above all, however, atheists and agnostics are marginalized. Although the percentage of Catholics who regularly attend services is not significantly higher than the European average (in Warsaw, for example, as many as 3,493 out of a total of 7,298, that is, nearly 48 % of marriages were celebrated with civil ceremonies in 2013)<sup>3</sup>, the very fact of criticising the clericalisation of public life or the myth of the Polish Pope automatically brings about stigmatisation as "wrecks of communism".

---

3 Data source on marriages: GUS, 2014.

The same goes for those who do not hide sexual preferences which are condemned by the Catholic magisterium, although the identification with the past regime, which was itself homophobic, is more problematic and less rhetorically effective in this case. The last category are women publicly admitting having undergone abortion. Tens of thousands of illegal abortions are performed annually in Poland. In addition, many thousands more abortions are legally performed abroad (Nowicka, 2007). Yet these do not determine in themselves whether a woman is part of a minority. What is critical under this respect is the explicit demand for legalization of elective abortion, or even the plain request for family planning education to be introduced in schools, or contraceptives to be refunded through public health insurance. It is the opposition to the principle of the confessional state, and not actual behaviour, that carries along allegations of “nostalgia for communism”.

In summary, the two largest minorities in today’s Poland are the economic “losers”, and the allegedly “communist” opponents of the Catholic confessional state. They are seen as enemies of a negatively defined, immanent Polishness and, as such, they are being marginalized, if not openly discriminated. As far as ethnicity is concerned, it does not determine in itself whether individuals belong to a minority or not, though non-Caucasian immigrants, especially from the Far East and Africa, are often regarded as racially inferior and unworthy to possess equal rights, though they are tolerated if economically useful as a cheap working class.

## THE MAJORITY AND REAL ESTATE

A peculiar case of admixture between the two pillars of post-1989 ideology were the so-called “regulatory committees”, bilateral agencies composed of representatives of both the state and five religious organizations. Their purpose was to “give back” the ecclesiastical property confiscated in various ways by various governmental entities (not just the People’s Republic) and “pay back” in cash alleged economic harm suffered by the same religious organizations. Although, by definition, their work brought about asset losses for the Treasury, and therefore for the tax-payers, their decisions were not appealable in any way, as confirmed by the ruling of the Polish Supreme Administrative Court (*Naczelny Sąd Administracyjny*) of 26<sup>th</sup> September 1991. In addition, their members, including those appointed by the Government, were completely exempt from any civil or criminal liability, even in proven cases of bribery, for nothing to say of the lack of political accountability in their capacity, as no MP has never even been allowed to ask questions on the issue.

Needless to say, of five agencies, the one which dealt with the overwhelming portion of the alienated public assets was the so-called “property committee” with representatives of the Catholic Church. Far from presenting the Church *una tantum* with assets allegedly confiscated by the former regime, the “property committee” acted without interruption from 1989 until 28<sup>th</sup> February 2011, enacting a sort of permanent revolution in favour of the new ideological (Roman Catholic) elite. An estimate by MP Armand Ryfiński (and all we can talk about are estimates, as the “property committee” was not submitted to any public control, and official data at hand are far from being fully reliable) indicate that, over more than twenty years, the commission transferred at least 76,000 hectares of land

and thousands of buildings (former property of the State or local authorities) to the Polish Episcopal Conference for free, besides paying them the equivalent of at least 35 million euros in cash (Ryfiński, 2011). The total value of alienated real estate and financial assets is estimated at nearly half a billion euros. According to an intelligence report of the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA) there is evidence of many cases of misuse, if not of outright corruption<sup>4</sup>.

Despite a steady decrease not only of vocations, but also of believers regularly attending services, especially in the five largest urban areas of the country (the Upper Silesian conurbation around Katowice, Kraków metropolitan area, Łódź and Wrocław besides Warsaw), such a number of assets granted to the Polish Episcopate for free could only result in their re-sale to private investors, but at market price. A different situation emerged in rural areas, where the free distribution of agricultural land to the Catholic Church led to a series of economic disruptions that will be discussed below. Focusing for now on real estate and building lots in urban areas only, it is very clear that very few of them were eventually used for purposes of worship or social assistance. When there was no direct (and tax-exempted) productive investment by the Bishops themselves, the property received as a gift by the State was sold to private investors who thus had access to areas of historical interest with no urban development constraint. This led to an investors' anarchy, which in turn resulted in a complete redesigning of the "fanciest" neighbourhoods. The related restructuring of the urban fabric has had important consequences in terms of presence and visibility in the area.

