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## Sociological Intervention «*a la polonaise*»: Alain Touraine's Method in the Polish Context

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**Abstract** In 1981, the French sociologist Alain Touraine (with a group of Polish young sociologists led by the veteran of Polish sociology – Jan Strzelecki), conducted a famous research on the Solidarity Movement with the use of a new and distinct method of investigation called “sociological intervention.” It was the first time that Polish sociologists, who were trained in a specific combination of Marxist and positivist traditions, had experienced this kind of ‘hard’ qualitative methodology. The reactions were mixed and the general approach was rather cautious. Nevertheless, the sociological intervention method has since been used several times by Polish scientists. The aim of this paper is to summarize these experiences.

**Keywords** sociological intervention, Touraine, Poland, France, Solidarity, social movement, quantitative methods

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Alain Touraine (b. 1925) is one of the most interesting contemporary sociologists, known not only in France and Poland, but also in many other countries all over the world, particularly throughout Latin America. From the outset of his professional career, he made his mark as a quite unique researcher, seeking new solutions and trying to incorporate into his own theory the ideas and notions introduced by other researchers (Crozier 1996). He authored over 50 books and is a laureate of the prestigious Prince of the Asturias Award (in 2010, together with Zygmunt Bauman) as well as he is a foreign member of the Pol-

ish Academy of Sciences. In Poland, he is mostly known because of his research on the Solidarity movement in 1981, which resulted in the publication of one of the best books on the Polish trade union and freedom movement (Touraine et al. 1982).<sup>1</sup>

The research on "Solidarity" was the last one in which Touraine directed the sociological intervention personally (excluding the studies on the French trade union movements, which had started earlier). In the subsequent years, he decided to dedicate himself mostly to theoretical reflection and to refining his theory. He was gradually leaning more and more towards issues that fringed upon philosophy, which had been important for him for years. In the mid-1960s, when Touraine was defending his major doctoral dissertation, a member of the examinational committee, the political scientist and thinker Raymond Aron, publicly accused him of employing philosophical notions too freely without having a proper background in philosophy. New and important books would then spring from Touraine's reflection, in which the very method of sociological intervention would be mentioned only in passing. The reins were to be taken over by his closest tutees, mainly by François Dubet and Michel Wieviorka, and then the next generation of his disciples (Didier Lapeyronnie, Olivier Cousin, Danilo Martuccelli) were part of what later became the Center of Sociological Analysis and Intervention (CADIS).

<sup>1</sup> The Polish translation appeared in 2011 and was published by the Gdansk European Solidarity Centre. The first underground edition appeared as early as the beginning of 1989, issued by the Publishing House Europa.

## Alain Touraine and His Method of "Sociological Intervention"

From the very beginning of his research, Alain Touraine had utilized various qualitative methods (e.g. standard semi-structured interviews). He was under the strong influence of several theoretical categories introduced by Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Talcott Parsons (later, he will consider them his "masters"). He was also a great admirer of Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault, and a good friend of Serge Moscovici.<sup>2</sup>

In 1978, Touraine presented the main principles of the sociological intervention method, by which he hoped to renew the classic sociological methodology. He did this in the book titled *La voix et le regard* (*The Voice and the Eye*) (Touraine 1978). The purpose of the book was to present and explain a new general sociological theory, namely the theory of social movements and a new method of investigation adopted to study these movements. This method has had an important impact on the French-language sociology and has given rise to various empirical studies. These concerned new social movements in the second half of the 1970s in France, which were directly linked to the 'post-68' cultural climate and specific intellectual atmosphere: the students' movements, the regionalist movement (Occitan's – a region in the south of France near the Spanish border), and, also, the environmentalists' and anti-nuclear movements. These first studies were organized by Touraine himself, with some young French

<sup>2</sup> Romanian-born famous French psychologist, who in the 1970s formulated the 'conversion theory of minority influence' (Moscovici 1976).

sociologists as part of the team, this including particularly Michel Wieviorka, François Dubet, and the French-Hungarian sociologist Zsuzsa Hegedus.

The principal objective was to better understand the specificity of the above-mentioned contestations as well as their relationship (proximity, differences, and oppositions) with the main social movement of the industrial society, namely the workers' movement and its organizational transcription (i.e. trade unions). However, for Touraine the main question concerned the process of transition from the industrial society to a new form of social life, namely the post-industrial society. Touraine wanted to discover a social movement that would occupy the central position held by the workers' movement in that new industrial society.

In this book, Touraine presented the main principles of his own theory of actionalism. The method of sociological intervention strived to put the theory of actionalism into practice. Touraine affirms the existence of social actors and the logic of social action, and his theory tries to establish a link between these two. Social actors are seen as having the capacity for action, but also as being able to account for the actions and situations in which they are involved themselves. Sociological intervention is principally based on the reflexive ability of actors. The method requires concrete actors (militants of a movement engaged in a struggle or a dynamics of contestation) to engage in a process of reflection, even (socio-psychological) introspection, in which they are helped by sociologist and can analyze how they view and interpret their own actions and the social world. The aim of the method is to bring to light the real

social relations in order to define the dimensions (and the different levels) that structure the action of the actors in their surrounding reality.

The sociological intervention consists in organizing meetings of groups (composed of eight to fifteen people) in order to discuss a specific issue (which had been proposed and formalized by the sociologists). The group of intervention is not a real group of militants. It brings together individuals who share either the same commitment or the same kind of experience, but who, if it is possible, do not know other members of the group. The Sociological Intervention involves having the same group meet in a neutral area on several (ten or more) occasions in order for them to be able to propose some analytical schemas representing the historical dynamics and the different components of the action (the logic of the action and the levels of the action). During every sociological intervention, the sessions (which take 2 or 3 hours) could be open or closed.

The *open sessions* involve external guests (*interlocutors*), who embody the social figures that the actors face within the context of their daily life, their commitment, or their social experience. They represent part of the social, political, and cultural environment, within which the social actors develop and, by means of confronting the group, help reveal the nature of the actors' social relations.

