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## “Sociology of Music in Theory and Practice” – Focus Group Summary Report from the 15<sup>th</sup> Sociological Meeting in Szczecin

On the third day of the 15<sup>th</sup> Sociological Meeting in Szczecin the discussion of the sociology of music focus group took place. The group of “Sociology of Music in Theory and Practice” was organized by Barbara Jabłońska from the Jagiellonian University. Five persons submitted their speeches and there were also two tabled papers. Due to absence of three of the speakers, however, the papers were presented by: Ziemowit Socha (University of Wrocław/WSB School of Banking in Bydgoszcz), Katarzyna Wyrzykowska (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences), and also by authors of the tabled papers: Maja Drzazga-Lech (University of Silesia in Katowice) and Aleksandra Nowakowska-Kutra (Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz).

It is worth mentioning that the group focused on sociology of music has appeared for the first time in the history of sociological meetings in Poland. Although these issues occurred in papers of such classics as Theodor Adorno, Alfred Schütz, Georg Simmel, and Max Weber, they have not been widely represented or undertaken by Polish sociologists. And even less frequently have they appeared at educational classes at Polish schools of higher education. Therefore, in my opinion, the more interesting was a noticeable presence of the studies carried out within this field (very often at the meeting point of musicology and sociology). After

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all, music is directly connected with social life, and it seems to be a form of art with incredibly large audience. With relation to that, one should ask a question, why the sociology of music is so rarely dealt with in Poland? Will, as a result of the discussions at the sociological meeting, a circle interested in reinforcing or consolidating this niche sub-discipline of sociology arise? Time will tell.

The first speech was presented by Ziemowit Socha who analyzed classical music perceived as a social construct. In his presentation, he adopted a constructivist approach and whilst carrying out a historical analysis of presence of music in social life, he raised a question: "How is that possible that music has become treated as something serious?" and "how did it happen that the term 'classical music' has become so obvious? What is deemed classical, and what type of music may be considered autotelic, valuable and timeless?" Therefore, the author made an attempt to deconstruct the concept. Having analyzed the literature, Ziemowit Socha came to the conclusion that for a society and institutions appointed to value music (musicology) classical music is the one that constitutes art but not craft, at the same time using musical notation, but not oral presentation. Classical music must use a prescribed set of instruments, but, most of all, as Tia de Nora points out – it bases on its own ideology (such music is difficult, incomprehensible to masses, has a complex harmony, is eminent, hermetic and exclusive), which has been defined by Thomas Luckmann as the invisible religion. At the same time, the speaker emphasized the existence of social imperative understood as concentration of classical music around specially appointed social institutions, such as philharmonic halls (orchestras) or musical academies. Such institutions enjoy enormous prestige and contact with them elevates one's status. The presentation of Ziemowit Socha proves that classical music may be examined in the way known to sociologists, and, re-framing of what has already been analyzed and what has been considered obvious may, in the studies of art, lead to the new approaches and answers to the research questions so far not raised within sociology.

The next speaker was Katarzyna Wyrzykowska who presented the paper entitled: "Music, youth and style of life – what way of participation in the culture is followed?" The paper contained results of the studies carried out as part of the project financed by the National Science Center. The speaker proposed to perceive music as a tool applied to organize everyday tasks (social activities of youth in their free time) and to look into the social functions of music (social application and involvement). Within the qualitative project Katarzyna Wyrzykowska examined such forms as: listening to music by oneself, singing to oneself, playing an instrument on one's own, independent creation of music in small groups, and participation in mass forms of listening to music. A significant aspect revealed in the project

was demonstration of the influence of common access to new technologies on the process of music listening (they indirectly create the musical experience and change themselves, adapting to the users' needs). According to the speaker, young people from Warsaw indicate music as a factor that, together with external appearance and behavior, determines their style of life. At the same time, they declare no affiliation to any youth subcultures, due to their negative images, associated with conformism, and an increasing importance of individualism being declared by young people as a style of social functioning. The respondents exist in many peer groups, listen to many music types and gather around the post-subculture styles of life. Besides, an analysis of the discourse on music divided by gender was carried out. In the summary Katarzyna Wyrzykowska pointed out that participation is dominated by individual forms of contact with music and it determines the esthetic thoughtfulness, whilst participation in the musical culture has the relational dimension.

