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The future of the university? The voice of young Polish scholars

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GDĄŃSK UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS

THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY? THE VOICE OF YOUNG POLISH SCHOLARS

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The Future of the University? The voice of young Polish scholars

Abstract

Changes of universities should not be a result of administrators' and university managers' decisions (as a top-down approach), but of initiatives from the academic community. It is a kind of third way, which goes beyond the liberal discourse of the capitalist, who want to turn universities into companies, but it is not only the realization of the vision of the university officials.

Taking into account our research and educational experience, we would like to introduce a wider perspective on the role of the contemporary university – regarding the core-periphery position of universities in a global world. In addition, our aim is to show how strategies of resistance can be built, which will result in effective and sustainable conversion of thinking about the university as an institution in shaping and creating an elite, as well as developing mechanisms of pro-quality, taking into account social factors. To reveal this way of thinking and show possibilities of taking action, we describe the main Polish initiatives that can change the university world in every field.

An example of such a social movement is Citizens of Academia (*Obywatele Nauki*). Its members are young (usually post-doctoral), as well as more experienced scholars, who, despite the fact of achieving scientific and academic success, are working for the common good and the good of the university seen as an important social institution. The university ought to be an institution responsible for the process of social and cultural development.

We agree that research on the role and activity of the movement is important to understand the direction of changes of the (post)modern university and society. The goal of such ethnographically inspired research is diagnosis of a specific engaged academic community. The article will present conclusions of the pilot study, conducted among the founders and initiators of the ON movement.

Additional important objectives of the paper are to provide practical recommendations for policymakers, academic communities, research institutions and university administration, as well as answers to the question about possibilities of using the intellectual potential of young, talented, rebel and open scholars, to become a catalyst for desired change of the university, as well as development of personal careers of Polish academicians.

Keywords: contemporary university, social movements, Citizens of Academia

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Introduction

The general question *Quo vadis, Academia?* is posed by scholars, research administrators, journalists and public opinion in Poland in different contexts. We do not call into question the necessity of changes of contemporary universities, but we believe that the source of changes should be characterized by a bottom-up approach, especially by those who have already achieved notable scholastic success and understand the requirement for “creative destruction” of traditional forms of the university. Changes of universities should not be a result of administrators’ and university managers’ decisions (as a top-down approach), but of initiatives from the academic community, as emphasized by Jan Szczepański, the classical Polish sociologist, who stated: “External pressures [on universities] frequently cause the pretence of change” (1993: 9). It is a kind of third way, which goes beyond the liberal discourse of the capitalist, who want to turn universities into companies, but it is not only the realization of the vision of the university officials.

Taking into account our research and educational experience (including fellowships at the world’s top universities, and participation in numerous international research projects focused on problems of higher education, and their social/symbolic capital), we would like to introduce a wider perspective on the role of the contemporary university – regarding the core-periphery position of universities in a global world (Wallerstein 2004; Kwiek 2010; 2015). In addition, our aim is to show how strategies of resistance can be built, which will result in effective and sustainable conversion of thinking about the university as an institution in shaping and creating an elite (Hejwosz 2010; Kola 2011), as well as developing mechanisms of pro-quality, taking into account social factors. To reveal this way of thinking and show possibilities of taking action, we describe the main Polish initiatives that can change the university world in every field. These social academic initiatives may take different forms – associations and foundations, bodies, opinion leaders, scientific councils – but also can be new social movements (Gorlach and Mooney 2008; Krzeminski 2013; Sztompka 2010; Żuk 2001; Touraine 2010; 2011, 2013; Staniszkis 1984; Sennet 1992, 2012).

An example of such a social movement is *Obywatele Nauki* (www.obywatelenauki.pl). Its members are young (usually post-doctoral), as well as more experienced scholars, who, despite the fact of achieving scientific and academic success, are working for the common good and the good of the university seen as an important social institution. The university ought to be an institution responsible for the process of social and cultural development.