The *closed sessions* focus on what was said during the previous meetings. This is why all the discussions during the open sessions must be recorded, transcribed, and handed out to all the partici-

pants. Giving the group the opportunity to go back over their different reactions and comments opens the way for a process of self-analysis and reflexivity.

A sociological intervention requires a team of minimum two or (better) three researchers, who are organized and mobilized according to different roles. The first one, called the *interpreter*, helps the group to establish itself and supports it in the analysis of its action. Positioned alongside the group, the interpreter facilitates the making of statements, brings order to what is said, and helps to clarify the possible differences and conflicts within the group. Assuming the role of a chairperson and deciding who will speak, the Interpreter pushes the group to reflect and to stand back from the members' spontaneous comments. The second researcher, called the *analyst*, from the beginning tries to maintain a certain emotional and intellectual distance toward the group. The analyst's role is to encourage the participants of each group to adopt analytical categories during the discussions and, finally, to adopt a sociological perspective, facilitating the process of auto-analysis of the movement (or of the experience). Afterwards, this researcher's role is to lead the members of the group to reviewing the situation and experience on the basis of the work undertaken during the sessions. The analyst often needs to shake the group up, to defy it, and to discuss and analyze its internal contradictions. Above all, the main role of the analyst is to introduce a sociological (analytical) point of view. The third researcher (but this work could also be done by the interpreter) is called the *secretary* and is in charge of all the practical aspects of

the research; in particular, this will entail looking after the process of recording, but also writing all external signs linked with the comportment of the people during and after the sessions (e.g. laughter, facial expressions, leaving the room, conversations on the side, etc.).

Naturally, before beginning the work with the groups of intervention and after the preparatory phase (semi-structured interviews, work on documents, and other archives about the movement), the researchers have to generate a frame of analysis and formulate several hypotheses about the movement (or the experience): the possible logic of action; the historical evolution of the movement and its ideology; the elements of social, cultural, and political environment; and the main social partners or adversary(ies) of the movement. This meticulous preliminary work must be done before the process of sociological intervention is initiated.

It all begins during the first meeting with a proposition (given by the researchers) of potential "guests" (interlocutors) that could be invited to debate with the members of the group. It is significant that sociologists do not impose their choice, but they have to negotiate it with the members of each group. It is also very important to invite an interlocutor during the first meeting so that the group does not 'close up in itself' (debating principally about its ideology or the strategy of the movement).

The principal aim of the meetings is to break all ideological discourses. It is really important that during the meetings the researchers know how to identify the differences within the group as well as how to

find concrete people who could represent (symbolize) the different type of the logic of action. After all the sessions, the researchers have to discuss all that had happened during the sessions and try to make the choice of potential interlocutors with regard to the internal dynamics of each group. It is important for each group to meet the same interlocutors, but not necessary the same persons.

Discourse analysis and the elaboration of analytical schemas (and their presentation and discussion by the group) is the most important moment of the sociological intervention. Influenced by the work of Michel Foucault,<sup>3</sup> Touraine attached great importance to the analysis of what had happened and what had been said during the meetings. The main work of the researchers consists in passing (switching) from “the language of action” (and its categories of description of the social relations) to a new “language of analysis” (which presupposes progressive introduction of the concepts utilized by the prominent sociologist’s theory).

Last but not least, the sociologists have to construct a general sociological reasoning. To achieve this, they introduce different hypotheses during the sessions, debating them within the group. At the end of the process of Sociological Intervention, the *conversion* session is the opportunity for the researchers to submit a general schema to the participants of the group. “Initially, *conversion* refers to a sociological intervention practice aimed at analyzing social movements. The method is not limited to the

study of collective struggles; it claims to go beyond the causes and effects of mobilizations in order to focus on the sociological and historic significance of the actors’ commitment and to understand how they bring about social transformation. Sociological intervention targets the highest level of action possible and questions the actors involved in order to comprehend their capacity to be (form) a social movement capable of contesting and changing the cultural orientations of society” (Cousin and Rui 2011:224).

In the last session, the conversion is tentative and seems to be a dual process (i.e. both analytical and initiatory):

Analytical, because the moment of conversion dissects the nature of the action and confronts the group of activists with their commitments and the theoretical hypothesis of the social movement. Conversion positions the group on the side of analysis and invites it to assess the difference that exists between its action and the social movement. This presupposes that the actors are capable of accepting intellectually an analysis of the material that they have produced and work undertaken throughout the research process by the gradual introduction of self-analysis. Initiatory, because the conversion equally aims to lead the group to reflect on the conditions that can help it become a social movement. Sociological intervention seeks, therefore, to lead the group towards this level of action, shedding light on it and opening the way to it. Conversion therefore includes a predictive element as it aims to raise the actors’ capacity for action; it constitutes a tool used in the action itself. (Cousin and Rui 2011:224)

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault became the key French theorist of this subject after he had published *Les mots et les choses* (Foucault 1966) and, later, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Foucault 1977).

## The “Solidarność” Movement and Sociological Intervention in Poland (1980-1981)

In 1980, the world was taken by surprise by the unexpected emergence of an entirely new and unique social phenomenon, namely the trade union movement called “Solidarity” (the Polish name being “Solidarność”) that comprised nearly ten million members. It attracted the interest of not only many journalists, trade union activists, and politicians all over the world, but also of many researchers (sociologists and political scientists alike).

The most extensive and, possibly, most intriguing research done to date (which the Polish authorities formally allowed and even signed a proper agreement about) was the sociological intervention on the Solidarity movement carried out by a French-Polish research team led by Alain Touraine. The culmination of this research was a book published in 1982, which was later translated into many languages. It made the Polish movement well-known throughout the world as well as kindled interest in the method of Sociological Intervention itself.

