

One of the most ambitious and complex undertakings in sociology is the scientific study of the structure of a specific society over a long period of time, including the division into large social categories and their mutual relationships. The challenge starts with the dauntingly large size of the subject-matter and the necessity to use cutting-edge quantitative techniques. The dynamic, mutual relationship between the actions of individuals and the shape of society as a whole adds to this complexity. The way the society is subdivided and the place where someone was fortunate, or unlucky, to be born impacts individual life trajectories. Individual actions, however, can also lead to sustained changes in social divisions.

The main goal of this project is to provide new, solid knowledge on the relationship between people's biographies and the transformation of the social structure in Poland over the past 30 years. This ambitious goal can be accomplished because our team initiated the POLPAN Polish Panel Survey (www.polpan.org) – a nationwide longitudinal study of the social structure launched in 1988 on a large representative sample of Poles and repeated every five years since. The sources of data in POLPAN are individual interviews conducted face-to-face with the same people and with new participants that join the study in every round. This composition enables us to maintain the relevance of the data. The range of topics covered in the interview is wide, and includes the respondent's complete work history and job characteristics, features of family and household, education and material status, health and well-being, social and political views, and many other issues. To date, POLPAN contains six waves of the survey, with the most recent conducted in 2013. The data and the findings from all the waves is extensive and enjoys growing interest from representatives of various academic disciplines from Poland and abroad. Without exaggeration, this collection is unique on a global scale.

Based on already accumulated data and many years of experience in our team, **in 2018 we plan to return to the panel respondents for the seventh time, to ask them about the changes that occurred in their lives over the past five years and to gather new data in this way, while also inviting new young people (aged 21–25) to the survey.** In total, we intend to survey 3,181 people in 2018. This will create the POLPAN 1988–2018 dataset that is of great value to the social sciences as it offers the possibility to verify many hypotheses in statistical terms, based on data that cover an exceptionally long period - from the decline of communist Poland until today.

As for the subject of the study, POLPAN 2018 focuses on the dynamics of the social structure. In the project, we write about 'multidimensional biographies' as we are particularly interested in the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of human life. With new data, it will be possible to study how respondents from distinct segments of the social structure, with specific intellectual and social resources, undergo the processes of change in their social position and how they build a 'new' social structure through their mobility. The project will account for respondents' life course. Of the unique sociological treasure that are long-term panel respondents, POLPAN 1988 – 2018 will have data that spans three decades.

The rigorous scientific methodology of POLPAN 1988–2018 will provide innovative insights into how to successfully conduct long-term panel surveys, how to assess the quality of such data, and how to harmonize them across successive rounds. The significant contribution of POLPAN to panel research methodology is based on the following: (a) this is the only study in the world that has collected data on a representative sample of adult residents in the course of 30 years; (b) the project proposes measures for data verification and assessment of the quality of data obtained through regularly repeated interviews with the same respondents; and (c) it develops methodology for inter-wave harmonization of panel data.

To thoroughly understand Polish society and view how it has recently changed, we need current data that can be compared with those collected in previous years. Integrating a new survey round, planned for 2018, into the well-established tradition of POLPAN will create this opportunity. At the same time, adding fresh information – in terms of both participants and questions they are asked - will open POLPAN to analyses of new social phenomena in the social sciences.