Hence, the goal of the ON movement is to defy the process of “de-universitification” of universities (Alvesson 2013). Members of this group are against the idea and practice of the neo-liberal university (Potulicka and Rutkowiak 2013), which is led by the idea of a for-profit university (Nussbaum 2010), measured by the effectiveness of commercialization of achievements (Berman 2012; Leslie and Slaughter 1998). The Citizens of Academia highlight the problem of the technocratic perspective of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, as well as the domination of bureaucracy (including academic bureaucracy).

The Citizens of Academia propose and encourage other scholars to seek constructive and parallel solutions, that, on the one hand, will respect the cultural, social and economic roots of the identity of the university, and, on the other hand, will have the ability to use the vitality of its *autopoiesis* (Lenartowicz 2015).

We agree that research on the role and activity of the movement is important to understand the direction of changes of the (post)modern university and society. The goal of such ethnographically inspired research is diagnosis of a specific engaged academic community. The aim of the pilot study, carried out as part of the wider project *Academic Social Movements in Poland* among representatives of this social movement, is diagnosis of academic initiatives involved in the affairs of the university and its development, including determining what solution should be taken to change this institution, using the enthusiasm of youth, creativity and sometimes even anger of the Citizens of Academia. The article will present conclusions of the pilot study, conducted among the founders and initiators of the ON movement. The preliminary research was designed primarily to indicate the main problems for further research, but also to demonstrate the chosen research perspective.

Additional important objectives of the paper are to provide practical recommendations for policymakers, academic communities, research institutions and university administration, as well as answers to the question about possibilities of using the intellectual potential of young, talented, rebel and open scholars, to become a catalyst for desired change of the university, as well as development of personal careers of Polish academicians (Waltoś and Rozmus 2012).

Academic initiatives and social movements in Poland

University reforms in Poland after the political system’s transformation in 1989, which were grounded mainly in external pressure from the government, did not bring the expected results

(Czerepaniak-Walczak 2013; Kościelniak and Makowski 2012; Sławek 2002). We believe that it is necessary to restart the process of change. Reforms should come from the members of Academia who treat the university as a public good (Nixon 2012; Filippakou). There is a lack of studies and writings devoted to this issue in Poland. Therefore, we are inclined to believe that bottom-up initiatives can strengthen the initiative of top-down ones, and *vice versa*.

In recent years, in the Polish academic world there have arisen several social initiatives aimed at introducing changes in universities. These changes are defined in different ways, which may result not only from the experience, knowledge and commitment of members of the movement, but also from the definition of social movements as such. There are many different definitions, but they have a common element, which is rebellion and dissatisfaction with the existing situation (Nowosielski 2012: 10-12).

Academic definitions are usually similar to those created by social activists engaged in social movements or those who are becoming more and more influential in contemporary societies – bloggers and citizen journalists. One of them is Paul Mason, English broadcaster, author of the book *Why It's Still Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions* (2013). Mason explains why now in Western countries people are increasingly organizing themselves to express their opposition and different points of views to the political, business and mass media mainstream. He offered twenty reasons explaining why people need to rebel against authority and cooperate with other people to create a new quality of community. Mason points out that the most important reasons is the fact that “At the heart of it all is a new sociological type: the graduate with no future” (Mason 2013). It is a paradox, because in a world that has achieved an unprecedented cultural, economic and civilizational standard of living, there are people without any perspective of living and working, despite their high education, excellent skills and flexibility. Work (especially work in the “academic sector”) becomes a rare good (and right), which is unreachable for those whose economic and social capital is lower than the successful others (Poławski 2012; Standing and Jandrić 2015).

The same idea/social problem is described in another important book for the 30+ generation, written by Guy Standing (2011). The author calls the 30-year-old social group the “precariat” because of difficult and unstable social and professional conditions, the inability to obtain professional advancement, and – worst of all – no guaranteed pension in the future.

Social initiatives and movements in contemporary Poland are not always caused by social difficulties in living or at work, which will be described below. Many of them are opposed to

the institutional, top-down approach changes that the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and other control institutions are trying to implement into the daily practice of the university. Solutions and reforms are almost entirely bureaucratic and are not related to a real change in the direction of innovation to support the economic and social development of the country. Hence, there are critical voices calling for these types of changes. They can take different forms such as boycotts and strikes, but the activists want to promote new solutions and visions of the modern university.