The study of the Solidarity movement was situated at the very heart of a period of Touraine's intellectual work, when the references to analytical propositions exposed in *The Voice and the Eye* were quite important. However, the initial program (formulated in the mid-1970s) did not envisage a study of oppositional movements in a communist country. Touraine was pessimistic about the possibility of the emergence of an independent social action in communist societies. He had intellectual contacts with some Polish

sociologists (Jan Strzelecki, Jan Szczepański), but he had never imagined he could arrange for an important empirical research in such countries. The rise of “Solidarity” was a total surprise not only for politicians and the public opinion, but also for sociologists, even the Polish ones.

Touraine decided to study the Solidarity movement in order “to understand the nature, internal workings and evolution of Solidarity /.../ to help establish the belief that men and women are not subject to historical laws and material necessity, that they produce their own history through their cultural creations and social struggles” (Touraine 1983:5). The research was conducted between April and November 1981, but the preparation phase had begun at the end of 1980. The team was composed of French (Alain Touraine, François Dubet, Michel Wieviorka) and Polish (Jan Strzelecki, Grażyna Gęsicka, Tadeusz Chabiera, Anna Kruczkowska, Ireneusz Krzemiński, Paweł Kuczyński, Anna Matuchniak, Małgorzata Melchior, Krzysztof Nowak, Włodzimierz Pańków, Dorota Reczek) researchers. During the first months of 1981, groups of between eight and eleven militants were established, and they were “as diverse as possible in composition.” They were composed of grassroots activists of the Solidarity Trade Union (principally workers and technicians). In spring, three different groups were formed in Gdansk, Katowice, and Warsaw, and in autumn three more groups were formed in Szczecin, Lodz, and Wrocław.

The study explained the adopted procedures in the following way: “The group first met interlocutors from the party, the management of factories, the

Church, the press and the political opposition, as well as leaders of Solidarity; they then went back over these meetings and, with the help of the researchers, formulated a first analysis of their action. Then the researchers submitted to them their own hypotheses and examined the way in which these were received – accepted, rejected or modified – in the course of long joint working sessions” (Touraine 2010:9).

“Solidarity” was found to be primarily a trade union and a workers’ movement, but it was more than this. It was a combination of three different types of the logic of action: the social or class logic, the national logic, and the democratic logic. This, however, was not the end of it. The Solidarity movement was a combination of a social movement (in the synchronic perspective) and a movement of liberalization of the society. Touraine and his collaborators concluded that “Solidarity” had to be analyzed as a total social movement. It was ‘total’ in the sense that it encompassed and incorporated national and democratic aspirations as well as those of a class. These, at least initially, were combined and inseparable. The concept of a “total social movement,” central to the analysis of “Solidarity,” had not appeared previously as a distinctive category in *The Voice and the Eye*. Touraine had used this term before in his book published in 1973, titled *Production de la société (The Self-Production of Society)*. However, these movements were seen as ‘total’ not in the sense that they incorporated the three components (types of logic) of class, nation, and democracy, but because they were said to have the capacity to encompass the three hierarchical action systems (the organizational level, the institutional level, and the level

of historicity), which are key to Touraine’s understanding of society and social relations in both *The Self-Production of Society* and *The Voice and the Eye*. The need to reformulate the concept of “total social movement” arose due to the fact that in *The Voice and the Eye* Touraine had not considered it possible that social movements could develop fully in the communist world. This shows that, for Touraine, the categories of analysis utilized by the sociological intervention could be evaluated and transformed (adopted) during the research process itself.

After the publication of the book about the Solidarity movement, the main conclusions (as well as the very method of sociological intervention) have been discussed and criticized. In a chapter titled “The Study of Solidarity and the Social Theory of Alain Touraine,” Luke Martell and Neil Stammers wrote: “Here we consider specific problems with the method which may have adversely affected the study of Solidarity. Our principal concern is that in Solidarity the authors combine the reworking of categories from *The Voice and the Eye* with sociological intervention, a method which stresses a role for researchers’ categories in furthering the goal of developing a progressive social movement. This, we feel, leads Touraine to bring in categories to define Solidarity which were predetermined. This leads to the underestimation of important dimensions not encompassed by the prior theoretical framework and not compatible with the intervention project” (Martell and Stammers 1996:138). Nevertheless, in their conclusion the authors stated that: “Despite our own criticisms, we feel that Solidarity will remain one of the most important studies of the early history of the movement because it succeeds in

representing the views of the Solidarity activists who participated with richness and depth. We have argued that the application of preconceived categories, combined with a desire and a commitment on the part of the authors to present Solidarity in a positive light, resulted in a failure to take account of the potential for neo-liberal and reactionary nationalist currents to develop. Yet it is to the credit of Touraine and his research team that the detailed nature of their findings allows us to apply the benefit of hindsight" (Martell and Stammers 1996:142).

### From the "Social Movement" to the "Social Experience": The Expansion of the Method into New Fields

Sociological intervention conducted with regard to the activists of the Solidarity Movement concluded the first phase of the application of the method. Then it was time for an attempt at assessing the results (CADIS 1984). Undoubtedly, the new method allowed for gathering a rich and absolutely unique material, which, in turn, facilitated the description of various aspects of the analyzed movements. In particular, it was now possible to recreate the language employed by the activists of a given movement. The dynamic language that was based on the attempt at recreating real social interactions (during open meetings with the interlocutors) allowed the researchers to distinguish not only different types of the "logics of action," but also the dynamics related to varying levels of social life, within which these interactions actually occurred. Therefore, due to the possibility to utilize the statements made by the activists, the description of the movement itself has become livelier and richer (at times even dramatic)

than in the case of reports based on interviews and analyses of documents.

Nevertheless, except for the case of the Polish movement, which Touraine acknowledged as being a "total social movement," all the other studies employing the new method have failed to isolate (and by no means exactly describe) the new social movement, which could be characteristic of the emerging post-industrial society. The attempts at distinguishing (during the conversation sessions) the logic of action at the level of general values and cultural orientations have not brought expected results. The majority of the surveyed respondents were at best able to reach the institutional level of analysis of social life by trying to define their actions in terms of a political movement.

