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From a social issue to an ecological issue. A glance at the ongoing transformation of the energy model in Europe from a sociological perspective

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A social issue is a bundle of social problems – co-occurring, interlinked problems that cannot be solved individually, but only systemically, through a fundamental reformulation of state policies.¹ In the language of programming public actions, this is “a matter to be dealt with of significant political importance.”² Such a social issue was the workers’ issue that appeared in Europe in the second half of the 19th century. The issue was triggered by a technological and organisational change in the production system, referred to as the Industrial Revolution: manufactories where production was based on manual labour were replaced by factories where production was carried out using steam engines.³ An important fact, especially when viewed from today’s perspective, is that the energy used by steam machines was mainly generated by burning coal. Thus, the revolution in the technology of mass production of material goods, initiated in European industrial centres, set in motion

1 M. Rymsza, *Polityka społeczna wobec kwestii społecznej w XXI wieku*, [in:] *Kwestia społeczna u progu XXI wieku*, eds. E. Giermanowska, M. Raclaw, M. Rymsza, Warszawa 2015, p. 31.

2 B. Rysz-Kowalczyk, *Teoria kwestii i problemów społecznych*, [in:] *Polityka społeczna*, eds. G. Fir-lit-Fesnak, J. Męcina, Warszawa 2018, p. 161.

3 See: R. Mishra, *Society and Social Policy. Theories and Practice of Welfare*, London 1982, pp. 39-49.

systemic changes in two fields: (1) the organisation of the labour market and (2) the exploitation of fossil fuels.

Key in the first field proved to be the displacement in industrial centres of hired labour requiring craft skills by simple labour used in machine production. Steam engines made it possible to produce more, faster and at lower cost. In particular, the cost of hired labour was reduced, as labour to operate the machines did not require qualifications, and the urbanisation process accompanying industrialisation ensured a permanent surplus of unskilled labour in the labour markets of the industrial centres.

The negative side effects in the second field remained unrecognised for a long time and were therefore practically absent from the debate on possible ways to solve the workers' question. Harmful to health and a nuisance in daily life, smog in the 19th-century industrial centres where coal was mined and burned did not become an important component of the social issue of the time. Meanwhile, pollution and environmental contamination increased with the growing scale of industrial production and energy consumption. At the same time, steam engines began to be used not only in industrial production but also in the process of coal extraction, and coal itself was also used for heating homes. When the growing extraction of coal (hard coal and lignite) began to be accompanied by the massive extraction and consumption of oil and its derivatives as a liquid energy resource, it was already possible to speak of a comprehensive strategy of industrial development on a global scale based on fossil fuel energy. The negative environmental and human health effects of fossil fuel extraction and consumption were only recognised as a global social problem at the end of the 20th century. This problem has become an important component of the 21st-century environmental issue.⁴

The workers' question, which attempts to address a century earlier, gave rise to the modern social policies of developed countries, but did not include ecological aspects. At the centre of the debate on the negative social effects of the 19th-century industrial revolution were the working conditions and living standards of hired workers and their families. It was recognised that the drastically low wages of unskilled workers, allowing only for the reproduction of the ability to provide work but no longer enabling the worker to support the family, led to the mass employment of women and children in the factories.

4 M. Popkiewicz, *Rewolucja energetyczna. Ale po co?*, Katowice 21015, pp. 14-46.

Employers, in accordance with the laissez-faire ideology,⁵ that had prevailed since the first half of the 19th century, had no obligations towards the workers they employed other than the payment of wages; labour was simply a commodity purchased by them on the free market in a situation where there was a significant surplus of labour supply over labour demand. There were no norms governing labour relations; workers were not only not allowed to go on strike, but also not allowed to unionise or bargain collectively with their employers.

Two alternative approaches to solving the workers' question have emerged in Europe: (i) revolutionary and (ii) evolutionary. Those in favour of the revolutionary path first turned against steam engines as a source of workers' misery. When it became clear that it was impossible to deviate from the path of technological development, as the new technologies brought a number of obvious advantages in addition to problems, private employers were seen as the source of the exploitation of the working masses. The solution, therefore, was to abolish private ownership of the means of production by means of a systemic revolution. The defeat of the revolutionary strategy in Western Europe led to a withering of the appeal of Marxist ideology, which was unable to develop a coherent position towards the emerging welfare states that, by providing social security for working people, weakened the carrying capacity of the revolutionary strategy.⁶

The evolutionary approach pointed to the need to civilise industrial relations by regulating the functioning of the wage labour market and launching social protection programmes for workers losing their earning capacity. Criticism of early industrial relations was conducted in three aspects: (i) ethical, (ii) in terms of the dysfunctionality of the organisation of collective order and (iii) on macroeconomic grounds. Reform efforts resulted in the creation of two systemic solutions: collective labour relations and employee social security. It was these two systemic solutions that became the foundations of the welfare state.⁷

An important voice in the ethical and functional critique of early industrial relations was that of the Catholic Church, particularly the encyclical *Rerum*

5 See: D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, London 1984, pp. 99-123.

6 See: V. George., P. Wilding, *Welfare and Ideology*, New York 1994, pp. 102-129.

7 P. Flora, J. Alber, *Modernization, Democratization, and Development of Welfare States in Western Europe*, [in:] *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*, eds. P. Flora, A. Heidenheimer, New Brunswick. 1981, pp. 37-80, especially the Figure 2.2, p. 42.