Academic social movements are more or less local and based on formal or non-formal education. They work in the public sphere (also in virtual reality, e.g. Facebook), but often their work ends after the establishment of the committee or spreading a kind of manifesto focused only on one professional group (professors, adjuncts, students or PhD candidates). They can either be a one-off action or be based on regular work of its members. Rarely their activities and opinions reach a wider audience.

Let us make a short overview of academic social movements in contemporary Poland.

(1) One of the oldest movements and social activities within the university in Poland is the Independent and Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity (*NSZZ Solidarność*). This is the largest trade union in Poland. It brings together employees of different industries, occupations and qualifications. The primary purpose of Solidarity was, and still is, to fight for better working conditions. They are “Employees who can organize together to negotiate better collective agreements, fairer treatment and higher wages” (www.solidarność.org, 15.04.2016).

Solidarność was established in 1980 (registration took place in Warsaw on November 10, 1980), mainly in order to defend workers' rights, but quickly became a major force of democratic opposition against the communist regime. Initially, Solidarity created numerous strike committees, including at universities (e.g. at the most important Polish universities – the University of Warsaw and Jagiellonian University committees operated from the beginning of Solidarity in 1980). The committees deal with non-compliance of workers' rights at universities, but they also engage in strictly political activities related to current events in the country (organized marches in defence of free media, political picketing as an expression of support for certain political groups, etc.). In addition, one of the activities is counselling for its members (mainly advice on labour law). This part of the Solidarity trade union activity is still very important and visible within Polish academia.

(2) Another academic initiative is the nationwide, although founded in Warsaw, Polish Crisis Committee of Humanities (*Komitet Kryzysowy Humanistyki Polskiej, KKHP*), established in 2013 (a year later it was transformed into an association). The committee was founded to overcome the crisis of higher education and Polish scholarship, and in particular its activity was focused on the recovery of the Polish humanities. The first spectacular KKHP action was a protest against termination of the course of philosophy at the University of Białystok.

KKHP appears often in public debates to discuss the issue of stratification and internal ranking of Polish universities. It deprecates these acts as very harmful, because they popularize neoliberal assumptions of growth and change at Polish universities. The result of numerous debates of the Committee in various groups was the Congress of KKHP, organized in February 2015, where members of the Committee discussed the demands of anti-crisis solutions, and – a media event – the Black Procession of Polish Academia in June 2015 in Warsaw. The procession resembled a funeral procession, and its pretext was the metaphorical death of Polish scholarship, mainly the humanities and social sciences. Those academics who could not join the march, both individuals and institutions, as a sign of solidarity with the “mourners” hung out black flags on the buildings of departments or institutes.

(3) The social movement Citizens of Academia (*ON – Obywatele Nauki*) was established in Warsaw at the beginning of 2012. It brings together people who want to be involved in work for a comprehensive change of the Polish system of academic training, hiring, promotion of professional evaluation of universities, research and science funding. The roots of the movement are correlated with another social initiative. The inspiration and impetus for ON was the movement Citizens of Culture, based on the claim that “culture is the sphere of human and social life that requires special civil care” (*Manifesto* 2012).

The ON aimed to initiate a public and fact-based debate on the shape of Polish scholarship and education. In their view, it has to avoid ideology and politics and instead focus on action and pro-quality goals that would not merely serve the development of research as a goal in itself, but also foster the advancement of Polish academics. The citizens, weary of the wailing and pessimistic tone of the current debate, approached the topic from a broad perspective and for this reason decided to use not only the media, but also the non-governmental sector. The private sector is also given its say, especially the companies that have to take part in creating new technologies – and (co)finance the related research work – so that they may be truly innovative and compete successfully on the global market. The goal of the debate promoted

by the ON is to seek answers to such questions as the purposes of scholarly work and scholars themselves as well as the desired approaches to education and research that would influence the social development in a potentially all-encompassing manner.

