

Book review

Wiesława Kozek, *Rynek pracy. Perspektywa instytucjonalna (Labour Market. An Institutional Perspective)*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2013: 282
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A monograph starts with a short introduction in which professor Wiesława Kozek wrote, ‘this book formed for a long time. Probably it was too long...’ Having read this book, I came to a conclusion that it might be an asset that Prof Kozek wrote this book without haste thus she wrote a systematic monograph which synthesizes two decades of the Polish Labour Market since its inception through the phase of institutionalisation till a firmly established institution of the labour market in Poland. Consequently, the outcome is an encyclopaedic study presenting in details intricate issues which concern not only the labour market, but other sociological aspects of labour relations. Due to the fact that a diachronic aspect is strongly emphasized in the monograph, the book became the first comprehensive history of development of the labour market in Poland after 1989.

Kozek stressed that in the early stage of the Polish labour market few sociological studies on this subject had been available. She listed three: two from the early period – including *Segmentacja rynku pracy a struktura społeczna (Labour market segmentation and social structure)* published in 1987 by Henryk Domański and a study by Rafał Drozdowski: *Rynek Pracy w Polsce (Labour Market in Poland)* from 2002. The author stressed that, ‘there are not too many studies dedicated to the labour market’ in the worldwide sociological literature. As she wrote, this state of affairs cannot make one be taken aback as ‘the market’ is deemed to be the principal domain of the economy and its sub-discipline – *labour economics*, while the sociology was traditionally more interested in division of labour (Durkheim) and social consequences of the labour market segmentation.

In the introduction and chapter 1 Wiesława Kozek presented methodological aspects and produced her proposal. She suggested that the labour market had been researched by authors of combined economic and sociological approach and she named British, German and American researches. The methodological proposals made by Kozek show that she had taken her own path. Mentioning papers of Kallenberg and Sørensen as well as Ivar Berg and Van den Berg, she wrote that, 'those are the studies from the sphere of economic sociology and their authors have both sociologist's and economist's views.' Next, she made reference to Gary Becker whom she described as a 'sociology-oriented economist', as well as to a fundamental study of internal labour markets by Piore and Doeringer. In the context of such literature, she made a statement that the aim of the book presented is ... placing the analyses in the current between two disciplines that are economics and sociology or more precisely, in the field of economic sociology.'

I appraise the perspective adopted – sociological along the economic one – as exceptionally valuable. The appraisal is, most of all, justified by the fact that Kozek managed to define the tools applied without undue discussion on methodology. The monograph is free of what is described as 'methods fetish'. This enabled the author to describe the phenomena examined so precisely: this monograph says about the Polish labour market as seen from sociologist's and economist's perspective. These two dimensions were more or less firmly embedded on the ground of empirical data, which varied in availability.

Such triple perspective appears in several chapters and consists of: presenting of the way in which a given institution is modelled, and then it is submitted to sociological examination in a dynamic perspective and finally, interpretation with statistical data. This perspective is particularly discernible in chapter 'The labour market as the focus of sociologists' attention. As regards institutional analyses' Wiesława Kozek indicated that the labour market is an institution of social life, which is described by constant, regular and habitual people's co-operation which includes attitude of commonly accepted values customs and norms, then it is an economic institution with exchange, distribution and circulation of a specific market goods known as 'labour'. The role of exchange in case of labour market is marked separately. After this remark, the author mentioned the classical optimal model of the labour market which consists of five assumptions including total competitiveness and individuals calculating in the foreground. In the next step, Kozek submitted those idealizing assumptions to sociological interpretation pointing at relevant social limitations of this economic model. In several places, the problem of economic relation is mentioned in terms of the market and institutional context. Kozek aptly

rejects arguments being a sign of reduction economics according to which the labour market is limited by various market sub-institutions such as obligatory works committees, employment protection legislation, minimal wage, range of collective bargaining, flexibility of payroll and temporary employment, social dialogue, etc. Wiesława Kozek emphasises that in her monograph 'such sub-institutions are not assumed as limitations on the labour market, but rather reflections of its more mature form'.