Novarum.⁸ In it, Pope Leo XIII spoke out against the revolutionary strategy and the abolition of private property, but at the same time pointed to the tasks of the state as an intermediate employer in solving the workers' question, including the need to realise the concept of a just wage as an income enabling the wage-earner to support his family and the need for dialogue between employers and workers, using the potential for self-organisation of working people.

In turn, in economist circles, the dysfunctionality of an economic model based on a combination of low wages and mass production, where the supply of manufactured goods significantly exceeds domestic market demand, was pointed out. This trend of reflection led to the creation of the Keynesian school of economics, which appreciates the intervention of the state in the play of market forces by stimulating demand and consumption, including controlling the purchasing power of wage earners.⁹

It is not the place here to discuss the successive stages in the development of European social policy after the Industrial Revolution, nor to characterise the components of modern welfare states as the final 'products' of policies to address the 19th-century social question.¹⁰ For the reflections carried out here, it is crucial to highlight the evolutionary nature of the systemic reforms carried out and to agree on the perspectives: ethical, functional, and economic in constructing the foundations of European welfare states. This, in turn, resulted in a decades-long political consensus in Europe around the basic assumptions of the concept of welfare states.¹¹

The main postulate of this article is that the contemporary ecological issue should be addressed in an evolutionary way, with a reconciliation of ethical, economic and functional perspectives, and by building a political consensus that is as sustainable as possible. The juxtaposition of evolutionary and revolutionary strategies is not particularly resonant today – three decades after the collapse of communism in Europe. But let us note that leaving communism as a systemic change brought about a similar (though not as sharp) list of alternative approaches to programming systemic change as at the turn of

8 Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*. *Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor*, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

9 J. W. Nevile, *Keynesianism*, [in:] *International Encyclopedia of Social Policy*, eds. T. Fitzpatrick et al., London 2010, pp. 720–722.

10 See: M. Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, London 1968; D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*.

11 M. Sullivan, *The Politics of Social Policy*, New York 1992; T. H. Marshall, *Social Policy*, London 1975.

the 19th and 20th centuries. They are referred to in the literature as transition (an approach closer to the revolutionary strategy) and transformation (an approach closer to the evolutionary strategy).

The Polish experience of political change should be taken into account when programming the change of the national energy model. It is worth bearing in mind that the adoption of the transformation path, both in Poland and on a European scale, will allow for maintaining continuity between the policy of solving the 19th-century social issue and the policy of solving the contemporary ecological issue.¹²

Transformation and transition as two approaches to the process of systemic change

Transition is a systemic change understood as a transition from system A to system B, i.e. a change involving the introduction in a given country of legal and institutional solutions characteristic of system B in place of the solutions functioning before the change under system A. Transformation is a systemic change understood as the transformation of solutions functioning in a given country under system A into solutions that meet the criteria applicable in system B.¹³ A real systemic change – for example, of the political system of a particular country or the model of energy production and consumption – is usually a political, socio-economic process, which includes elements of both transition and transformation. Transition and transformation are model approaches to systemic change, i.e. ideal types as understood by Max Weber.¹⁴

The ideal type, as Weber emphasized, is created by the researcher simultaneously enhancing the features considered crucial for the analysed phenomenon or process and marginalising those features that seem unimportant. For Weber, the ideal type is an analytical tool. In order to better understand the essence of the studied phenomenon (or process), it is worth comparing it with the ideal type as a pure type, whose key elements and the relationships between them are clearly visible (purified, as it were), and thus understandable.

12 J. Auleytner, *Polityka społeczna, czyli ujarzmianie chaosu socjalnego*, Warszawa 2002, p. 62.

13 K. Gadowska, M. Rymsza, *Od socjologii transformacji do socjologii sfery publicznej. Nowe możliwości syntezy wiedzy o zmianie systemowej*, „Studia Socjologiczne” 2017, no 4, pp. 19–23.

14 M. Weber, *Obiektywność poznania w naukach społecznych*, przeł. M. Skweciński, [in:] *Problemy socjologii wiedzy*, eds. A. Chmielewski et al., Warszawa 1985, pp. 80–93.

However, Weber pointed out that in an analogous way (but for a different purpose), it is possible to construct normative models as not tools for scientific analysis, but patterns for designing practical solutions.¹⁵ The difference here is that in the model types, the features that are not so much characteristic as desired are emphasised and intensified. For Weber, the construction of model types was no longer an academic pursuit, but a social practice. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasising that the procedures for constructing ideal types as analytical tools and normative models are similar; what is an objective characteristic for one specialist may turn out to be a desirable feature for another.

