

From the Editor

Continuity and Change at the *Polish Sociological Review*: Inaugural Editorial

An inaugural editorial is difficult to pen at the best of times, but seems especially trying as the world around us constantly shifts and exacerbates the sense of living in the ‘catastrophic society’ marked by omnipresent risk, tangible hazards, and anxiety (Beck 1992: 49). As scholars, and especially as sociologists, we must ask: how can we navigate this poly-crisis? Further, given that positive sentiment towards science does not automatically translate into trust in academic researchers (Eurobarometer 2025), does ‘society’ even seek our guidance? In this editorial, I address this complex relationship, outlining my vision for the *Polish Sociological Review* (PSR) and its role in bridging the gap between sociological knowledge and the public.

Sociological Knowledge and Sociological Publics

The question of audience—who sociologists “work for”—is central to our discipline, a recurring theme in impactful past editorials (e.g., Imber 1995). This dilemma is deeply intertwined with the broader relationship between science and society. Recent years have witnessed the proliferation of fake news and conspiracy theories, particularly on social media, contributing to a perceived devaluation of scientific expertise (Mahl et al. 2022; Tangherlini et al. 2020). The often-repeated claim in this context is that ‘society’ has turned its back on knowledge. However, I argue that this is not the case, instead focusing on a failure in our communication, particularly vital and consequential during these trying times marked by fear (Tateo et al. 2022).

A recent example of this comes from the alarm raised by the 2025 Eurobarometer report on Europeans’ knowledge and attitudes towards science. The most frequently cited results carried clear undertones of disdain about an increase in respondents confused about basic facts, such as humans coexisting with dinosaurs. Unlike some commentators, I disagree that these results indicate we are entering dark times because the general public (or: society) is at fault and disregards science. In fact, I think we—as scholars—are partially to blame. Zooming in on conspiracies, half of those surveyed in Poland declared that viruses are created in science labs to control society. Crucially, there has been a 10% shift from the category of those who stated they ‘did not know’ what to think in 2021, as they—by

2025—became inclined to believe falsehoods. In simple terms, it is not necessarily ‘lack of knowledge’ but rather ‘uncertainty’ that is being replaced with incorrect information, suggesting that science communication is losing ground to illegitimate sources.

Sociology, betwixt and between the two modes of scientific and common knowledge, has been overly keen on proving itself to more rigorous sciences. As a result, as argued by Giza (2024: 215–216), we are ending up with knowledge that cannot be easily adopted by ‘society’ for its goals. In everyday life, scholarly results and recommendations—regarding social processes and events—become decontextualized from experience. Moreover, this lack of dialogue—between scientists and society—makes knowledge inaccessible as an emancipatory tool (Burawoy 2005). To illustrate this, researching practices of seeking parenting expertise among new mothers (Sarnowska, Pustulka 2025), we have shown vast uncertainty caused by competing knowledge regimes (Hecht 2001). At first glance, our data shared similarities with the Eurobarometer findings regarding somewhat dismissive attitudes held by interviewees concerning science: the women did not listen to their doctors, could not understand medical jargon, and made decisions by listening to ‘expert-influencers’ who shared anecdotes and sold bogus products. At the core, however, we recognized that the first-time mothers interviewed for the study were, simply put, very scared. They expressed fear of not being good enough, which led them to delve into the rabbit hole of today’s Internet. Feeling vulnerable and exposed to social judgment, along with experiencing a strong sense of fear for their newborn children, they were easy prey for ‘experts’ who were not scientifically grounded and often purported hoaxes for purely financial motivations. The absence of accessible sources paired with an abundance of illegitimate expertise is rendering us science-blind in our daily life. This underscores Anna Giza’s (2024: 227) point: the social crisis does not turn people against science; rather, our dismissal of public anxieties exacerbates the problem. We must move beyond simply decrying the proliferation of misinformation and instead focus on making our findings usable, acknowledging how we—as exemplified by the reactions to the Eurobarometer data—‘dismiss’ society too easily.

Facilitating Access

As I take on the duties of Editor-in-Chief, I set forth two key goals for the *Polish Sociological Review*. With the help of the Editorial Team and the new PSR Board, I aim to, in parallel, increase the journal’s visibility and contribution, and broaden access for those who have not previously engaged with us, including both authors and the general public. While recognizing that being published since 1961 is the journal’s great asset, I also argue that continuity and tradition must be complemented by strategic changes. These changes are directed towards making sociology published in the PSR more engaging, resonating with the spirit of public sociology, diversity, intersectionality, and socially responsible scholarship.

In practical terms, we will begin by reviving the practice of editorials, opening this space for discussion and diverse sociological voices. To this end, we have just launched the first call for special issue proposals, seeking to share responsibility for the journal with

guest editors. The PSR's open access policy not only underscores continuity in the journal's operations but also aligns with the mission of science, which should not be subject to gatekeeping and financial hurdles. The existing free-of-charge OA model, I believe, can be further capitalized upon when we launch social media channels. We hope to use online communication to reach new audiences and to translate our findings into engaging and exciting knowledge.

The late Michael Burawoy advocated “neither distance nor immersion but dialogue,” continuing that “the purpose of field work is not to strip ourselves of biases, for that is an illusory goal, nor to celebrate those biases as the authorial voice, (...but) to discover and perhaps change our biases through interaction with others” (1991: 4). I am very much a sociologist who thinks this way, not only as a recipe for good social research for public sociology—but also for sociology more broadly. Being open to dialogue is the key tenet of the timely yet rigorous double-blind peer review, for which the PSR has been known. It is the key practice of scholars sharing responsibility for high-quality submissions, feedback, and its consideration, an essential precondition for publishing impactful knowledge. As Anna Giza writes, a socially responsible attitude for sociologists is to “be sensible regarding our own assumptions, be aware that each subsequent theory is provisional, and avoid the lure of vain glory” (2024: 209). I invite you to join me as I try to put this into practice in my new editorial role at the *Polish Sociological Review*.

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