

## Call for Papers

**Special Issue of the Polish Sociological Review (vol. 4/2026)**



### **Knowledge Societies in Contemporary Post-Socialism**

This special issue brings together papers that examine the evolving landscape of knowledge societies within the post-socialist environment. This issue aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how knowledge societies evolve beyond Western paradigms, shedding light on the unique trajectories of post-socialist countries.

The concept of knowledge societies emerged in the 1990s within “Western intellectual milieu” (Stehr, 1994; Gibbons et al., 1994) to describe the transformation of social institutions related to post-industrial economies. This shift was characterised by an increasing share of employment in high-skilled service sectors, the rise of social investment strategies focused on human capital within welfare systems, and the growing prominence of lifelong learning as an ideological framework (Brown et al., 2001). A key driver of this shift has been the spread of computing and networking technologies, which revolutionized information processing and communication (Castells, 2010).

We understand post-socialism as historical, political, economic, and sociocultural conditions — as well as an ongoing process — that defines societies undergoing a transition from state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe towards alternative socio-political and economic order. Post-socialist countries, emerging from a distinct historical and economic modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000), “adopted” and uniquely “adapted” institutions of knowledge society at a later stage, with specific timing, and often under peculiar economic and social conditions (Cook & Inglot, 2022; Farkas, 2016; Szelenyi & Wilk, 2010). Three decades after the collapse of communism, it is essential to assess the extent to which post-socialist countries have transitioned into knowledge societies, or what role might the transition play in “diluting” (Drozda, 2024) the post-socialist state of affairs.

This analysis is particularly timely. In the contemporary political economy, knowledge-based growth continues to be recognised as a cornerstone of economic success (Hall, 2020, 2022; Hassel et al., 2022), while the social investment approach has emerged as the prevailing strategy in welfare policy (Hemerijck, 2017; Hemerijck & Ronchi, 2022). At the same time, technological advances are profoundly reshaping the relationships between knowledge, skills, power, and society (Zuboff, 2019).

On the one hand, the digitalisation of society — propelled by the rise of online platforms (van Dijck et al., 2018) — gained renewed momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic (Herteis & Billett, 2023), resulting in novel mechanisms for the control and monetisation of knowledge. On the other hand, the anticipated surge of artificial intelligence — what Suleyman and Bhaskar (2024) term “the coming wave” — poses the potential to disrupt the very foundations of knowledge societies: altering the value attributed to high-skilled service work, redefining the nature of intellectual labour, and transforming the skills required to navigate and participate in social life.

This special issue welcomes theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions that explore key aspects of knowledge societies within post-socialist contexts, including:

1. Theoretical papers that critically examine the relevance (or irrelevance) of the knowledge society theory in post-socialist settings. Related theories such as learning society, information society, or digital society are also of interest.
2. Conceptual papers that advance frameworks for understanding different dimensions of knowledge societies within the post-socialist context.
3. Methodological papers focused on the operationalisation and measurement of various aspects of knowledge societies.
4. Empirical studies that investigate trends in post-socialist countries, such as transformations in labour markets, human capital development, skills formation, approaches to lifelong learning and digital skills or digital inequalities based on the newest empirical evidence.

## Timeline

**Expression of interest – 30 September 2025:** please send an extended abstract of 500 – 1000 words and a working title to the guest editors by email.

**Feedback on abstracts – 31 October 2025:** by this date, guest editors will provide feedback on the submitted abstracts.

**Full article submission – 28 February 2026:** manuscripts will be handled by the journal submission system. All articles will undergo double-blind peer review.

**Publication** of the special issue is planned for late 2026.

## Guest Editors: Jan Kalenda and Tomáš Karger

**Jan Kalenda** is an Associate Professor of Adult Education at the Research Centre and Head of the Doctoral Study Programme in Education at the Faculty of Humanities. He is the author of *Formation of Adult Learning Systems in Central Europe* (Springer, 2024), and has published extensively on lifelong learning, skill formation, educational systems, and historical institutionalism. His work has appeared in international journals such as the *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *Higher Education Quarterly*, *European Journal of Education*, and *Czech Sociological Journal*, among others.

He co-edited a special issue of the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* on the use of large-scale survey data in lifelong learning, and has recently contributed to editing a forthcoming volume, *A Modern Guide to Adult Learning Systems* (Edward Elgar, 2025), which explores the global evolution of

adult learning systems. Involving fifteen countries, this publication constitutes the most comprehensive collection of national case studies on adult learning systems to date.

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**Tomáš Karger** is director of Research Centre at the Faculty of Humanities, Tomáš Baťa University. At the Research Centre, he coordinates research into various aspects of education and learning. He holds Ph.D. in sociology from Palacký University and has been researching various aspects of digitalization since his Ph.D. study. More recently, his research interest shifted towards investigating digitalisation in adult learning. He is the author of *The Weight of the Intangible: Knowledge Networks in Free and Open Source Software Development* (published in English by Palacký University) and of numerous studies in peer-reviewed journals such as *Economy & Society*, *Information, Communication & Society*, *Social Media + Society*, *Time & Society*, or the *International Journal of Lifelong Education*.

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