This was happening at the time of changes in the political climate in France. In 1981, the candidate of the Left, the then leader of the French Socialist party, Francois Mitterrand, won the presidential elections for the first time in the history of the V Republic. The parliamentary elections also brought a victory for the broadly understood leftist camp. Hence, the political demand for a "new social movement" registered a significant decrease. Accordingly, the researchers still willing to employ the method of Sociological Intervention were faced with the fundamental question: What to examine in the situation of drastic weakening, or perhaps even the twilight, of new social movements which seemed to have been exhausted?

A collaborator of Touraine, François Dubet, developed a new interesting approach. The body of existing research led him to the following radical idea: perhaps the elements of a new social movement

should not be sought in conflict, struggle, or situations of contestation. Instead, one should research social phenomena or situations removed from these hot spots of life defined by mobilizations, fighting, protests, and contestation. By means of employing the method of SI with regard to the “spheres of exclusion” (i.e. young people living in the poorest neighborhoods, usually on the border of French cities), Dubet’s novel concept proved to revitalize the method and opened up a slew of new opportunities. It turned out that one could examine not only real examples of collective contestation actions, but also other social situations in which, at least theoretically, such actions should occur, but which instead are characterized by apathy, discouragement, and the lack of belief in the power of any collective actions.

Dubet’s new theoretical foundations were presented in 1987 in his book: *La Galère – jeunesensurvie (Hell: Youth in Survival)*, which immediately provoked heated debates. Many researchers questioned the real value of the expensive and very complicated method. “The Method of sociological intervention places the examined actors in a constrained situation /.../ and arbitrarily isolates a certain group of actors of whom one does not know much (among others, about their social and professional characteristics) and which is presupposed to have some form of representativeness. And on top, all that is combined with a peculiar “theoretical syncretism” which at best allows only to describe the values shared by the examined youth” (Briquet 1988:40). For others, however, employing the analytical formula of a ‘social movement’ (although in this case one termed it a “yearning for or craving for social movement”) for examining various “social experiences” (including the experiences of participat-

ing in various protests and contestation movements) has proved much inspiring.

There appeared a new group of researchers linked with the Paris Institute CADIS-EHESS. They undertook the examination of quite a range of social phenomena that were fairly distant from those researched before, and employed the method of sociological intervention. The research initially concerned spontaneous, ephemeral, and somewhat loosely organized collective mobilizations, such as the movement of French students protesting against attempts at introducing a selection system in the access to studies in 1986, or the protest of French nurses in 1988, when they demanded a significant increase in their salaries. In the years to follow, the research of Touraine’s disciples included issues such as racist behaviors, unemployment, and the social exclusion situations or school failures with regard to French students, which was also connected to chances of receiving government grants. In all these cases, the methodological procedure was in accord with the initial foundations of the sociological intervention: research teams consisting of several people; establishing groups of actors who “shared certain experiences”; inviting external interlocutors to the open group sessions’ attempts at formulating, together with participants of the surveys, shared categories of descriptions; analyses; and, finally, endeavors to perform self-analyses of a given experience. That being said, the aim of the final session of “conversion” was no longer about the surveyed group attempting to generate the logic or dynamics of action that would correspond with Social Movement (which falls into the category of “squeezing” the participants into the corset of the theory),

but, rather, about the effort to widen the range of the analyses so that the studies could include the whole society. To a smaller extent, it was also about searching for the elements of a social movement, but the main focus was to describe the condition of the post-modern society.

Undoubtedly, researchers of that generation would have found themselves very comfortable in their way of thinking and perceiving the role of a sociologist in today's society as presented by Marta Wyka in her book dedicated to Jan Strzelecki on social experience. As she writes,

The aim of this book is to present the category of 'experience' in such a way so that it becomes not only a notion but also a certain factuality and a way of being of a researcher. This passage or a link between what is 'theoretical' and what is 'practical' in our cognition may be arrived at through intentional making the category of 'experience' a real one. Hence experience takes on a quality of a tool of cognition, inseparably connected to the learning subject and therefore co-shaping the application of all other tools which are available today. There rises a question then which kinds of research procedures and how constructed should one aim at in order for the 'experience' – treated simultaneously as a value – to be preserved. (Wyka 1993:5)

### **The “Solidarity” Movement and the Reconstruction of Post-Communist Societies (1991-1995): Sociological Intervention in a New Context**

The question about what it is exactly that is being examined was posed by the authors of another am-

bitious research project initiated by Alain Touraine (and for which he managed to secure appropriate government funding) in the early 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet system, and which was to be conducted simultaneously in Poland and other countries of the former Soviet Bloc, including Russia itself. In the case of Poland, the question was: Should the sociological intervention concern the analysis of a disintegrating and 'once beautiful' social movement that “Solidarity” used to be, or should it try to describe various social experiences of people self-identifying (often emotionally) with the Solidarity Movement in the environment of much accelerated and somewhat chaotic liberal and democratic transformation?

For Touraine, the problem was how people in ex-communist countries (particularly in Poland) were able to reconstruct a democratic and liberal society. Could the Solidarity movement (after eight years of illegality) assume a constructive and leading role in this process? What happened with the three main types of logic that had been identified during the 1981 research? At the beginning of the 1990s, this question was quite important. Many of the “Solidarity” historical leaders thought that the creation of new political parties was not so urgent and that the Solidarity movement could play a decisive role (i.e. a role of an umbrella, sort of facilitating the general process of transition).

The research team was entirely new. From the French side, it was led by Marcin Frybes (whose pleasure it was to also participate in that historic research of 1981 in the capacity of an interpreter/translator) and Patrick Michel (a political scientist, the pupil of

Michel de Certeau, whose attitude towards the method was rather ambivalent). On the Polish side, the research was led by Aldona Jawłowska, who was a specialist in transformations in the sphere of culture; in the 1980s she visited CADIS several times and was more interested in the philosophical aspects of Touraine's ideas than in the method itself. The Polish team included Mirosława Grabowska, Tadeusz Szawiel, Wojciech Pawlik, Adam Mielczarek, Michał Kempny, Roman Gdul, and Anna Matuchniak. Matuchniak was the only person who had also participated in that historic research on the Solidarity movement in 1981; she published an important reflection on the Polish experiences with the methodology of sociological intervention (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1995). After the transformation of 1989, the vast majority of the 'historic crew' from 1981 abandoned a purely academic sociology in favor of journalism, business, consulting, or politics.