The transformation of social spaces in the five largest urban areas in Poland saw the massive building of office complexes, hotels, shopping malls and luxury residential complexes. Office complexes and hotels were the most likely result of the fresh availability of building lots (and property needing renovation) in city centres, or in their immediate vicinity. Shopping centres, however, are to be divided into two distinct categories: Those that "mark the territory" in central areas and those that expand instead the urbanized area having risen on the outskirts or in the suburbs. The luxury residential buildings for the new entrepreneurial middle class, on their side, are more scattered and are also to be divided into two main types: The complexes of detached houses, often fenced and guarded by privately-hired security, that is, the so-called "gated communities"; and high standard condominiums, to define which, not by chance, a U.S. English derivative word was invented: *apartamentowce* (Jałowicki, Szczepański, 2006, 300).

An analysis of the owners of newly built luxury apartments in Warsaw gives quite interesting evidence of the transformation of the territory and the new visibility of most community members embracing the dominant ideology. As stated by Bogdan Cichomski of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw, of all the *apartamentowce* built in the capital city area in the first decade of the new regime (1991–2001), as many as 85 % are located in the Centrum municipality, with over half of them in the Mokotów neighbourhood. At least two thirds of landlords were born in Warsaw. This is an important fact, since the restructuring of the economy in the last two decades has increased the trend to urbanization in general, and in particular to immigration to the urban area of the capital. The percentage

---

4 Gazeta Wyborcza, 1. 3. 2011: Bezkarna Komisja Majątkowa?

of residents actually born in Warsaw, measured over the entire metropolitan area, does not exceed 48 %. A rate of 66 % of indigenous Varsovians owing property in the luxury residential areas in the city centre underscores the revolutionary impact of a structural economic change which brought about a rapid advance of the historically urbanized social classes of the self-employed, at the expense of lower-income population from the countryside. The latter are thus reduced to an authentic minority segregated outside the urban areas of visibility. Employment data about residents of the Centrum municipality confirm the trend: Two thirds of them are professionals or executives, against a general rate of 29 % referred to the urban area of the capital as a whole (Cichomski, 2004). Moreover, the median household income data indicate that at least one third of the inhabitants of *apartamentowce* earn the countervalue in local currency of at least 3,000 EUR per month, while another third earns over 2,500, against a national monthly average of a mere 600 EUR. What is emerging is the consolidation of a new bourgeoisie who, taking advantage of the favourable ideological climate, automatically became the ruling class not only in economy, but also in terms of urban visibility, political influence and ability to impose their cultural models.

<b>Years</b>	<b>Thousands</b>
1952-1960	3,063.0
1961-1970	2,569.2
1971-1980	3,138.0
1981-1990	2,368.5
1991-2000	1,311.3
2001-2009	2,073.4

*Tab. 1: Migration from the countryside to urban areas (RD, 2010)*

A seemingly opposite phenomenon is the centrifugal migration from city centres. The ideological and cultural reference point behind it are residential suburbs of large U.S. urban areas. Such a centrifugal migration has resulted in the rise of “gated communities” in selected villages close to large metropolitan areas. In the case of Warsaw, the phenomenon is concentrated mainly in Piaseczno and Konstancin Jeziorna. In the last two decades, these villages have seen an increase of as much as 70 % in their population compared to a decrease in the absolute number of residential buildings figuring around 25 %. This is due to a considerable increase in the average size of residences (Jałowicki, 2005). The structure of closed residential complexes, surrounded by fences and guarded by CCTV surveillance and private security, emphasizes the ideological symbolism of urban transformation, with the emergence of a kind of apartheid between the upper, ideologically mainstream classes, and all those who, instead, live on the other side of the fence and, in their own way, are considered too as “losers”.