The programming of public action is a sphere of social practice. A practice entrusted not only to decision-makers-practitioners, i.e. politicians (decision-makers elected by citizens and controlled by public opinion) and public servants (decision-makers from the apolitical civil service corps), but also, to a large extent, to experts with scientific analytical and research skills.¹⁶ As a result, within the framework of analysing and programming public action, ideal types and normative models are often mixed: value judgements from the world of social practice are transferred to scientific analysis, and practical solutions are formulated according to the assumptions of certain ideal types. Practices of the first type can be described as the ideologisation of scientific analysis, and practices of the second type are examples of theoretical doctrinairism.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that group interests play an important role in public decision-making processes,¹⁷ which stakeholders seek to legitimise, among other things, by invoking the corresponding ideal types. Moreover, by using certain elements of ideal types, specific vested interests can be legitimised (intentionally or unintentionally). In other words, specific models, paradigms, approaches, concepts – both analytical (ideal types) and design-related (normative models) – usually turn out to be more than just analytical-design tools. It is quite obvious that in order to achieve a certain goal in the construction of public policies, we try to select the right tools. It is less obvious, however, that the tools used, both at the stage of programming and implementation, always reformat the aims of these policies

15 M. Weber, *Obiektywność poznania w naukach społecznych*, p. 87.

16 A. Zybala, *Polityki publiczne. Doświadczenia w tworzeniu i wykonywaniu programów publicznych w Polsce i w innych krajach*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 293-322.

17 See: D. Milczarek-Andrzejewska, P. Tłaczała, *Analiza grup interesu*, [in:] *Teoria wyboru publicznego. Główne nurty i zastosowania*, ed. J. Wilkin, Warszawa 2012, pp. 196-220.

to some extent. In other words, the relationship between the aims and tools of public policies is two-way, not one-way.

This interdependence is worth bearing in mind when juxtaposing two approaches to systemic change: change understood as a transition from system A to system B, and change understood as the transformation of system A into system B. It is important to be aware of how the two approaches differ and how each approach translates into social practice: not only in understanding the systemic change processes taking place but also in actively profiling them. We will consider this using the example of the systemic change implemented in Poland in the 1990s (cf. Table 1).

Firstly, the change of the state system, both in the paradigm of transition and in the paradigm of transformation, is a process spread over time. This process is not only concerned with making formal and legal changes (although it is necessary to have time to prepare these as well), but also with changes at the level of the functioning of the institutions of the public sphere, bureaucratic pragmatics, behaviour of collective actors, etc. We note, however, that the **transformation paradigm** is characterised by greater decision-making 'patience' in this aspect, while in the **transition model** there is a tendency to accelerate changes, to apply – as in the case of the marketisation of the Polish economy – reforms of a 'shock therapy' nature.¹⁸

Secondly, the **transition paradigm** exposes the exogenous (external) conditions of systemic change. In this perspective, communism collapsed as a macro-system on an international scale: the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union collapsed and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were given the opportunity to make systemic change, understood as the introduction at home of systemic solutions applied in Western European countries. Here, systemic change is treated as an adaptation of countries from a specific region to changes associated with globalisation and remains in line with the strong market and soft-state model outlined in the 1990s by the World Bank.¹⁹ In contrast, the **transformation model** exposes endogenous (internal) conditions. It was we, the Polish society, who rejected communism: first through mass participation in the Solidarity movement, which in 1980-1981

18 See: S. Gomułka i T. Kowalik (wybór), *Transformacja polska. Dokumenty i analizy 1990*, Warszawa 2011.

19 *From Plan to Market. World Development Report 1996*, World Bank, New York 1996; *The State in a Changing World. World Development Report 1997*, World Bank, Washington DC 1997.

disturbed the systemic foundations of the People's Republic of Poland,²⁰ and then by delegitimising the communist authorities in the plebiscite parliamentary elections of 4 June 1989²¹ (the Berlin Wall, it is worth remembering, was dismantled five months later.) The Round Table talks as an agreement of the national elites also fit into the logic of transformation.²² On the other hand, in the model of transition, the so-called Washington Consensus, encompassing agreements on the scope and form of support for the systemic change in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe by supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, turns out to be important.²³

Thirdly, in the **transition model**, modernisation has the character of a largely imitative development, involving the adoption of solutions founded in advanced welfare states, with elements of adaptation to local circumstances.²⁴ It is the developed countries that share their economic know-how in exchange for more or less privileged access to new markets; it is they who define what political democracy and civil society are (and are not.) The assistance provided to countries in transition is significant on their part, but the lack of partnership is also significant.²⁵ In the critical current, such aid and development practices are even referred to as the neo-colonial approach.²⁶ In the **transformation model**, the state in the process of systemic change also benefits from external support, but it relies more on domestic resources and its own know-how in the reforms carried out, both the 'old' know-how (which is not completely discarded) and the know-how accumulated from the transformation experience.²⁷ An example of the application of the transition approach in a way that is close to the pure transition model can be found in Estonia, and in a way that is close to the pure transformation model in Slovenia.