A few-days-long seminar, whose objective was to prepare new Polish researchers to apply the still unknown method of SI and to discuss the preliminary research hypotheses, took place in Warsaw in the fall of 1991 (with the support of the French Institute). All the sociologists who had participated in the research of 1981 and who did not intend to take part in the new one were also invited. The meeting was dominated by an intriguing debate between Touraine and Jadwiga Staniszkis, who made a strong impression on the French sociologist, and who adamantly argued that in the then current conditions the chances of finding authentic social actors in Poland (leaving aside the real social movements) were minimal. It was decided that three intervention groups would be initially formed (the first one

consisting of trade union activists, the second one including the so-called "producers of culture," and the third one composed of activists of various movements that were linked to the Church). Then, the researchers shall see what happens next. The union group was organized in the city of Płock while the other two in Warsaw (although many participants would commute from all over Poland). The aim of the intervention was to grasp or establish the possible continuity between the actions undertaken by these actors in the early 1990s and the Solidarity movement of 1981. The researchers were particularly interested in whether the three types of logic identified then (democratic, social, and national) had been for them a significant reference and, if so, in what way, and if talking about them allows for setting the perception in order and analysing the quickly changing reality. In the second stage of the research, three additional intervention groups were formed: two composed of private entrepreneurs (in Nidzica and Lubaczów) and one more in Warsaw, for which active women operating in various fields were invited (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1998).

The big problem that the researchers needed to overcome somehow was the strong instability of the intervention groups. Practically, with the notable exception of the union group and the group of "producers of culture," and, later the group of entrepreneurs in Lubaczów (where a constant, several-people core of the group participated in all the sessions), in all the remaining cases the participants would attend consecutive sessions irregularly, which greatly hindered the very research process. Many of them were so deeply engaged in some extremely important activities that – as stated by themselves –

they “didn't have time to think all of that through.” Hence, the groups were unable to build some sort of own and shared identity, or have the feeling that the research process was making some progress. However, the main problem was the difficulty in establishing a common language (shared categories) that would make it possible to discuss the surrounding reality. Some participants (and sociologists as well) employed the categories taken from the time of communism (e.g. “we” and “the authorities”), while others tried to use (albeit quite superficially) the notions that were typical of mature democratic societies. Generally speaking, some of the sessions were dominated by a “creative chaos,” which is something that the sociologists (having problems with self-identification themselves) did not always manage to overcome. Another problem was the proper choice of interlocutors. The union members wanted, above all, to meet with the important politicians of that time, especially those responsible for the initiated process of privatization (MPs Michał Boni and Jerzy Strzelecki, or Senator Andrzej Celiński), while the private entrepreneurs who were involved demanded meetings with various activists on a local level.

Another big issue was the inability of the sociologists to present a common analytical scheme that would be attractive and comprehensive for all participants. As stated by Aldona Jawłowska, “We were aware that as regards the then current social and political situation in our country, employing the terms like ‘social actor’ or ‘social movement’ in the sense attributed to them by Touraine, will not facilitate grasping the essence of new phenomena” (Jawłowska 2007:54). The above-mentioned difficul-

ties influenced the whole research process. Only in the case of the union group and one of the private entrepreneurs' groups, the sociologists managed to arrive at the situation of self-analysis during the closed sessions, which was based on constantly corrected, perfected, and changed analytical schemata. In both cases, however, the participants accepted the principles of Sociological Intervention, liberating themselves from temporary, everyday activities and conflicts, as they “willingly entered the game” of working on what happened within the group based on general schemes proposed by the sociologists. In order to clarify the situation, it should be added, however, that in the both cases the sociologists managed to gather and “lock up” the participants in the research groups in an isolated and secluded place (a resort) during the sessions planned for the whole weekend.

Generally speaking, the research revealed the extreme weakness and instability of the new social actors as well as the subordination of social actions to the dominant logic of politics and the economy. In none of the examined groups (with the exception of the union group), any reference to the Solidarity social movement was of significance. None of the groups even tried to combine and employ the three fundamental types of the logic of action, as was done by the Solidarity movement in 1981, which was proved by the research and which made for the uniqueness of the movement itself. All the groups agreed that the three kinds of logic were gradually drifting apart and that the conflict between them was unavoidable. In particular, the conflict between the logic of democracy and the logic of nationalism was more and more visible.

The deadlock between the 'Democratic and Liberal Poland' and the 'Nationalist and Catholic Poland' (particularly strongly noticeable at the meetings between Catholic activists and culture producers) appeared to be inevitable. No group was able to propose any way out of the possible confrontation. The outcomes were presented in a book published in France (Frybes and Michel 1996), which was later translated into Polish. The research into separate groups resulted also in a series of other compelling publications.

### **Other Applications of Sociological Intervention in the Post-Communist Poland**

The research on the disintegrating Solidarity movement and on the emerging framework of the new society (which, by definition of the adopted model of transformation, was to be both democratic and liberal) highlighted both the advantages and the shortcomings of employing the method of Sociological Intervention. First of all, it is an expensive and time-consuming method. It requires a lot of involvement not only from sociologists (who, after all, have their routine duties, such as lectures or classes), but, above all, also from the research participants. Rushing towards a very uncertain future of the today's hectic world, not many people can find time to participate in several multi-hour research sessions. Moreover, the lack of consistency of the group members makes the method itself not useful to sociologists, as then they cannot achieve the "group progression" (i.e. a slow transformation from the language of "giving evidence" to a more abstract and theoretical language).