The movement is bound not only to promote specific solutions, but also provoke a systemic approach which would include scholars themselves. The success is not only supposed to be gauged by the introduced changes and the reform of universities, but it also has to bring about the increase of the sense of community into academia, the restoration of the value-based ethos, the call for solidarity, responsibility and involvement. The informal nature of the movement, as well as the absence of any inner structure, is its undeniable asset.

The first action of the ON was the publication of the *Manifesto*, concerning the whole range of education practices (from pre-school to university education). Its principles are widely conceived so that everyone can support them and make them his or her own. The *Manifesto* includes the main thesis that education is a complex of interrelated elements related to the economy, business and the non-governmental sector. Schools and universities should prepare their alumni for life in today's highly unpredictable and unstable world (Baumann 2006). In such a world permanent self-education and critical, emancipatory thinking is very important (Nussbaum 2004).

By 15 March 2016 the *Manifesto* had been signed by 1 948 people (www.obywatelenauki.pl, 15.04.2016) The *Manifesto* was signed by prominent Polish professors and people known for their public intellectual engagement, e.g. the former rector of the University of Warsaw, President of the Board of the Foundation for Polish Science, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. This strong support for the ON demonstrates the need for such an initiative.

(4) Another academic initiative is created by the University of Warsaw's students. Their aim is to change the ethos and mission of the University. The movement was called the Involved University (*Uniwersytet Zaangażowany – UZ*) and was formed by students who do not want to allow this culture-producing institution to be transformed into a company that treats students as customers and does not let them participate in its work. The UZ accused the ministerial and institutional authorities of a lack of transparency in the functioning of the University and also imposing statutory changes without consulting them with the student government. The UZ works for the restoration and renewal of the student movement and the student culture treated widely – as creating knowledge, but also as reconstruction of the ethos of the student.

(5) Equally important is another informal group founded in Warsaw in 2011 named the New Opening of the University (*Nowe Otwarcie Uniwersytetu – NOU*). The NOU was established by students, graduate students and young scholars to monitor the reforms in higher education and science introduced by the Minister of Science and Higher Education – Barbara Kudrycka in 2011. These reforms aimed to commercialize both research and education at university level. Activists focused on research activities rather than protest. The result of its activity is a report on working conditions at universities *There is no Time for Research and Writing. Working Conditions of Young Scholars Employed at Polish Universities*.

(6) *The Open Space Committee Release Education* should also be mentioned among the minor movements, formed as an initiative of doctoral students at the University of Gdansk in order to protest against the closing of the university as well as the neoliberal ministerial reforms. (7) The next academic initiative is The University of Solidarity (US) created to reduce the doctoral salaries within grants in the National Science Centre. The social action (8) Lublin 9 Alternative of Thinking and Acting is the initiative "for alternative thinking and action, established in protest against the commercialization of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, especially against dismissing four hundred members of the cleaning staff – mostly women" (Szadkowski 2015: 317).

Citizens of Academia – the Research Project

The main idea of social movements is action. Therefore, the presented initiatives are defined as a process rather than as an organization. It allows permanent learning and inclusion activity among its new members. The ON address their activities at local groups associated with universities. They look for university local leaders who may attract others. The group of initiators co-ordinate the work of the leaders and members. Their role, however, is organizational in nature – they abstain from managing the movement directly (they are not formed into a structure such as the board of the ON). They also act as spokespersons of the ON: they attend important consultation sessions organized by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the National Science Centre, take part in conferences concerning the role of research (e.g. the Academic Culture Congress in Kraków in 2014) and gain wide acclaim in the public sphere, mainly on account of their ever more frequent interviews for newspapers and radio stations, as well as social media and the Internet.

This article is devoted to the presentation of the results of a pilot study for the project *Ethnography of Academic Social Movements in Poland*³. The research is inspired by ethnographic and anthropological methodologies (Kostera 2005), but also takes into account pedagogical action research (Červinková and Gołębniak 2010, 2013) and studies on higher education (Leja 2013). Therefore, methods used in this study are: in-depth interviews (IDI) with four leaders and members of the movement, participant observation, as well as discourse analysis (DA). An important aspect of the research in the context of conclusions and possible applications, but also for the conceptualization and operationalization of the research, is engagement of both authors in the activities of the movement.