20 J. Holzer, *Solidarność 1980-1981. Geneza i historia*, Paryż 1984.

21 A. Dudek, *Historia polityczna Polski 1989-2012*, Karków 2013, pp. 33-46.

22 A. Dudek, *Historia polityczna Polski*, pp. 19-33.

23 See: Z. Ferge, *Welfare and 'ill-fare' systems in Central-Eastern Europe*, [in:] *Globalization and European Welfare States*, eds. R. Sykes et al., Basingstoke 2001.

24 A. Lubbe, *Transformacja, modernizacja, czy po prostu normalizacja? Wybory modelu gospodarki polskiej po 1989 roku*, [in:] *Modernizacja Polski. Struktury. Agencje. Instytucje*, ed. W. Morawski, Warszawa 2010, pp. 62-64.

25 W. Kieżun, *Patologia transformacji*, Warszawa 2013.

26 See: K. Górniak, *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie w Polsce – spojrzenie postkolonialne*, „Trzeci Sektor” 2014, no. 1 (32), pp. 17-29.

27 M. Rymśza, *Aktywizacja w polityce społecznej. W stronę rekonstrukcji europejskich "welfare states"?*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 205-220.

Fourthly, the political costs of systemic change carried out in the rapid **transition formula** are significantly lower than the political costs of systemic change in the logic of a protracted **transformation**;²⁸ while, counted in total, the social costs of shock therapy applied in the **transition model** turn out to be significantly higher.²⁹ “Step-by-step” reforms, implemented as part of the strategy of systemic change, where the starting point is known (rejection of communism), but the target solutions emerge in the course of the reforms, being, as it were, the culmination of the transformations carried out,³⁰ allow these costs to be significantly reduced.

Table 1. System change in the transition model and in the transformation model

Differentiation criteria	Transition paradigm	Transformation paradigm
Determinants of systemic change	crucial importance of external factors	key self-effort and responsibility
Course of change	as rapid as possible – shock therapies	spread over time – step-by-step reforms
Costs of reforms	political – limited, social – high	political – high, social – limited
Development factors	resources and know-how mainly external	external support using own resources
Development strategy	Diffusion-polarisation strategy: investments concentrated in major centres as development locomotives	more territorially balanced development, using own dispersed resources
Limits to modernisation	traps of dependent (imitative) development	influence of the forces defending the old status quo

Source: Own analysis.

Fifthly, the **transition model** is dominated by a diffusion-polarisation development strategy, where the carriers of change are the so-called growth centres (primarily the largest urban agglomerations)³¹ as recipients of

²⁸ See: L. Balcerowicz, *Wolność i rozwój*, Kraków 1995, pp. 317-374.

²⁹ G. W. Kołodko, *Transformacja polskiej gospodarki. Sukces czy porażka?*, Warszawa 1992; P. Szotompka, *Trauma wielkiej zmiany. Społeczne koszty transformacji*, Warszawa 2000.

³⁰ See: M. Rymsza, *Urynkowanie państwa czy uspołecznienie rynku? Kwestia socjalna w Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie ubezpieczeń społecznych*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 99-102.

³¹ *Polska 2030. Trzecia Fala Nowoczesności. Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju*, Ministerstwo Administracji i Cyfryzacji, Warszawa 2013.

transferred know-how and areas of cumulative investment. In the **transformation model**, development is more territorially balanced, as it makes greater use of dispersed own resources.³²

Sixthly, in the **transition model**, development constraints are related to the dependent development trap: the recipient country does not receive the latest know-how in order not to become a competitor to the countries supporting it in the modernisation process.³³ In the **transformation model**, on the other hand, the inhibiting factors are the forces and defence mechanisms of the old status quo.³⁴

The differences between the systemic change understood as a transition and the systemic change understood as a transformation, presented in Table 1 and briefly characterised, are not an exhaustive discussion of the essential assumptions of each of the models (as ideal type and normative model at the same time) and the differences between them. They are, however, sufficient to capture the game of macro-interests that accompanies a regime change – from totalitarian communism (as the aforementioned system A), where the public sphere is totally controlled by the state, the economy is centrally controlled, and there is no space for social self-organisation, to liberal democracy (as system B), which is characterised by the triad: political democracy, free market economy, and civil society.

To put it briefly, in the transition model: (1) systemic change occurs faster, (2) the actor in the process of change receives a lot of external support, but (3) on terms favourable to the supporting actors; thus, (4) the implementation of systemic change does not make the supported actor an equal partner, because in the logic of imitative development adopted here as dependent development, the modernised country remains “two steps” behind the developed countries. In contrast, in the transformation model: (1) systemic change proceeds more slowly, (2) reforms are much more strongly exposed to the defensive mechanisms of the old order, but at the same time (3) although external support

32 See: A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York 1999; A. Matysiak, M. Raftowicz-Filipkiewicz, *Wpływ procesów endogenicznych na rozwój zrównoważony*, „Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach” 2017, no. 311.