The organizers of every single meeting faced this problem. At the beginning of 2008, the CADIS Institute (on the basis of the agreement with the Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe S.T.O. – the Civic Educational Association) began preparations to the research into the history and social identity of the movement, which was to be carried out with the employment of the social intervention method. Formally, the research had been commissioned by the Board of Directors of the S.T.O. The S.T.O. movement was initiated in the late 1980s and its main goal was to create new social schools that would be independent of the authorities. The movement made clear references to "Solidarity" (particularly in the sphere of education), but was formed independently of "Solidarity" (Mader 1988). The former one was one of the most intriguing social movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s as S.T.O. straddled two different eras in the history of Poland: the period of resistance and self-organization of the civic society of the 1980s, and the period of transformation and the rebuilding of organization and institutions of the new Polish state after the year 1989. The S.T.O. is an excellent example of how a contesting and protesting social movement can transform into a constructive and affirmative one, thus building a new social sphere in accordance with its system of values.

It should be stressed that the agreements reached at the Round Table, the 'June elections' and the establishment of the Tadeusz Mazowiecki government radically changed the context in which the S.T.O. evolved. One of the first decisions of the new Minister of Education, Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, was that such schools should be allowed. In addition, establishing a position of the special minister's

plenipotentiary for innovation in schools and for non-public education considerably facilitated the creation of this type of new schools. Hence, already in 1989 the local board of education gave their consent to the creation of 32 new schools. In the school year 1990/91, there were already 179 of them. Initially, social schooling existed mostly in bigger cities. As the interest in them kept growing, the year 1991/92 brought such schools to smaller localities. In the school year 2005/2006, more than 1000 non-public primary and secondary schools operated in Poland alongside some 1.7 thousand private high schools. Over 180,000 students attended them, which made for some 6% of all children who were subjected to mandatory education.

Twenty years after the emergence of the S.T.O., non-public schooling became an important segment of the Polish education system. The aim of the research was to analyze the experience of the people who were active in establishing non-public education, and particularly of those who worked for or in schools connected formally with the S.T.O. Both the teachers and the directors of such schools were part of the survey (and, occasionally, historical activists of the movement dating to the late 1980s), including parents and former students (still connected with the S.T.O.). The main research questions concerned the evolution of the movement within the period of twenty years and the possibilities of the movement's further evolution.

The research team consisted of two people (in some sessions also a third person participated, namely a secretary responsible for technical matters): the French-Polish sociologist from CADIS, Marcin Fry-

bes, and the experienced parliamentary expert in the Polish education and at the same time a school teacher, Marek Kunicki-Goldfinger. The researchers managed to organize four research groups: in Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, and Białystok. In spite of limited funding, and courtesy of the management of the S.T.O., they managed to take advantage of the S.T.O. delegates' convention in order to organize a joint meeting of all four groups. During the open sessions, the role of interlocutors was assumed by, among others, the representatives of local self-governments and governments, trade union representatives from education, the leaders of political parties, and the activists of other social initiatives different than the S.T.O. (both from education and outside of it). Also, at the initial stage of the research the people connected with the S.T.O. became the interlocutors of the groups. The results of the research were being reported on a specially created website ([www.badanie.sto.org.pl](http://www.badanie.sto.org.pl)).<sup>4</sup> The final report was presented at a special session during the S.T.O. convention in Jahranka. While the research was still ongoing, partial reports were being compiled and presented to the participants of particular sessions. It could be concluded that a relatively high representativeness of the S.T.O. movement participants was achieved.

The sociologists started the intervention (following a series of in-depth interviews and the analyses of available documents) on the basis of the following set of preliminary hypotheses (see below). Apart

<sup>4</sup> Overall, 77 people associated with S.T.O., representing 27 locations where S.T.O. schools existed, participated in the research alongside 30 guests and 3 outside consultants. Representatives of 57% of locations with S.T.O. schools (including all the major ones) took part in the research. Over 20% of operating presidents of S.T.O. groups and nearly 30% of S.T.O. school directors participated in the research.

from the purely historical dimension, the S.T.O. movement can be analyzed as a classical social movement and an example of an organized collective activity, which manifests on three fundamental levels of a sociological analysis:

- the movement of protesting and creating new organizations, namely social schools (organizational level –the principles of the system functioning),
- the movement of radical criticism that leads to the reform of the education system in Poland (institutional level – system standard),
- the movement being partially a component of the historical and social “Solidarity” movement of the years 1980-1989, and in the second phase being marked by actions leading to the building of the new civic society after the year 1989 (the level of historicity – system values).

The discussions conducted with the interlocutors during consecutive sessions resulted in the fairly quick formulation of elements which initially defined the identity of the S.T.O. movement. Basically, three different types of motivation ruling the commitment of separate individuals were distinguished. Teachers were the main social group initially engaged in the movement, and they constituted the most significant driving force behind it. It was within their professional group that the first concept and programs of non-public education were born. Parents formed the second important social group (some of them were also teachers). They were motivated by the desire to provide proper education

for their offspring. And, finally, the sense of civic duty was initially a significant motivating force. The majority of the S.T.O. activists were somehow connected with the union-civic movement, which was what the underground “Solidarity” was at that time. “Their determination sprang from the deep involvement of some in the Solidarity movement and active resistance in the 1980s against martial law. These were the same people who in the year 1980 were establishing Solidarity structures and who in the dark period of martial law printed leaflets, published underground books and political journals, supported the oppressed and were building solidarity and ‘Solidarity.’ They were the ones who established the Civic Educational Association S.T.O.” (Starzyński 2005:16).

The group members fairly naturally accepted the proposed by the sociologists schemata of the analysis of the movement as a collective social action, simultaneously referring to the three levels (or dimensions) of social life. The process of describing and defining separate historical stages of the movement’s evolution went quite smoothly. With the help of the sociologists, the research participants identified three fundamental types of the logic of action, calling them, respectively: a) civic logic, b) parental logic, and c) teachers’ logic. At the initial stage, these types of logic were strongly connected and intertwined, which was facilitated by the fact that the opponent was relatively easily defined as a dysfunctional and hypocritical communist state. However, moderately soon the kinds of logic began drifting apart, sometimes even contradicting one another. Moreover, new conflict areas emerged.