The main advantage of this type of research is the ability to take into account the social context, but also specific cases, which exemplify this context (Flick 2007a: 14). The authors used the ethnographic method because it enables multivariate analysis based on long-term commitment of the researcher and data collected by different methods and techniques (Angrosino, 2007: 45-46). Such an approach also requires care of the quality of research, and therefore the most commonly used method here, triangulation data sources (Flick 2007b). This in turn helps provide the fullest and in-depth answers to the problems and research questions. Thanks to the method employed, we could gain more information about the motivation of Citizens of Academia to work, act and research. The authors of the project are interested in the issue of synergies between the initiatives of the academic community and the expectations of the ministry and university authorities regarding the direction of change. What is important for academic social initiatives? Do they have a chance to make changes to the Academy? What/who is responsible for the success of these movements? What helps in implementation of the movement's demands? How important are interpersonal relationships, community experiences, related biographies and "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980: 171) to shift from neoliberal politics to the politics of community?

³ The pilot study was conducted by the ethnographic method based on in-depth interviews aimed at understanding the meaning of the central and the most important topics (Kvale, 2007: 42). The pilot study (interviews) was conducted in February and March 2015 in Warsaw, but the authors have also been participants of the ON movement for 1.5 years (2014-2015). The interviews lasted about 2 hours each and were organised by the authors in Warsaw.

The authors are co-authors of the report with diagnoses of and proposals for changes of Polish science and higher education. This document titled *Pact for Science* includes a number of solutions and reforms for universities and ministry. The authors of the present article have written numerous texts – academic as well as popular – describing the ON activity (Kola 2015a; Kola 2015b).

The Citizens of Academia – the pilot study⁴

The ethnographic studies among the Citizens of Academia allowed for the formulation of the initial conclusions regarding the creation of this group, its motivation to work, as well as the character of the group's activity and the goals they set for themselves. The most frequent word that appears in the statements provided by the founders of the ON social movement is "frustration", which seems to be the main motivation initiating the creation of the movement. The social or even friendly element is an additional aspect here, as one interviewed person said:

"I have known M. since forever. He was my best man at my wedding, and I was his" (R2).

The psychological as well as the informal motivation of the activities of the Community should be pointed out. One of the founders mentioned that:

"the movement's participants came from friendships and private relationships. (...) M.(...) is very outgoing, broad-minded and even has an obsession, I would say, with dialogues" (R4).

The social capital possessed by the community participants who live in Warsaw, the capital city of the country, where the best Polish university – the University of Warsaw – is located, plays an important role here, too. It is a lot easier to create any structures, even an informal organization, if it is possible to rely on the support and the kindness of coworkers, family or colleagues.

The last person to be studied was an interesting one who, as she put it herself, is an example of "the second wave" (R3) of the movement, because she joined it in April 2012. Before that, she participated in a variety of administrative work at the university and this is how she knew about the system which was causing "a great loss of energy" (R3). After observing the work of the different institutions inside the university, she came to the conclusion that "the community should be able to decide on its own fate" (B3). Although she did not possess any experience in voluntary work, she had the knowledge about the university structures and the methods of operation, and so she joined the movement in order to be able to change the solutions dictated from above.

The ON participant recalled that the conversation she had with one of the movement members, Beata Chmiel, the founder of a movement similar in its objectives, the Citizens of Culture,

⁴ The citations in this part of the text are derived from the in-depth interviews. In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewed people, their names have not been indicated.

was crucial for the foundation of *the* Citizens of Academia movement. She asked him a question:

“Why would the academics not want to do anything for themselves?” (R2).

It was the beginning of 2012, when this “frustration” was boiling over together with the feeling of hope that it was possible to actually change the existing reality. The need for change was observed by everybody.

The motivation to create the movement was, *inter alia*, the need to stop complaining and convert the bad energy into an involved discussion inspired by the experiences of the founders gained abroad by observing the ways people communicated there. The interviewed participant added that the movement had a motto:

“Let’s gather up and start a mass mobilization, not as a form of a strike and negation, though, and not against the authorities, but rather as reviewers of the changes taking place. Perhaps it was about agency, subjectivity, and the fact that the implemented reforms were not consulted with us” (R1).