33 See: *Autostrady i bezdroża polskiej modernizacji* (Editorial discussion between A. Giza-Poleszczuk, P. Koryś, A. Leszczyński and Z. Nosowski, M. Rymsza), „Więź” 2013, no. 2 (652), pp. 39-53.

34 L. Balcerowicz, *Wolność i rozwój*.

is used, it is easier here not to remain in the logic of dependent modernisation and thus (4) gradually develop one's own pro-development know-how.

As Zsuzsa Ferge argues,³⁵ in the reflections of Western analysts the systemic change taking place at the turn of the century in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (including Poland) appeared to be a change of a transitional nature.³⁶ It is equally understandable that Polish experts developed a transformational paradigm.³⁷ The theory of transformation is an important, though not fully explored, contribution of contemporary Polish sociologists and political scientists to the development of applied social sciences.³⁸

It is worth noting that in the reflections of Western academics, under the influence of empirical data on the fate of systemic reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, the "edge" of the transition formula has become blunted. There has been a growing awareness of the high social costs of shock therapy for national economies and the need to include an 'intermediate stage' in the transition from communism to democracy, referred to as the post-communist model; and the gradual transition, as so understood, came closer to the transformation formula.³⁹ The questioning of the shock therapy model by its co-creator Jeffrey Sachs⁴⁰ echoed loudly. Also significant was the appreciation of the role of the state and the public sector vis-à-vis the play of market forces by Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and one of the most globally influential US economists, following the end of his work with the World Bank,⁴¹ ultimately followed by a change in the Bank's own policy in supporting the development of countries in transition by valuing the role of endogenous development

35 Z. Ferge, *Welfare and 'ill-fare' systems in Central-Eastern Europe*.

36 See: T. Fitzpatrick, *Transitional Economies*, [in:] *International Encyclopedia of Social Policy*, op. cit., pp. 1419-1421; *Welfare States in Transition. National Adaptations in Global Economies*, ed. G. Esping-Andersen, London 1996; *Societies in Transition: East-Central Europe Today*, eds. S. Ringen, C. Wallace, Aldershot 1994.

37 See: E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Rozpad połowiczny. Szkice z socjologii transformacji ustrojowej*, Warszawa 1991; J. Staniszkis, *W poszukiwaniu paradygmatu transformacji*, Warszawa 1994; A. Sulek, J. Styk, I. Machaj (wybór i opracowanie), *Ludzie i instytucje. Stawianie się ładu społecznego*, vol. 1, Lublin 1995; I. Krzemiński, J. Raciborski, *Oswajanie wielkiej zmiany. Instytut Socjologii UW o polskiej transformacji*, Warszawa 2007; J. Kurczewski, *Ścieżki emancypacji. Osobista teoria transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2009.

38 K. Gadowska, M. Rymysza, *Od socjologii transformacji do socjologii sfery publicznej*, p. 27.

39 See: R. Mishra, *Globalization and the decline of 'social protection by other means': the transformation of welfare regimes in Australia, Japan, and Eastern Europe*, [in:] *A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy*, ed. P. Kennett, Cheltenham 2013, pp. 57-60.

40 J. Sachs, *The End of Poverty. How We Can Make it Happen in Our Lifetime*, London 2005.

41 See: J. E. Stiglitz, *Economics of the Public Sector*, New York & London 2000, and especially Preface, pp. xix-xxiii. Author was the chief economist of the World Bank during the years 1997-2000.

factors over the implementation of external solutions. There was also a growing awareness of the diversity of social security systems and, more broadly, of institutional patterns of social policy making in the CEE group of countries, which undermined the sense of applying the same Western solutions.⁴²

In the post-transformation period, i.e. after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, we were unable to bring out the strengths of the transformation logic. This is because, on political grounds, in a situation of social fatigue with systemic change, the aspiration prevailed in Poland for accelerated and, at the same time, relatively easy-to-manage modernisation associated with dependent development, relying to a large extent on the efficient absorption of external resources in the form of EU structural funds.⁴³ The academic community has largely succumbed to the pressure of modernization formatted in this way and the (temporary) infatuation with neoliberalism.⁴⁴ The need to reorient the country's development towards endogenous development tracks was only strongly hinted at in the 2017 *Strategy for Responsible Development*,⁴⁵ which accounted for its attractiveness.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the strategy was not consistently implemented.