Years	Thousands
1996-2000	+46.0
2001-2005	-128.7
2006	-35.1
2007	-48.0
2008	-38.9

Tab. 2: Balance of migration to (+) and from (-) urban areas (MRS, 2009)

The feeling of apartheid is reinforced by the fact that, in other outskirts and suburbs, usually those less attractive for private investors, low-cost social housing was developed instead, creating a striking contrast with the “gentry suburbs.” This happened, for example, in the Kozanów neighbourhood in Wrocław, where clusters of cheap, up to twenty-storey-high flat buildings stand. They consist of 30-square metre flats meant for the lower working class, that is, those earning no regular income or an income hardly meeting their survival needs. Such barrack-like complexes, which often stand far from places of aggregation and definitely lack efficient public transport, are generally defined as *blokowiska*. Living there implies social exclusion and often entails considerable risk too. The above mentioned Kozanów neighbourhood, for example, rose in an area highly threatened by flood damage, where no settlement had ever been built before the Sixties of the last century. The latest floods of the Oder, in 1997 and 2010, caused casualties and widespread damage there, contributing to a deeper feeling of segregation by the social strata excluded from the neoliberal rat race (Żuk, 2009).

A separate issue, as mentioned above, is agricultural land. Thanks to donations of formerly state-owned farmland by the “property committee”, the Polish Episcopal Conference has become the largest owner of agricultural land in the country and, thereby, the largest recipient of financial contributions to agriculture by the European Union. This has led, on the one hand, to a slowing down of the effective modernization of Polish agriculture, as funds for structural investments take a completely different direction than they were meant for. On the other hand, the seizure of farmland by the new landowner has resulted in the inability to redistribute it to the weaker sectors of the rural population, especially that of the former state farms (PGR). This not only hindered any possibility of integration of these other “losers” in the new market economy, but it also caused an accelerated abandonment of rural areas, at the same time increasing immigration of the professionally unskilled to urban areas. The latter phenomenon has only enhanced the above mentioned segregation process, and it does not seem solvable in a short time. Nor the emigration to other EU member states seems to be a solution. The exodus of over two million Polish citizens after 2004, mostly to the British Isles and Scandinavia, has specific characteristics. Most of them are young people under 30 years of age, nearly half of them have a university degree, and they have almost always opted for a no-return emigra-

tion, as the study case of the Podlaskie Voivodeship clearly shows (Cieślińska, 2010). On the other hand, as experience has shown in the last five years, most emigrants with low qualifications are unable to fit, either professionally or socially, in the countries of emigration, and they almost always return to Poland after less than three months, without significant improvement in their financial situation, nor in acquired working skills. They join therefore the pariah minority that, as we have seen, tends to be segregated and slowly turned into a “different race,” regardless of ethnicity and language spoken.

This new “race” is sometimes juxtaposed to minorities in the classical sense, those of immigrants from outside Europe who traditionally live in the remaining “bad neighbourhoods” in (or close to) city centres. In the Gierek era, these areas were allocated to social housing programs, characterized by low (four- to six-floor) buildings made of large cinderblocks (*wielka płyta*). Gradually abandoned by the “gentry” who, after 1989, earning significantly higher incomes, was in search of higher living standards too, these neighbourhoods have lost any attractivity for private investors over time. At the same time, given their short history and the impossibility of including those buildings in the bulk of “refunds” to the Catholic Church, they have undergone a gradual degradation. From the buildings in question, which are too degraded for lack of maintenance, nothing but very low rents can now be won, which makes them attractive both for the Poles out of the mainstream, and for Asian immigrants. Exemplary in this regard are the Vietnamese enclaves in the Prague neighbourhood in Warsaw, on the right bank of the Vistula (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2004).

A fact worth some more attention is that, while Asian communities usually show a trend to *integration* strategies including a general learning of the language and selected contacts with indigenous communities, strategies displayed by Eastern European immigrants (mainly Ukrainians)<sup>5</sup> tend instead to be *assimilative*, through mixed marriages and a general avoidance to be identified with a distinct national group, which is of course easier thanks to their somatic features, indistinguishable from native Caucasians (Grzymała Kazłowska, 2008). Under this respect, Ukrainians (and to a much lesser extent Russians and Belarusians) living in Poland have become a non-minority minority, as most are not immediately identifiable as members of a distinct community. Thence the paradox: In post-1989 Poland, what determines whether an individual belongs to a “minority” is more often his or her economic and professional failure, rather than distinct ethnic features, as long as Caucasians are involved only.