A narrative of fusing trends of economics, sociology and experience was firmly accentuated in Chapter 'Changes on the labour market: Surveying and Interpretation'. While discussing in details parameters pertaining to the labour market, such as economic activity of people, employment rate, employment in individual sectors and sections, unemployment etc., she interestingly combines economists' views, in which low competitiveness of the Polish economy is emphasised, and views of far-left politicians in which the loss of competitiveness of the Polish economy is accentuated as a result of wrong policy of the reforming elites, as well as the views of sociologists: labour as a value, perpetration or lack of perpetration in the course of work, motivation, etc. Those three perspectives were juxtaposed with data of many years which depicts the process of institutionalisation (including recalculated by the author data of the Central Statistical Office) and a broad analysis of sociological and economic publications. The chapter ends with questions: 'How radical are those changes in social perception? What are the consequences of them? How do the people adapt to the changes?'. It is my conviction that Kozek gave apt answers to those questions in the subsequent chapters where she referred to an immense reservoir of data from the Central Statistical Office, the Public Opinion Research Center, research done in others centres and her own research.

I would like to draw attention to very apt, in my opinion, analyses of sensitive phenomenon such as inequalities generated by the labour market or informal employment. Having analysed data of the Public Opinion Research Center on views of social diversification, the author demonstrated aptly that the attitudes formed in the authoritarian times last for long: 'The people were fed on the rhetoric of egalitarian payroll. Such frame of reference must be taken into account for interpretation of low acceptance of income and pay diversity in decades in Poland. ... the existing stratification is not being accepted and its volume does not seem to be significantly legitimated by lack of market mechanism. The above opinions can be interpreted as lack of acceptance for affluence which are not created by the market'. In my opinion, this interpretation explains well a phenomena recurring in research done in the Warsaw School of Economics: in general terms stringent egalitarian attitudes and

antagonism in a relation between the rich and the poor on one side, and relatively low level of perception of antagonism between private entrepreneur and wage earners employed by him on the other. Further, in case of informal market it is important what Kozek observed: ‘discussing this type of economy one notices that a substantial part of domestic product in some societies is generated as a result of informal labour. One hardly ever turns own attention to the fact that existence of the black labour market generates peculiar relations between the worker and the employer. ... the worker cannot exercise his legal protection which is granted to those employed on the official market. While the employer remains paradoxically in situation alike: he cannot expect to be defended in case of contention as it stems from the letter of the law’. As it resulted from the research done by the Warsaw School of Economics: a peculiar paternalistic type of relation had been established, often in a antisocial form, as recently mentioned case of employer imposing capital punishment on the employee for actual or supposed infringement of informal agreement.

In the monograph, Kozek manifests her ideological orientation which can be described as social democratic and which is close to the orientation of the reviewer. Firstly, it takes forms of criticism of the liberal market economy established in Poland and particularly, reluctance of the ruling elites toward social dialogue, and secondly, toward defence of trade unions. Generally speaking, I would like to highlight the research fairness of Wiesława Kozek: the value judgements do not slant the analysis of the labour market and moreover, the opinions on the ruling elite and trade unions reflected the complexity of political decisions and negative aspects of the trade union movement. Kozek describes those in power in the following way: ‘In Poland, politicians have not been concerned about organized work force and negotiations between them. Politicians preferred a model of pluralistic confrontation and deregulation which on one hand, had originated from the tradition of work relations (pre-war period) and on the other hand, converged with the civilization trend which led to deregulations related to the globalisation in its current phase. The descriptions of trades unions are balanced. The author emphasised union’s important role in the market economy and self-restrain of their activists and in the same time, she criticised them for the politicization or ‘incorporating themselves into the system of governance’.