This makes it all the more important to realise the difference between the logic of transformation and the logic of transition when programming change in the energy model. Unfortunately, in the aforementioned *Strategy for Responsible Development* itself, relatively little and rather conservatively⁴⁷ was written about changing the energy model. One might even get the impression that the team preparing this strategic document failed to subject the game of interests present in the energy industry to the logic of horizontal programming. This is evidenced by the treatment of changes in the area of energy and environmental protection⁴⁸ as if they were two separate, mutually unrelated fields of public activity. Meanwhile, it is the environmental protection policy that will have a significant impact on the energy industry, and the paradigm

42 T. Inglot, *Welfare States in East central Europe 1919-2004*, Cambridge 2008; M. Polakowski, *The Institutional Transformation of Social Policy in East Central Europe. Poland and Hungary in Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Maastricht 2010.

43 A. Sadowski, *Kto zapłaci za ten rachunek?*, "Więź" 2013, no. 2 (652), pp. 61-63.

44 K. Gadowska, M. Rymśa, *Od socjologii transformacji do socjologii sfery publicznej*, p. 28.

45 *Strategy for Responsible Development for the Period up to 2020 (Including the Perspective up to 2030)*, Ministry of Development, Warsaw 2017.

46 See: *Opinia o projekcie Strategii na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju*, Narodowa Rada Rozwoju, Kancelaria Prezydenta RP, Warszawa 2016, pp. 5-54.

47 *Strategy for Responsible Development*, pp. 251-258.

48 *Strategy for Responsible Development*, pp. 259-270.

of changing the energy model implemented in the coming years will largely determine the development trajectory of our state and national economies.

What transformation of the energy system?

The systemic change in the production and use of energy is currently defined in the European discourse in terms of energy system transformation. Three objectives of the EU energy and climate policy to be achieved by 2030⁴⁹ have been defined as follows: (1) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 40% (compared to 1990 levels); (2) to increase the share of energy obtained from renewable energy sources (RES) to at least 32% (in total energy consumption); (3) to increase the so-called energy efficiency by at least 32.5%. Framing the programmed systemic change in terms of the transformation of national energy models is beneficial for the Member States and their citizens, in particular for those countries and societies where the projected changes will be the most far-reaching. This group of countries unquestionably includes Poland, whose so-called energy mix is currently based on the predominance of energy obtained from coal combustion. At the same time, the achievement of such ambitious reduction and efficiency targets over a period of just one decade⁵⁰ is conducive to formatting operational activities in a manner closer to the transition model.

In July 2021 the European Commission made the next step in shaping European Green Deal announcing the Revision of the Renewable Energy Directive. The aim of the package of legislative proposals called *Fit for 55*⁵¹ is to significantly accelerate the green transformation in the European continent. The new proposals assume to increase in 2030 in all UE member states the share of RES in the energy mix up to 40%, and – first of all – to reduce in 2030 of net GGE emissions (also in all member states) by at least 55%, compared to

49 The framework of EU policy in that field was shaped by the European Commission in 2014 in the document *A policy framework for climate and Energy in the period from 2020 to 2030*, European Commission, Brussels 2014, COM(2014) 15 final. The document was updated in 2018 when indicators of reaching strategic goals were raised. Poland as the only EU member state did not sign this document.

50 Ten years in strategic programming is a relatively short period.

51 *Fit for 55 Package. Briefing towards climate neutrality*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733513/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733513-EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733513/EPRS_BRI(2022)733513-EN.pdf)

1990 level. *Fit for 55* undoubtedly promote green revolution based on transition paradigm although still using ‘transformation’ as a crucial term.

In this situation, it seems crucial for organising public debate and expert discourse to bring out the rational aspects of the transformation model, emphasising the benefits of its real implementation. From this perspective, it would be a mistake to use transformational rhetoric in the discourse with supporters of an accelerated energy transition as an argument for simply slowing down the pace and scale of the changes introduced. Transformation is a model of real systemic change, not a strategy for delaying reform or making sham changes. Only it is distinguished by its ability to carry out systemic change by an evolutionary method, while minimising social costs and maximising social benefits. The time to implement changes here is a function of accumulating benefits, not vice versa. The benefits are thus not linked to the postponement of change, but to the way in which it is carried out, involving the mobilisation of one’s own resources and endogenous development potential. And it is the bringing out in the discourse of such possible benefits from the implementation of the transformative paradigm of systemic change that seems crucial. Given the above, it is worth noting the following circumstances and determinants of energy paradigm change.

► **The strategy of pushing for rapid changes in European national energy systems as changes from which there is no turning back is reminiscent of the shock therapies of the economies of countries emerging from communism in the 1990s.** It is worth pointing out at this point that market reforms were introduced in the absence of clarity about the political scenario unfolding on our continent. It was then assumed that the time of political détente should be used as effectively as possible and market mechanisms should be introduced to centrally planned economies in such a way as to trigger a scenario of self-propelling changes, which can no longer be stopped by possible counter-political decisions. This was one of the justifications for the reformist rush. However, in the case of changing the energy model in conditions of political democracy, there is no risk of a political reversal of the proposed reforms: climate change is becoming more and more obvious – because it is directly felt – for an increasing number of people. The pressure of time is thus associated not with the possibility of reverse policies, but with the mass perception of climate change, the accompanying collective emotions, and the

possibility of starting (initiating) the process of irreversible climate change leading to an ecological catastrophe on a global scale.