## DENOMINATIONAL AND/OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION MINORITIES

As mentioned before, people belonging to a non-Catholic religious denomination are not automatically part of a minority. Exemplary is the case of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg (i.e. Lutheran) Confession in Poland, whose members tend to be concentrated in very specific, historically Protestant areas of the country. The case of the largest

5 In 2002, over 309 thousand Ukrainians lived in Poland, which accounted for nearly 40 % of all residents born outside the country (GUS, 2003).

Polish Lutheran community, those living in the valleys of the Silesian Beskid Mountains, has shown in the last two decades that their sense of belonging to an undivided local community, together with the common acceptance of the negative mythopoiesis about the People's Republic, led to an almost complete overcoming of theological adversity between Protestants and Catholics. The harmony between the representatives of the two denominations is almost complete in the region, as demonstrated in a recent study by Urszula Lehr (Lehr, 2009). Moreover, the same Augsburg Evangelical Church has apparently received “refunds” and free property from the Polish state, albeit to an incomparably lower extent than the Catholic Church, and it is the only Lutheran church left in Europe to methodically reject the ordination of women. In short, the sharing of two ideological pillars of the regime after 1989, direct financial support to churches by the state and the institutional primacy of the Catholic Church, grants non-Catholics a partial *Anerkennung* and keeps them from being emarginated or harassed. On the contrary, at least three Polish Lutherans have achieved important personal goals, and even a reputation as public figures, that is novelist Jerzy Pilch, skier Adam Małysz, and politician Jerzy Buzek, acting Chairman of the European Parliament from the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009 to the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

The situation of sexual minorities appears to be much worse. Institutionalised homophobia became paramount after the EU accession, as a reaction to the clear position taken by the European Commission towards repeated discrimination of homosexuals in Poland in the past. The worst harassment took place in June 2005, when the late Lech Kaczyński, Warsaw Mayor at the time, expressly forbade a gay pride event in the streets of the capital, allowing instead a march of young neofascists threatening to send “faggots” to the gas chamber, «doing the same to them that Hitler had done to the Jews». Later that year, Lech Kaczyński would win the presidential election as candidate of the extreme right nationalist movement Law and Justice. Also supposedly liberal politicians, such as those belonging to the so-called Civic Platform, began supporting the homophobic campaign, which was unofficially approved of by the Catholic Church. Under this respect, an Amnesty International report underlined the pressure put on policy makers through comments about the misdemeanour against religious feelings (a criminal offense according to Polish law) which homosexuals allegedly committed by simply manifestating their orientation in public (Amnesty International, 2006). Another sensational episode occurred in late autumn 2005, when “liberal” Ryszard Grobelny, Mayor of Poznań, at first banned a gay pride parade and, later, required the intervention of riot police to arrest seventy protesting queer activists. At the same time, the police did nothing to suppress a counter-demonstration of young neofascists<sup>6</sup>. The events of 2005 had an international echo, which culminated with the intervention of Amnesty International and the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

The need for open political support (or at least a benevolent neutrality) by the Episcopate still makes both Polish right-wing parties, that is, either Law and Justice nationalists and Civic Platform “liberals,” officially reject every request by homosexuals for more civil rights. Even the new *ombudsman*, Civic Platform activist Professor Irena Lipowicz,

---

6 Protokół nr 82/2005 LXXXII sesji Rady Miasta Poznania z dnia 29 listopada 2005 roku.

stated in August 2010 that same-sex couples will absolutely never be legally acknowledged as such in Poland. The situation can therefore be described as open discrimination motivated by denominational (sectarian) considerations.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have so far examined a few mechanisms of property (and thus indirectly of social visibility) redistribution after 1989. An attempt was also made to give a definition of “minorities” which could better explain social inclusion/exclusion processes, which in turn play a major role in determining group visibility inside a given residential environment.