There occurred a sharp conflict between the civic and the parental dynamics. As one of the group participant reminisced,

S.T.O. schools went through this typical stage of conflict: When the school was founded, there was much enthusiasm and conviction we should overcome all problems. Once the school actually existed and full success has been registered, there was no new goal and chaos reigned supreme. Someone would put forward a slogan: Since we have the school already, what do we need the association for? The association has done its bit and it's no longer needed. And a school cannot exist without the ruling organ. /.../ If the director was good and the president as well, they manage to pacify the people and the school functioned well. (Frybes and Kunicki-Goldfinger 2008:34)

A similar type of a conflict started emerging between the logic of teachers and the logic of parents, which was, among other things, linked with the changes within the social environment from which students would come. Initially, social schools were selected by parents who belonged to the middle class. With time, the clientele of these schools started changing: firstly, because of the pauperization of the former middle class (the parents were no longer able to afford the tuition) and, later, in connection with the growing position of new financial and economic elites as well as groups of small businesses and entrepreneurs. Their expectations toward non-public schools (often perceived simply as private schools) seemed more and more often quite different or, simply, dramatically antithetical to the initial assumptions.

In some groups, there was also a clear conflict visible between those who still tried "to be a social movement," i.e. influence not only the general system of education, but even the social and political life, and those who saw the current day and the future for the S.T.O. in strictly corporate and professional categories (such an attitude was especially promoted by those members of research groups who at that time, or previously, had held some sort of managerial positions). All of them exhibited a sort of "nostalgia for the social movement," namely for the formula of the movement which was dominant in the first period of its existence. Some tried to find ways how to rebuild it (with the assistance of the sociologists), while others maintained that this "chapter has been closed" and attempted to define the current conditions allowing for a better position of the S.T.O. in the free-market society. The lack of funding as well as the diminishing interest in further continuation of the research did not allow the sociologists to develop the research.

Growing conflicts between various types of the movement dynamics were simply unavoidable. Social, economic, and civilizational changes connected with the transformation brought about the accelerated evolution of the separate dynamics of the movement. Their primal definitions had lost their meanings when confronted with the entirely new character of the surrounding reality, namely a market-oriented one. Within the same dynamics, there appeared at times dramatic tensions. School and education stopped being core values and became a commodity. The teachers' dynamics, which was initially about creating alternative schools and ambitious though pupil-friendly programs of

education, faced a new dilemma, namely whether to create a “good school” from the point of view of values and contents of teaching, or to be a “good school” in terms of various rankings. A similar dilemma arose with regard to the parental dynamics: Should we educate our children so that they can become conscious and responsible citizens, or are they simply going to be skillful participants of the market game? Even the very civic dynamics posed the necessity of dramatic choices for those who wished to preserve and cultivate the established strong social bonds and those who still wanted an active participation in public life, which inevitably led to the very movement being made political.

The internal diversification of the movement was also a result of the school’s locality, namely whether it functioned in a big city or in a smaller provincial place. “There are schools in Poland which play a culture-forming role. In smaller towns and in the countryside such centers are truly culture-forming but in Warsaw, or whenever students have different access to knowledge, school remains not so attractive. And in spite of our utmost efforts – the students simply have different sources to gain knowledge” (Frybes and Kunicki-Goldfinger 2008:16). Hence, the role and place of the school in a local community is naturally different depending on the place, and so are the problems and challenges faced by the S.T.O. activists. As a long-time director of an S.T.O. school in a small town stated, “In a small local community, school will always remain important. And it does not matter whether it is private, public, self-government-ruled, church-affiliated or any other. It is so because in a local and small community school’s role is completely different than in a big city. And it

is fact which has to be accepted” (Frybes and Kunicki-Goldfinger 2008:15). In spite of several attempts of the sociologists to include this thread into discussions during the final closed sessions, the group from Warsaw exhibited no desire to talk about this subject. The members of the ‘elite’ group from the capital simply failed to see that the attempts at defining a new identity of the S.T.O. movement required the inclusion of the full richness of experiences within the movement itself. The sociologists were particularly surprised by the fact that the statements of people from smaller towns had frequently involved the issue of ‘safety’ as an important element of the S.T.O. schools’ identity, while that theme seemed to be practically non-existent in the case of schools from Warsaw or Kraków.<sup>5</sup>

The evolution of the S.T.O. is quite similar to other transformations of civic movements, which were born out of the rubble of the great social movement of “Solidarity.” In spite of its indubitable success, the S.T.O. movement was, with time, transforming inevitably into an effective organization, representing the interests of certain groups, which is a natural and necessary element of the rebuilding of a civic society.

Toward the end of the 1980s, some might have thought that the collapse of the communist system would lead to the impetuous and accelerated emergence of a new order in the socio-economic sphere, which would involve various ‘social movements’ dealing with these problems. The process of trans-

<sup>5</sup> The conclusions from this research were published in “Edukacja i Dialog,” Vol. 9/2009. See: [http://www.eid.edu.pl/archiwum/2009,261/czerwiec,327/dodatek,342/sto\\_jako\\_ruch\\_spoleczny,2254.html](http://www.eid.edu.pl/archiwum/2009,261/czerwiec,327/dodatek,342/sto_jako_ruch_spoleczny,2254.html)

formation from 'communism' to 'capitalism', from 'centrally controlled economy' to the 'free-market' one, and from the 'economy based on state property' to the 'economy based on private property' seemed to be absolutely paramount. Somewhere on the way, democratic mechanisms were to consolidate. It was expected that social energies generated by the process would play the main role.

Instead, however, the accelerated introduction of free-market mechanisms provoked the crisis of social movements. The previously discussed research conducted in Poland in the years 1992-1995 clearly evidenced the inevitable process of the burning out and the integral disaggregation of the Solidarity movement. The trade union movement, which once constituted the heart of "Solidarity," became much weaker due to the drastic liberal economic reform and the inevitable politicization, the symbol of which was the emergence and the eventual assumption of power by the political body called 'Ruch Społeczny AWS' (Solidarity Electoral Action) in the second half of the 1990s. The three types of the logic of action that used to form the core of the Polish movement, separated irrevocably. It is worth acknowledging that the historic victory of "Solidarity," which brought about the collapse of communism, also eventually brought about the ultimate demise of the movement itself. At the same time, the context of the accelerated transformation, which included all spheres of social life, had never created conducive conditions for the emergence of new social movements. The old forms of social identity suddenly became inadequate and the 'fluid' and much unstable character of the new reality hindered greatly the forming of new identities, and, as

a consequence, the emergence of new social actors (Frybes and Michel 2000).