Thus, the first demand was very important:

“to seek people interested in change” who will make a strong declaration to support the activities and the proposals of the members of the movement. It was consistent with the objectives of the founders, but also it was generally understood that the formulation of the most universal *Manifesto* was necessary. The document had to be open but not populist in character. Despite the lack of any experience, the members developed solutions the main principle of which was “(...) to act independently of the establishment” (R2).

In the beginning, the support of third parties was needed. The interviewed person recalled, *inter alia*, the setting up of the direction by the befriended PR people, who suggested:

“to go forward and not backwards; to move on, because setting up the ground rules is good for many reasons, but it is crucial to move to the next phase, because of this and that... And I think that for most of the activities of the other organizations before us this was the key point – having a group of people who can observe this from the outside and also who have the practical knowledge to observe us and our environment” (R1).

Moreover, the watershed moment can actually be indicated. In September, 2012, during the Warsaw Science Festival, a public collection of signatures for the support of the Citizens of Academia took place the permission of which was provided by the previous director of the Festival, Maciej Geller. Thanks to that the ON members could enter every event and lecture.

The response to the demands of the Citizens of Academia were not always positive, though:

“You would have to see the collision we had with the representatives of Solidarity. They told us straight up that the situation of academia is catastrophic and in order to change it, more funding for scholarship is needed; otherwise, nothing will help. We, on the other hand, said that this is not the way to do it, because if we add money without any reforms, we will only be keeping up with the system and nothing will change. We need to connect all the elements which are linked to two factors: the change in the mentality of the ruling parties as well as the change in the structures existing in our environment” (R1).

The attitude adopted in the conducted dialogue is very important, as are the conversations with each professional group – the professors, the young academics, the undergraduate or Ph.D. students, as well as the ministerial authorities.

“I think that what really makes us different is that we talk to everybody, and we don’t make any enemies” (R1), says one of the participants. “When I created the movement, I made a wrong hypothesis”, because:

“surely, the scientists are educated people; therefore, if they are educated, it means that statistically the awareness of the society should be higher, and if it is higher, then the percentage of people joining the social movement in order to act in their own interest should be higher, too” (R1)

– and that was a big mistake (R1).

The respondent commented on the scientific work in the following words:

“Currently, the path of academia is more risky and difficult in comparison with the paths of the so-called regular labour market. It used to be a cushy job, and now it is more difficult. The principles are not clear, and they keep being changed. It is difficult to know now what can be considered to be the criterion of excellence; therefore, instead of true scientific excellence, and instead of asking the proper questions, we score points”(R4).

There are also weak spots of the movement’s activity which can be evaluated based on the experience of other professional groups or community work:

“I personally coordinated a public debate which was a rather bitter experience. We had a very low attendance even for the well-received subjects or when the media attended and famous media personalities, such as Sylwia Chutnik [popular young Polish writer, journalist and activist – A.M.K., K.L.], were acting as panellists. Even then we had a low attendance during the debates” (R4).

The spirit of Solidarity is often present in the stories of the community members. When asked about the experiences with community work, one of the respondents answered:

“Besides abolishing socialism – there were none” (R2). He participated in the oppositional activity in 1989 as well as during the first free elections in Poland on June 4, 1989, which he concluded in the following way: “as citizens, we changed the reality then” (R2).

Currently, the social activation to undertake joint actions to defend our own interests “is our failure rather than a success” (R2). The respondent predicted that this is related to the far-reaching atomization of citizens as well as the workers of science, and thinking in terms of competition rather than cooperation. The other reason for the poor commitment is the general feeling of discouragement in a situation where the arguments about the mission and the ethos of the university simply do not work. It should be noted that there is a total lack of faith in change, because the “system is superior” (R2). The most active people in the movement are the young academics, but also the oldest ones who are close to retirement, who believe in the need for change.