Another speaker, Maja Drzazga-Lech presented results of an analysis of the printed press materials referring to the performances of operas of Stanisław Moniuszko and significance of the pieces of art of that composer for sustaining the Polish cultural identity at the Upper Silesia. It must be pointed out that the examined area was regaining connection with Poland in two phases (in 1992 and 1945). Stanisław Moniuszko was treated as a symbol of Polish identity of the Upper Silesia. The speaker analyzed the press materials, such as announcements and reviews of the stage performances of Moniuszko's pieces of art presented in the Polish Theater in Katowice within 1922–1931 and the Opera of Silesia within 1945–2010, and also articles referring to the operation of the Silesian Singing Movement published in the specialized press issued in that area.

Aleksandra Nowakowska-Kutra presented the paper entitled: "Social function of some pieces of music composed on the occasion of the Olympic Games – case study". An analysis of the lyrics of some songs composed on the occasion of the largest sporting event in the world was an attempt to realize one of the functions of sociology of music understood as the need to comprehend social determinants of the "use of music" in particular, sometimes instrumental aims that motivate both creators and the entities commissioning the creation of pieces of music. The speaker revealed that by a proper selection of the songs' lyrics a hidden function of the Olympic song is realized which is to involve a global audience in the imagined community and to create a collective identity based on common sentiments, past, symbols, and meanings. Songs gather spectators around the values officially promoted by the Olympic movement within the media event, analyzed from the perspective of Jean Duvignaud's anthropology, somehow "creating" a peculiar utopia of unity, connecting people (consumers of a media event) around such

slogans as: peace, friendship, brotherhood of nations, concentrated around the values transmitted by the symbol of the Olympic flame.

As it has been mentioned, not all submitted papers were presented at a convention, but it must be stated herein that despite few attempts to carry out scientific researches within sociology of music in Poland, the meeting was of strong interest and attracted young audience who very actively participated in the discussions. But will the meeting constitute a starting point to larger-scale studies on the social aspects of music? Well, we will see. Undoubtedly, this is the theoretical and research field of Polish sociology that is still expecting its explorers.

On the second day of the 15<sup>th</sup> Sociological Meeting I took part as a listener in the second part of the discussion of the focus group "Backstage of Social Life – towards Non-sentimental Sociology", organized by Daniel Wicenty. The following persons presented their papers: Joanna Wyleżałek (SGGW – Warsaw University of Life Sciences), Joanna Dąbrowska (University of Warsaw, a student), Joanna Szalacha-Jarmużek (WSB School of Banking in Toruń), and Joanna Jurkiewicz (a doctoral student at the University of Warsaw).

All speeches performed the "unmasking" function of sociology, and some of them proved their authors' courage to undertake difficult, unpopular topics, rarely present in scientific debates. Exactly such a speech was delivered by Joanna Wyleżałek who presented the results of qualitative and quantitative research project: "University mobbing – pathological mechanism of power and informal control". The research was being carried out within 2009–2012 and its aim was to answer the question who the university mobbing served for, what was the range of it, its legal framework and history. According to the speaker, the examined phenomenon is an instrument of organizational activity. Organizational culture of universities favors its presence, whilst present regulations referring to mobbing prove incompetence of the legislators, or even a manipulative character of legal regulations. In the course of research, it was revealed that the clever individuals, enthusiastic about their duties were most exposed to mobbing (the respondents who had experienced mobbing claimed that it had not been worth revealing their talents at universities). Another risk factors are related to being an organizational or scientific competition to members of the governing bodies, taking up "inconvenient" research topics or the topics "reserved" for years, obtaining attractive grants, representing "independent personality", and existing in the environment famous for the presence of "academic patronage". In addition, the speaker created an ideal type of a university mobber that is a conformist easily yielding to stronger persons, having no feeling of guilt, and promoting informal dependencies. The factors that create mobbers are: routinization of charisma, disappearance of

critique, lack of practical implementation of anti-mobbing policy at universities, existence of network of informal control, creation of systems supporting mobbers in power, and a "conspiracy of silence". Joanna Wyleżalek reckons that this process does not develop the organization and she explained its presence with application of systemic theories. She also analyzed and presented reports of persons who experienced mobbing interviewed by her.