I do not have the knowledge to comment on the pace, 'depth' and permanence of the observed climate change. This knowledge is, of course, an indispensable component of the instrumentation for rational programming of public activities, currently referred to as conducting energy and climate policy. Nevertheless, the programming of public actions should also take into account sociological knowledge, including the phenomenon of moral panic recognised in the social sciences and its impact not only on public sentiment and social order but also on public decision-making processes. Moral panic may manifest itself spontaneously from below, but its maintenance is also one of the ways to legitimise planned public activities.⁵² Moral panic is a mass fear of some phenomenon, process, or state, which legitimises taking almost immediate remedial action. There is not only a social 'directional' consent to take action but also a highly risky 'leap' to accept a specific programme of action. In a situation of moral panic, a solution that can be implemented here and now becomes the necessary solution that has no alternative. Meanwhile, it is the belief that there are no alternatives that lowers the rationality of public policy programming; it leads to underestimating the social costs of the systemic change being carried out and leads to underestimating the importance of side effects and unintended and unanticipated consequences.⁵³ Therefore, considering alternative solutions or different strategies is one of the key elements of the rational programming of public actions.⁵⁴

► **Moral panic not only increases the risk of multiplying the social costs of the systemic change being carried out, but also promotes the pushing forward of the interests of the most powerful and best-organised interest groups.** Sociological analysis here refers to Merton's category of manifested and latent (overt and covert) functions of public programmes.⁵⁵ The rapid implementation of increased production standards for car engines may serve not only the protection of the environment (explicit aim – overt function) but also the interests of the strongest producers in the global market, able to adapt to increased norms and standards faster than the competition (implicit aim – covert function). In turn, significant subsidies from

52 See: K. Thompson, *Moral Panics*, London 1998, pp. 36–39.

53 J. Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 91–100.

54 A. Zybala, *Polityki publiczne*, p. 82.

55 R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York 1968, pp. 92–157.

public funds for the purchase of very expensive (and thus inaccessible to average citizens) cars with electric engines not only shape pro-environmental consumption patterns (manifested function) but also lead to a redistribution of income “from the poor to the rich” within the national community (latent function). And if we add to this the attempts to intervene by raising oil and petrol prices above their market value, we have – as in France – a possible scenario for the launching of protests like the Yellow Vests movement, which, although undertaken by representatives of the middle class, can take radical forms and escape the control of public services. Examples of the play of overt and covert interests and their unexpected outcomes can be multiplied.

► **Ethical reflection is a necessary element in the programming of public actions.** Indeed, any state intervention in collective life requires axio-normative justification. When new social problems or issues emerge, ethical reflection should lead to a questioning of the status quo and thus legitimise the intervention under preparation. However, when social consent for action is already in place (which can be assumed to be the case with the directional guidelines of the European Union’s new energy and climate policy),⁵⁶ ethical reflection should be extended to the assessment of the proposed and implemented measures themselves. Indeed, ethics should not be an instrument for sustaining moral panic but, on the contrary, lead to responsible decisions: morally right and at the same time reasonable (justified.)⁵⁷ Let us recall that the distinguishing feature of the policy of the evolutionary solution to the workers’ issue in Europe was the agreement on ethical, functional, and economic perspectives. The strength of the aforementioned encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII was the combination of ethical reflection with a common-sense approach. It seems that a similar potential lies in the encyclical *Laudato Si’* of Pope Francis.⁵⁸ This encyclical combines (1) moral reflection on the proper use by humans of the goods of nature, (2) suggestive illustrations of a growing ecological crisis involving the loss of biodiversity, overexploitation of natural resources, increasing restrictions on access to water, etc., and (3) demands for remedial public action at local, national and international levels. A discussion of Pope Francis’ reflections and proposals is the subject of a separate paper. For the reflections carried out here, I would like to bring

56 Evidence of societal legitimization is rising number of green parties’ members in the European Parliament, grass-root voluntary activities under ecological movements etc.