The saddest thing is that the apathy and lack of any social activity among the scientists is happening in a situation of a particular cultural change and a political transformation where democratic institutions allow for a dialogue with the authorities.

What connects the founders of the Citizens of Academia, but not necessarily the members of the movement, are the relatively common views on life and the social system, and the value of scholarship. One member said:

“I have the impression that the ideals about building our own capital will only clog the ears of the students, and only the information such as... invest in yourself, open up to the whole wide world, scholarship is the key that unlocks the world would actually hit the spot” (R1).

Scholarship has an autotelic value for all the interviewed persons, but it is also a passion which is turned into a tormenting experience by bureaucracy. One of them says:

“We are not taught, we as the Polish people, as academics, we got mixed up with scoring points, rarely raising our heads to grant ourselves the right to think about how this system should be, how we would like to be treated, what our career paths and our jobs should be like, and what role scholarship should play for society” (R1).

The citizens believe in the possibility of changing academia in Poland, which is not an elitist island. We should take care of academia as a whole – as a set of social, civilization, culture-

making functions. It is a distant goal, but "in a variety of details, we can make an impact on reality" (R2). Thus, what are the functions of the University? One of the respondents stated that it is "1) conducting research at the highest level, 2) training of the elite participants of public debate, and 3) educating teachers" (R2).

Is Academia and community work the highest value in life for them? Perhaps it is not, but they remain high next to the other values related to the life outside the personal sphere. For one respondent, it is "cooperation, doing something together with the people I really appreciate" (R4), and for another – "I think that getting along with others is the basic value inside and outside" (R1).

Does this activity have important people or masters? The respondent answered that in the following words: "I have many masters, and I have none. I try not to treat them as masters. I like to live with smart people, and if someone is stupid in a certain area and smart in another, then let's take advantage of that wise part" (R1). Again, we can see a personal, individual kind of approach but with a clear community perspective.

Conclusions

We have noted certain concerning aspects in relation to the creation and the maintenance of the activities with the characteristics of resistance which result from the pilot study implemented in 2015. The most important conclusions are presented below:

1. **Lack of leaders of the movements and the academic initiatives.** It is necessary to support the leaders and people implementing specific activities of the initiatives. Usually, the leaders take on tasks that gradually start to exceed their knowledge and time availability. This leads to the situation in which they lose the energy that could be directed towards the integration and management activities.
2. **Phases in introducing changes.** The vision of change in the academic world, as proposed by the Citizens of Academia, is introduced partially, step by step, in stages – so that it is accepted by most of the academics in a positive way; however, the evolution of changes causes even the radical changes to be unnoticed, unclear.
3. **Socialization and the inactivity and lack of critical thinking ability.** This does not apply to the activists who, because of psychosocial predispositions, are a minority in the world of academia, but to the passive majority of the employees of the system of aca-

demia and higher education. In schools, the Polish people are taught to follow the orders of a teacher who has a strong authority within society. The students are not taught to become the leaders of social change, but to know how to be subordinate and adapt to the existing reality. This also results from the strong traditional family model and the upbringing in a family in which the positions of the members are strongly hierarchical. The situation is similar at universities, because the relationships are highly formalized, rigid and subjected to the status system of universities.

4. **The “tribes” of the privileged dominating the “outlaws” of the system.** This is related to point 3, but it is important to indicate the internal and distinct character of the privileged groups which enjoy the benefits not always resulting from substantive causes but being the effect of the possessed and multiplied social capital. Those who speak their own voice are doomed to be, in a sense, university outlaws, as they will never be part of the university bodies, their projects will never be supported financially, and they will not be helped in professional and scientific advancements.
5. **"Bad reputation" of resistance and revolution.** In Poland, despite the strong opposition tradition of Solidarity, the majority of citizens still adopt the conformist attitude, especially when the socio-economic conditions force them to focus on caring for their livelihood and employment. Today, the social hero is not an activist or a rebel but a conformist who can blend into the system in order to use it to carry out his or her own (mainly financial) particular interests. It is also linked to increasingly more popular among the social activists popular theories of Karl Marx about introducing social change through revolutions (sometimes bloody). In a post-socialist country like Poland, this tradition is not popular among the majority of citizens, fearing a sudden and radical change.
6. **Unfavourable economic situation in the country.** Poland is not an economic powerhouse, and its geopolitical location makes this situation more difficult. Throughout the last several dozen years, the economy of this country could not develop in the same way as other European countries could. The centralized economy invested neither in academia nor in higher education. The situation of such a poor level of financing academia does not result in an increase in the level of Polish academia today, when compared to the universities of the west.