I would like to proceed to few critical remarks. Wiesława Kozek begins the introductory chapter with indication that since the end of the 80 s of the 20 th century the Polish economy was not market like and in the last decade of the past regime it was not even a planned economy. It was ‘anarchised system of groups of business which used the marked off areas of property’ and was characterised by ‘insufficiency

of regulating mechanisms.’ In that time, ‘the labour market was accepted as choice’ from that it may result that in the situation preceding the collapse of the authoritarian socialism the work itself had little, if any feature of goods. Such perspective is legitimate on the condition that it is made on the very high level of generality. Presenting this issue on lower level of generality, this perspective does lessen the contribution of the non-agricultural private sector which was quite institutionalised at the time of Gierek’s governance (1971–1980). Omitting of private sector or treating it as irrelevant margin occurred also in other chapters of the monograph. In Chapter 4 – ‘The change of the importance of work by the market mechanisms’. Wiesława Kozek wrote that ‘in real socialism individuals had been subordinated to positions where status had been determined by the criterion of usefulness for maintenance of the new system. Therefore, the most important criterion of the job assessment was its location in the hierarchy of power and employee’s usefulness for a governing body’. In this context I would like to mention the results of research of social structure of the People Republic of Poland done by prof Henryk Domański. He wrote about a paradox of the highest income obtained not by the groups in the aforementioned quotation, but by groups of private entrepreneurs and their employees as well. They had their quite a substantial market niche and they worked within the frames of peculiar but institutionalised labour market.

In chapter ‘Labour as market and non-market goods’ the author presents a very important for the whole monograph typology where the axis constitutes a normative system comprising of norm of obligation to work (internalized by an individual obligation to provide labour to the people) and norms of inclusion (pertaining to social duty toward an individual seeking and having a job: ‘every member of the society should be included into interesting and relevant work’). With the reference to the research ‘Meaning of Working’ and PGSS Wiesława Kozek demonstrates four types of opinion about the labour market which are made up by two axes defined by the above norms. The analyses implementing this tool enabled to distinguish societies: strong norm of obligation and weak inclusion – the USA; weak obligation and strong inclusion – Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium; weak obligation and strong inclusion – Japan, Great Britain; strong obligation and strong inclusion – Poland as well as Israel and the former Yugoslavia. The given types refer to different level of commodification of work as well as different models of trade union. The results of the research mentioned by Kozek are interesting because they question the stereotypes; however the picture of the Polish people creates also problems because of the issues mentioned in other chapters. In the chapter discussed, the Polish people were defined as labour-centric, in other words, the collapse of socialism coincided

with erosion of the norm of obligation: strong norm of obligation to work, moulded in the time of socialism (industrial society, ideology of hard work, condemning of freebooters and income obtained in other way than earning a living, the rhetoric of work with devotion – indispensable for building a new type of society) had to be subjected to gradual destruction. The older generation, which is traditionally obliged to hand over the paradigm of obligation to work to younger generation, were made professionally deactivated. This statement creates dissonance when compared with many other statements from the monograph where ‘the collapse of employee morale in the terms of the Weberian ideal model’ is accentuated. Wiesława Kozek mentioned one of the postulates from the strike in Gdańsk in August 1980, which had demanded to lower the retirement age to 50 for women and to 55 for men. She also brought up the habit of inebriating at work, etc. From the research that I had an opportunity to examine at the end of the 80s and the beginning of and the 90s the following conclusion emerged: the waning of praxeological standards, corruption of work ethic, etc. contributed considerably to the fact the market economy implemented in Poland was legitimized among blue collars. Consequently, my doubt refers to what had been surveyed by the questions about the obligation to work which became the reason to draw the conclusion about the workaholism of the Polish people – those questions were less to measure the standards of diligent work, high employee morale or responsibility, especially as the author wrote about the impact of the labour market on the increase of work related declarations with people’s behaviour.

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