57 See: S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics. The Creation of the Mods and Rockets*, London 2002.

58 Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato si’*.

out two themes: (i) concern for the poor⁵⁹ and (ii) criticism of the technocratic paradigm.⁶⁰

► Pope Francis demands decisive and immediate pro-ecological actions, but at the same time emphasises the need to carry them out in a way that protects the interests of weaker communities and poorer societies. It is a continuation of the Christian “option for the poor” associated with the principle of the universal destination of goods⁶¹ and recurring as a requirement of social justice throughout the Church’s social teaching, starting with *Rerum Novarum*. On a global scale, the rich North must not burden the poorer South with the costs of climate policy, especially as it was the North that popularised the development concept based on the exploitation and use of fossil fuels on a global scale. Similarly (this is a further development of Francis’ thoughts), on a European scale, the countries of the old EU-15 should not push for solutions that are too costly for countries that have just undergone a costly political transformation. Finally, at the level of national policy, it is necessary to think about linking the energy transformation with territorially sustainable development and to promote not only the development of RES as such but also prosumer forms of energy production and consumption. In Poland, it seems that high hopes can be pinned on photovoltaics and bioenergy.⁶²

► **The ethical sensitivity directed by the encyclical *Laudato si’* furthermore dictates that the transformation of the energy model be carried out in a way that transcends the technocratic paradigm.** According to Pope Francis, it is not enough here to change the technology of energy production while leaving behind a development model based on the ever-increasing production and consumption of material goods. It is a question of reducing both production and consumption and spreading their new patterns, such as the closed-loop economy (sphere of production) and the sharing economy (sphere of consumption), valuing the non-material aspects of social well-being and taking greater care of social and family ties. In a word, integral ecology.⁶³ Appropriate planning and dissemination of activities in this area may, in the long-term perspective, bring greater social benefits than a purely technological leap in the field of new ways of obtaining energy.

59 Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato si’*, 48–52.

60 Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato si’*, 106–116.

61 *Kompendium Nauki Społecznej Kościoła*, Papieska Rada Iustitia et Pax, Kielce 2005, pp. 120–122.

62 M. Popkiewicz, *Rewolucja energetyczna*, pp. 268–290.

63 Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato si’*, chapt. 4.

From a social issue to an ecological issue

Recognising the politics of solving the environmental question as a continuation of the politics of solving the 19th-century social question seems advisable for three reasons. First, it allows the energy and climate policy programming to draw on more than a century of evolutionary experience in shaping European social policies as policies for the rational and ethical creation of the foundations of social welfare.

Secondly, it allows the policy of building welfare states as states of societal well-being to be completed, as it were. After all, the origins of the 21st-century environmental question and the 19th-century social question are the same. Both are bundles of social problems emerging from the same development processes. It is just that the harmfulness and nuisance of some (working conditions and standards of living of industrial workers) were noticed earlier, and the harmfulness and nuisance of the other (impact of fossil fuel exploitation on the natural environment) – later. Both of them determine the quality of our lives.

Thirdly, consciously linking the resolution of an old social issue to the resolution of a new environmental issue provides an opportunity to overcome the dysfunctions and side effects of earlier modernisation efforts. Social development after the civilising of early industrial relations led through the formation of a social order referred to as an industrial society⁶⁴ to a modern society with very strongly developed patterns of consumerism⁶⁵ and technocratic rationality.⁶⁶ In contemporary late-modern societies as post-industrial societies, there is a growing awareness of the depletion of development potential based on these patterns; according to some researchers, a post-social situation is even being created.⁶⁷

The concept of energy and climate policy linked to the integral ecology model allows for a systemic change that breaks through consumerism and

64 R. Mishra, *Society and Social Policy*, pp. 40–44.

65 B. R. Barber, *Consumed. How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*, New York 2007.

66 T. Schwinn, *Nowoczesność: od historycznych źródeł do współczesnej ekspansji. Socjologia Maksa Webera w XXI wieku*, in: *Nowe perspektywy teorii socjologicznej*, eds. A. Manterys, J. Mucha, Kraków 2009.

67 See: A. Turaine, *After the Crisis*, Cambridge 2014.

managerial technocratism. In contrast, a purely technocratic orientation that enables the rapid change of the energy model itself to be pushed through is highly risky. Its real (measurable) impact on the climate remains essentially unknowable (and attempts to directly control the climate, e.g. weather, rainfall, etc., using the latest technologies are an example of self-referential politics of a downright moral gamble),⁶⁸ and the social costs incurred are very likely to prove very high. The concept of integral ecology opens the way to transformative changes, reforms that are less spectacular because they are spread out over time, but more comprehensive; changes with lower social costs and higher social benefits.

The key advantage of the transformational model is that the evolutionary introduction of interconnected new pro-ecological production and consumption patterns (including energy production and consumption) will be socially beneficial, regardless of how effective the systemic change is on climate impact.

Abstract

From a social issue to an ecological issue. A glance at the ongoing transformation of the energy model in Europe from a sociological perspective

The main message of this article is that contemporary environmental challenges should be addressed in an evolutionary way, taking into account ethical, economic, and functional aspects. At the same time, it is important to build a political consensus to include diverse perspectives. In the context of programming changes to the national energy model, it is worth taking into account the Polish experience of systemic change, which was achieved largely thanks to the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność.” Adopting the transformation path, both in Poland and at the European level, will allow for maintaining continuity between the policy of solving the 19th-century social issue and the policy of solving the contemporary ecological issue.

Keywords: a social issue, an ecological issue, energy transformation, Europe, Poland, experience, political change

68 See: N. Luhmann, *Politische Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat*, München 1981.

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