Given the conditions, should there be a demand in Poland for employing the method of sociological intervention?<sup>6</sup> The answer seems to be affirmative; even more so as the changes occurring in the world of politics for the last few years now more than ever provoke various forms of civic protests (women's movements, rallies, and other demonstrations undertaken by the followers of the 'KOD' – the Committee for the Defence of Democracy on the one hand, and student strikes at universities on the other). The method of Sociological Intervention (or its selected elements) has been successfully employed in various countries across the world (Belgium, Canada, Chile...). In Poland, apart from the above-discussed research, it has been used several times in recent years.

After all, the memory of the research on "Solidarity" is still very much alive. In the early 2000s, a seminar on researching contemporary social movements used to be offered initially at the University of Warsaw and, later, at Collegium Civitas (Frybes and Kuczyński 2002). There appeared new groups that wished to continue the experience and research orientation of the French sociologists. Thus, ZARS (Zespół Analiz

<sup>6</sup> The author wishes to state that, contrary to some opinions circulating among Polish sociologists, employing the method of Sociological Intervention does not require purchasing any license or special permission in writing from Alain Touraine himself. Every adventurous researcher is allowed to try and use this method. It should be acknowledged, however, that it is complicated, costly, and time-consuming indeed, and requires a specific set of predispositions on the researcher's part. Therefore, it is advisable to contact Touraine himself or, alternatively, the newly established association "CADIS International" in Paris, which groups the majority of researchers from all over the world who have had the pleasure of conducting studies using the method of Sociological Intervention.

Ruchów Społecznych – the Social Movements Research Team) was formed as well as the Research Center on “Solidarity” and new social movements at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw. In 2012, the team organized by Paweł Kuczyński conducted an interesting research that employed some elements of Touraine’s method with regard to the ephemeral ACTA movement. This was followed by a report, in the introduction to which the authors wrote: “The Study ACTA Citizens is not a chronicle of the events /.../ but a report on a very interesting process occurring in front of our eyes and with our participation. It is a result of a somewhat spontaneous and therefore possibly imperfect undertaking which we have conducted employing the method of the so-called sociological intervention which is a much original and seldom practiced sociological research method...” (Kuczyński, Jurczyszyn and Rakusa-Suszczewski 2014:3). In 2012, a special issue of the quarterly *Animacje życia publicznego* was devoted to social movements in Touraineian perspective.<sup>7</sup>

Other research referencing this method was conducted in 2010 by a team led by Ireneusz Krzemiński (Krzemiński 2010) as part of the large project titled “The Experience and Memory of ‘Solidarity.’” As a result of all this, a fascinating work has been created; work that was an attempt at investigating and describing the Solidarity Movement sociologically. It was based on a national survey performed on a sample of 1,800 individuals, several hundred in-depth interviews, as well as ten focus groups involving “Solidarity” activists from Warsaw, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Lublin, Katowice, Os-

trowiec Świętokrzyski, Starachowice, Skarżysko Kamienna, Poznań, and Wrocław. However, it was the research implemented by Professor Ireneusz Krzemiński’s team in 2016 that proved the most revealing. The assumption behind this research was to bring back together and survey those individuals who had participated in the 1981 historic research. The prominent researcher decided to track down the members of the old research groups and reiterate the research with the use of the sociological intervention method. The purpose of the intervention was to juxtapose the memory and experience of the Movement from over 30 years ago with the transformation of the Polish society after the year 1989. In particular, it was interesting to study whether the participation in the research taught its participants any lesson, which was done in compliance with the very theory of ‘permanent sociology’. The researchers were unable to reach every individual, while several others refused to participate. Eventually, 14 participants in Warsaw, Szczecin, Gdańsk and Wrocław (out of the original 56 in the year 1981) took part in the ‘repeated intervention.’ Simultaneously, the above-mentioned Center that studied “Solidarity” and other social movements implemented a research project, whose focus was on the Solidarity of Individual Farmers’ Movement. The team led by Ireneusz Krzemiński involved: Marcin Józko, Łukasz Jurczyszyn, Krzysztof Martyniak, Wojciech Ogrodnik, Dominik Wasilewski, and Ruta Śpiewak

The above examples demonstrate that the method of sociological intervention, though costly and laborious, as well as one requiring increased commitment from sociologists, continues to be relatively popular with Polish sociologists.

<sup>7</sup> See: [https://www.civitas.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AZP\\_07\\_2\\_7\\_2012.pdf](https://www.civitas.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AZP_07_2_7_2012.pdf).

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## Interwencjonizm socjologiczny «a la polonaise»: metoda Alaina Touraine w kontekście polskim

**Abstrakt:** W 1981 roku francuski socjolog (wraz z grupą młodych polskich socjologów prowadzonych przez weterana polskiej socjologii – Jana Strzeleckiego) przeprowadził znane badania nad ruchem „Solidarność”, stosując nową i specyficzną metodę badawczą zwaną „interwencją socjologiczną”. Po raz pierwszy polscy socjologowie (wychowani w specyficznym klimacie łączącym tradycje marksistowskie i pozytywistyczne) mieli okazję prowadzić badania przy użyciu tego typu „mocnej” metody jakościowej. Ich reakcje były mieszane i raczej ostrożne. Tym niemniej, od tego czasu metoda ta była kilkakrotnie stosowana przez polskich badaczy. Ideą artykułu jest próba podsumowania tych doświadczeń.

**Słowa kluczowe:** interwencja socjologiczna, Touraine, Polska, Francja, Solidarność, ruch społeczny, metody jakościowe