The very idea of “non-Polish” population is based upon an axiological point of view and does not necessarily encompass mother language or ethnic features. A “non-Polish” citizen may be a foreigner or not. What appears to be critical is whether he or she shares the superimposed “common values” of neoliberalism and the primacy of the Catholic Church in public life. That leads to assessing that an *ad hoc* democracy was established in post-1989 Poland. Generally speaking, an *ad hoc* democracy should be understood as the taking of political decisions based on contingent and situational (rather than generalized and abstract, i.e. *erga omnes*) considerations. The origins of the process can be traced back to inconsistent logics of action by the three main agencies in political life: Mass media, a civil society which has been shrunken to the role of passive audience, and political decision makers. It is typical not only of Poland, but of most state entities where a quick (revolutionary) social change towards a Westminster-like parliamentary system took place (Szewczak, 2010).

In post-1989 Poland, most mass media fell directly under the control of one of two political flavours, both conservative. One of them shows a reactionary trend towards clericalism and authoritarianism, whereas the other one sports predispositions to neoliberal fundamentalism. The creation of a negative mythopoiesis on the People’s Republic, uncritically presented as a “reservoir of evil”, has resulted in de-legitimation of any opposition to neoliberalism and clericalism by branding it as a “wreck of communism”. Thus silenced the critics, and given the lack of interest by the mainstream society in taking part in a public debate in which they would have no legitimate counterparts, society itself morphed into a passive audience, the antithesis of civil society in long-established representative democracies. As a result, and during both the centre-left dominated Kwaśniewski era and the right-wing hegemony period after 2005, policy-makers were mostly driven by the ideological conformism of the media and the absence of an actual civil society. They thus contributed to the creation of a system indeed of equals, but where some are more equal than others (capital versus workers, the Roman Catholic clergy versus those who do not accept their dogmas).

All three players have followed inconsistent logics of action: The press, no longer subject to state censorship, turned into the first spokesman of the dominant ideology instead of becoming a critical voice; common people laicised as a result of European integration, and they remained basically egalitarian, but they did not find any manner to protest against clericalism and the excessive social stratification which brought along

impoverishment of larger and larger population groups; finally politicians, instead of rising to the rank of European leaders, plainly boost their image as obscurantists or social Darwinists.

The result is, as said, a democracy *ad hoc*, in which everything is allowed to private enterprise and the Episcopate, and almost nothing is allowed to others. This led to the formation of minorities which are not necessarily ethnic or national, but economical (the excluded from entrepreneurship) and cultural (anti-clerical activists, atheists, agnostics, homosexuals, feminists, pro-choice women.) These minorities tend to be stigmatised as “non-Polish” although they are mainly composed of people speaking Polish as their mother-language and with Polish ancestors. In turn, such minorities tend to enjoy very limited social visibility and have but a very limited access to real estate in large urban areas. In the meantime, if remaining in the country, they are mostly unable to achieve a significant improvement in their income, and they fairly often resort to emigration to other EU member states.

SPREMEMBE V VIDLJIVOSTI URBANEGA ZARADI PREVREDNOTENJA  
MANJŠIN NA POLJSKEM PO LETU 1989*Davide ARTICO*

Univerza v Wrocławu, plac Uniwersytecki 1, 50-140 Wrocław, Poljska

e-mail: artico.dawid@gmail.com

## POVZETEK

Namen članka je predstaviti konkretne primere sprememb urbane vidljivosti na Poljskem po letu 1989, in sicer kot posledica prevrednotenja manjšin. Čeprav se večji del analize nanaša na Varšavo, so bili vzeti v poštev tudi drugi primeri velikih mestnih območjih, med temi Wrocław. Raziskava je temeljila na analizi demografskih in statističnih podatkov javnih uprav ob njihovi primerjavi s poljsko znanstveno literaturo, predvsem sociologije.

Dva sta bila dejavnika, ki sta pripomogla k tako imenovani metropolizaciji, in sicer težnja po migraciji iz podeželja v velika urbana središča, po tem ko je prišlo leta 1989 do institucionalnih sprememb. Po eni strani je izginotje državnih kmetij (PGR) vplivalo na pauperizacijo širokih plasti podeželskega prebivalstva; po drugi je zaradi politične hegemonije Katoliške cerkve prišlo do "vračanja" mnogo večjih nepremičnin, kot jih je prejšnja oblast zasegla, kar je pripeljalo do tega, da je postala Cerkev lastnik največjih površin v državi. Posledično so se evropski strukturni skladi za kmetijstvo izkazali za neučinkovite v smislu gospodarskega zagona podeželskih skupnosti, kar je privedlo do masivnih migracij v mesta. Vzporedno so neoliberalne politike dajale prednost prebivalcem, ki so se v preteklosti že urbanizirali, tako da je prišlo do nesorazmernega porasta vloge tistih struktur, ki so bile lastniki nepremičnin v zgodovinskih središčih. Obenem je prišlo tudi novega pojava luksuznih stanovanjskih predmestij, še posebej v okolici Varšave.