Another speaker, Joanna Dąbrowska presented the speech entitled: "Behind the scenes of elite college – empirical study". In her presentation, the author tried to unmask a process of creation of an image of the elite, exclusive school of upper secondary education. As the speaker admitted, "one believes in exclusiveness" that is why an analysis of semantic networks is a very interesting procedure. Using the renowned metaphor of "front stage" and "back stage" by Erwin Goffman, she presented a structure of formation of educational prestige of an institution. The most important form of the "front stage performance" are the so-called "open days" when by way of full "mobilization" of a school society a uniquely precise course of self-presentation ritual is controlled, pointing to the students' "brilliance". Official rules and values binding at the school are promoted and convenient results of rankings are presented. What is most interesting for a sociologist is the "back stage" and this is exactly what the speaker examined. She described students' reactions to the spectacle organized at school. They were as follows: disclosure of gaps in the facade, disbelief, ridicule, disclosure of backstage games even referred to as "brainwash" or school criticizing, including via Facebook (which very often resulted in censorship or a severe reaction of the school's governing bodies). The aim was obviously to sustain the facade that was a source of the school's success and served for maintaining and strengthening its position.

Another speaker, Joanna Szalacha-Jarmużek discussed the phenomenon of *interlocking directorates*, which refers to the practice of members of a corporate board of directors serving on the boards of at least two corporations. As a result, an informal relationship is made (informal institution) the aim of which is to control capital accumulation and pursuing group interests. An interlock is to guarantee stability and constitute a potential source of leak. The speaker presented results of the studies carried out among the people who sit in boards of corporations taken from the list of "Rzeczpospolita 500". She determined the number of connections between the actors and pointed out the groups that might be interested in operation of such institutions.

The last speech was prepared by Joanna Jurkiewicz and was about "The new exploitation? Franchising system as the innovation in managing the workforce". The paper unmasked the operation of an owner of small neighborhood stores,

which is the company "Żabka Polska SA". The speaker calls the way of "employment" organization within the network as "a new exploitation". The small stores, defined as the "family" ones, are managed by franchise holders who are separate economic entities. The researcher found out that both franchise holders and the checkout assistants are a strongly feminized group, usually middle-aged and threatened by unemployment. The franchise holder managing the store, despite the fact that he/she is an individual economic entity, is subject to total control of his/her superiors from the company "Żabka Polska SA". His/her decisive power is limited to minimum, and, what is more, he/she has no protection from the state as, within the meaning of the Labor Law, he/she is not an employee. The stores "Żabka" must operate every day from 6 am to 11 pm, which is why, according to the interviews, the working time norms are frequently exceeded and the right to paid leave is not obeyed. The company prefers to "employ" checkout assistants on the basis of the contract to perform specified task (or mandate contract) and they very often obtain the lowest possible remunerations. It is the franchise holder who is responsible for gaining profits. His/her task is to sell goods with high margin and contribute taxes; however, he/she has nothing to say about the range or price of the goods. The strongest mechanism preventing quitting the network is a requirement to sign a blank note, where, in case of resignation from managing the store, an amount of "debt towards the company" is filled in. Joanna Jurkiewicz described a system of constructing an illusion of "social promotion" that, owing to "Żabka", allows a person of even small capital to open "an own" store (as they cannot establish a shop on their own account). The research reveals that the franchise holders do not accept such system but somehow learn to live in it and try to hide taxes, bypass the rules and minimize operating costs. The franchise holders' buffers become the checkout assistants whose employee rights are constantly violated. Joanna Jurkiewicz defines this situation as a multi-level crisis. Situation in "Żabka" stores is compared to problems revealed several years ago in case of "Biedronka" chain. The speaker managed to determine the fact that situation with "Biedronka" was a "proving ground" for "Żabka" today. As every store is a separate economic entity, the checkout assistants are employed by the franchise holders and not by "Żabka Polska SA". The latter one, however, does not hold legal responsibility for the stores' employees. Therefore, the speaker unmasked existence of a new, so far unknown category of a person working on his/her own account (agent/ franchise holder) who, in spite of bearing the risk of conducting his/her own economic activity, signs a strict contracts of cooperation, and as a result is almost totally deprived of possibilities to make decisions concerning his/her own company.

All speeches delivered within the group were very interesting and took up significant issues, but, most of all, they reported on the new studies carried out within sociology interested in what is going on backstage of social life. No doubt, there are plenty of similar topics that sociologists could touch. The question is: will they dare?