

## **Transformations of Polish middle class lifestyle – twenty years later. Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of lifestyle**

The ‘middle class’ and ‘lifestyle’ terms are surprisingly popular in public discourse. They are used by both journalists, of the traditional and the new media, and experts trying to explain diverse social issues. These terms denote interdisciplinary concepts that catch the attention of sociologists, economists, social psychologists, researchers working in the field of cultural studies, etc. Both are also ambiguous terms. Many diverse social and occupational groups are characterized as the middle class, similarly, the lifestyle denotes often blurred set of distant practices and forms of behavior. From the beginning of the political and economic transformation in Poland, which is considered as the period that gave rise to the middle class, there are ongoing discussions about whether the middle class is an objective social category, or is it discursively constructed. The research project assumes the utility of the middle class and lifestyle terms for explaining social phenomena and aims to answer the question on crystallization of the middle class by intergenerational transmission of lifestyle elements.

Almost twenty years ago Hanna Palska posed a similar research question: *‘is it possible to ‘locate’ the middle class by examining the lifestyle (find it out by the characteristics of this style)?’* (2002:248). She pointed out that *‘(...) the stabilization of the lifestyles map, that will be developing in the 1990s will occur, as we can expect, only in the next generations’* (Palska 2002: 250). Nowadays, after two decades, i.e. after reaching adulthood by the next generation, I can verify whether this ‘stabilization of the lifestyles map’ has occurred. The aim of this project is to reach the second generation, i.e. today adults - children of people who spoke about their lifestyles in 1999-2000.

The main objective of the project is to explore mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of middle class lifestyle elements in contemporary Poland. It concerns the middle class crystallization by inheriting its cultural distinctiveness in the next generation. This aim will be achieved by (re)analyzing and interpreting three sets of data: (1) 35 ‘old’ interviews (the collection of interviews, archived by the author of the project, is available at the Qualitative Data Archive at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, <http://www.adj.ifispan.pl/katalog-9>), (2) 15 “new” interviews with researched almost 20 years ago; (3) 15 interviews with their children. 30 in-depth individual interviews are planned.

The specific goals of this project may be summed up as follows:

- 1) Finding an answer to the research questions: (a) what are the elements of lifestyles that are intergenerationally transmitted (inherited) and whether these elements typically represent the middle class lifestyles; (b) what are the new elements of the lifestyle in the ‘children’ generation, does the consumption of experiences dominate consumption of goods, products and services that is characteristic of the generation of ‘parents’; (c) what are the mechanisms of lifestyle’ inheritance; (d) how specific elements of lifestyles affect interviewees structural position;
- 2) developing a typology of lifestyles occurring among the Polish middle class;
- 3) critical revision of the revisits and reanalyses methodological framework;
- 4) contribute to a culture of data sharing in qualitative research: disseminating good practices of archiving the data, and also legal and ethical issues related to the use of it.