*Ključne besede:* urbana vidljivost, notranje migracije, integracije proti asimilacijam, tranzverzalne manjšine

## SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amnesty International (2006):** [http://amnesty.org.pl/no\\_cache/archiwum/aktualnosci-strona-artykulu/article/4274/224](http://amnesty.org.pl/no_cache/archiwum/aktualnosci-strona-artykulu/article/4274/224) (14. 12. 2014).
- Benevolo, L. (1975):** *Storia della città*. Roma, Bari, Laterza.
- Benevolo, L. (2011):** *La fine della città*. Edited by Erbani, F. Roma, Bari, Laterza.
- Brighenti, A.M. (2010):** *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*. Basingstoke (Hants), Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cichomski, B. (2004):** Zróżnicowanie społeczne mieszkańców Warszawy. In: Grzelak, J., Zarycki, T. (eds.): *Społeczna mapa Warszawy: Interdyscyplinarne studium metropolii warszawskiej*. Warsaw, Scholar, 11–41.
- Cieślińska, B. (2010):** Wzory współczesnych emigracji zarobkowych z województwa podlaskiego. *Studia Socjologiczne*, 199, 4, 201.
- Czyżewski, M. (2009):** Polski spór o „Strach” Jana Tomasa Grossa w perspektywie „pośredniczącej” analizy dyskursu. *Studia Socjologiczne*, 194, 3, 5–26.
- Douglas, M. (2002):** *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London, Routledge Classics.
- Gazeta Wyborcza – Warsaw, Agora, 1989–.**
- Grzymała-Kazłowska, A. (2004):** Migranci z krajów mniej rozwiniętych gospodarczo. In: Grzelak, J., Zarycki, T. (eds.): *Społeczna mapa Warszawy: Interdyscyplinarne studium metropolii warszawskiej*. Warsaw, Scholar.
- Grzymała-Kazłowska, A. (2008):** Separacja, integracja czy asymilacja? Strategie adaptacyjne osiadłych w Polsce imigrantów z Ukrainy i z Wietnamu. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 52, 131–155.
- GUS (2003):** 2002 Census Report. Warsaw, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Table 11.
- GUS (2014):** Baza Demografia. Warsaw, Główny Urząd Statystyczny.
- ISP PAN (2005):** Jarosz, M. (ed.): *Wygrani i przegrani polskiej transformacji*. Warsaw, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Jałowiecki, B. (2005):** Polskie miasta w procesie metropolizacji. *Studia regionalne i lokalne*, 1, 5–15.
- Jałowiecki, B., Szczepański, M.S. (2006):** Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej. Warsaw, Scholar.
- Krugman, P. (2009):** *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.
- Lehr, U. (2009):** Czy katolik i ewangelik mogą być „braćmi”? *Etnografia polska*, 53, 47–60.
- MRS (2009):** *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny*.
- Nowicka, W. (2007):** Ustawa antyaborcyjna w Polsce: Stan prawny i rzeczywisty. In: Nowicka, W. (ed.): *Prawa reprodukcyjne w Polsce: Skutki ustawy antyaborcyjnej: Raport 2007*. Warsaw, Federacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny, 16–45.
- Nussbaum, M. (2006):** *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*. Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press.
- RD (2010):** *Rocznik Demograficzny*.

- Ryfiński, A. (2011):** <http://ryfinski.blog.pl/tag/koscielna-komisja-majatkowa> (14. 12. 2014).
- Szewczak, W. (2010):** Istota i mechanizmy funkcjonowania demokracji ad hoc. *Studia Socjologiczne*, 197, 2, 11–30.
- Żuk, P. (2009):** O podziałach społecznych w mieście: Perspektywa klasowa zamiast tożsamościowej w analizie nierówności społecznych mieszkańców Wrocławia. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 52, 43–60.