7. **The postcolonial mentality.** The researchers of universities indicate that there are universities which have a significant and basic influence on scholarship. Mostly, though, the position of a university is measured by the placement in the world ranking. Poland is usually not included in those rankings or it is placed very low, which is considered by the researchers as well as the neoliberal ruling party to indicate bad conditions of scholarship in Poland. Not often, however, is it understood how important it is to build a model for it based on the specific social, political and historical conditions.

The category of resistance appears in research and publications of the current critical pedagogy which uses the "language of criticism and capabilities". "The critical pedagogy being the driving force has the task of changing the lifelong conviction, maintained by many students and teachers (the academics? - A.M.K., K. L.), that they are too insignificant and too weak to cause any transformations in the social order" (Bilińska-Suchanek 2003: 47). Zbigniew Kwieciński says that "we must tear apart the universality of the beliefs about opportunism, the resignation of one's self and values as the sole source of social advancement" and "postulate of social creativity" and "self-realization through changes outside own self" (Kwieciński 1992: 30). One can and should act differently for the common good, but also to improve one's position in the academic world. Without this type of thinking there is moral emptiness, and the values of emancipation disappear. For this reason, "Pedagogy of resistance suggests a departure from deterministic thinking, because strengthening and validating the pessimistic and fatalistic thinking serves "as an alibi for passivity and pedagogical impotence" (Melosik 1994: 54). It criticizes and in fact rejects the understanding of the goal of education to serve as economic efficiency. Schools are more than "the warehouses of enterprises" (Bilińska-Suchanek 2003: 48). Lech Witkowski, on the other hand, argues that school (and, in our context, college) can be such a public place in "which dialogue and criticism cultivate the feelings and habits of democracy" (Witkowski 1993: 219). He sees here three planes of school functioning which are guided by the ideology of resistance:

1. "Realizing the fight in all of those places which are not entirely dominated by the influence and the control of the state.
2. Developing the activity towards the culturally opposing public spheres (outside of school) in order to create new 'forms of collective ruling authority' and 'the practice of self-governance'.

3. Developing 'alcoves of cultural resistance' directed, thanks to the creation of new forms of social relations and practices, to fight objectification, exclusion, and the suffering of particular groups and environments" (Witkowski 1993: 220).

In academia, resistance appears in several contexts: social, psychological, moral, and cognitive. It is defined by Thomas Kuhn as one of the main mechanisms in the development of knowledge (Kuhn, 1962). There is active and passive resistance, and Ewa Bilińska-Suchanek has clarified this simple classification (based on her own research). She has distinguished four types of resistance: 1 transformative (resistant activities in order to introduce change), (2) accommodative (situated between conformism and resistant behaviour), (3) passive (usually these are very subtle activities), (4) aggressive (which are destructive in nature) (Bilińska-Suchanek 2003: 85-94).

Are the young, talented and open-minded people the future of the university? The argumentation presented in this work, supported by the selected elements of the ethnographic research studies, conducted among the main representatives of the Citizens of Academia social movement, indicate that the answer to this question may be positive. The initiatives of the movement are often ahead of their time and are the source of inspiration for the politicians who make their decisions regarding the direction of changes at the level of the higher education system, which eventually will transfer to the institutional level. The members of the Citizens of Academia are not affiliated with any political party, yet they have been invited to offer their opinions regarding the projects of changes of legal regulations regarding the higher education system, as well as having been invited to participate in the works of the Polish University Accreditation Commission and the consultative teams appointed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The creative resistance represented by the members of the Citizens of Academia is starting to bring results in which the movement's success can be recognized.

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