

## **RaM-CLASS. Class reproduction and mobility - biographical experiences in academic, artistic and business fields**

Compared to the UK or France, class language and class self-identifications are less embedded in Polish society. This is related to the different historical experiences of these countries, and the emotional and political imprint of the notion of class. In Poland, the post-1989 social inequalities tend to be normalized and told in the frames of unavoidable consequences of the transition to a 'better' reality dominated by the middle-class. This understanding has led to firstly, a normalization of inequalities and secondly, a popularity of meritocratic discourse. Simultaneously, despite expectations of growth in social mobility in the post-1989 context, the barriers of social advancement, including classed educational inequalities, remain relatively stable and they influence the individual and collective experiences.

The RaM-CLASS project addresses the question about biographical experiences and identities of the individuals occupying the same professional fields, but having different class backgrounds. Taking into account that professions differ by the career paths, the individuals working in three fields (perceived as holding publicly recognized symbolic capital) were chosen to be studied: academic (academics with at least PhD, working at universities), artistic (artists representing different artistic disciplines), and business (top managers and business owners, especially in the financial sector).

To see if and how the class background interlinks with the individual's opportunities and experiences of entering and gaining recognition in the selected professions, the project focuses on the life stories of both those who managed to move up in the social ladder, and those who reproduce their parents' (relatively) high status. By taking a comparative perspective, the project aims to explore the (a) the similarities and differences in the biographical pathways to the same professional fields, (b) the experiences of dealing with crossing the (in)visible class boundaries or reproduction of the parents' social position; (c) the intersection of class background and gender; (d) class self-identification and perception of social classes, and (e) the relation between biographical experiences and selected fields. Moreover, taking into account that both biographical processes and social perception of social classes are in part shaped by public discourses, the project seeks to address the question of the presence and representation of social classes in Polish media.

To answer the above questions, the project combines various research methods. To explore how the biographical identities are constructed in relation to structural and cultural conditions (incl. class resources and public discourses), the primary collected material will be 60 biographical-narrative interviews conducted with people who experienced intergenerational upward mobility (30), and with people who reproduce their parents' professional careers (30). Subsequently, it will focus on the critical discourse analysis of articles published in selected weekly magazines between 2004 and 2022, and concerning social class topics. A diachronic analysis will concern both main thematic tendencies and in-depth discursive strategies of representing the social classes (and constructing the symbolic boundaries) in selected newspapers. The project is believed to make a contribution to the existing research on social classes in Poland, and to the discussion on ideologies of meritocracy and equal chances.

The results will be published on the webpage dedicated to the project, on the project's Facebook profile, during national and international conferences, in academic articles published in recognized Polish and international journals, in media, and during open seminar organized in the last year of the project. The collected data (will be archived in the TIME&TRANSITION data archive (established in the Youth Research Centre, SWPS University).