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Counselling in the Satellite Communication Era

The article outlines counselling of the satellite communication era, with counselling seen as a social process in which many social agents are involved. These include the organisers of social life and other society members: potential advice recipients, counsellors (employed in counselling services), researchers (counselling experts, counsellologists). In the industrial era, intentions at the foundation of counselling were different from those the agents of social life have now in the satellite communication era and the network society era. The author analyses this change in its broad context, emphasising endeavours to elaborate an anthropological theory of counselling and its role in solving global problems.

Key words: satellite communication era, intentions of social agents, multiple modernity, network society, counselling, counsellogy

Social, cultural and technological contexts of the development of counselling

Counselling is most frequently referred to as an interaction between a counsellor and an advice-seeker, which develops in direct interpersonal contacts. At the same time, little attention is paid to the fact that counselling takes place in the common space of social life, and its position and changing role in society as a whole are not analysed sufficiently. If, however, counselling is interpreted from the perspective of social and cultural anthropology, it turns out to be one of the processes of social life. In this case, society is defined not as a set of bond-creating relations (Giddens 2005), but rather as – more generally – a field of mutual relations. Society, then, is an inter-human space, in which people's activities sustain social life, constantly imbue it with dynamics and foster its formation, transmitting structural and cultural frameworks from generation to generation (Sztompka 2002). Taking into consideration the role of change in human work (particularly the changes in organisation and technology of work), we note tensions between equality and hierarchy, as well as between free and controlled access to markets and administration centres. The tensions contribute to diversification of contemporary civilisations, determine crystallisation of their cultural frameworks and modify social processes taking place

within them.¹ The agricultural, industrial or post-industrial eras are only a few names for different periods of social development. They have witnessed changes in production of both material and spiritual goods and, crucially for counselling, the emergence of new social relations and, broadly speaking, new modes of inter-human communication. The changes comprise not simply 'physical' modifications enabling people to communicate, but also alterations in the meaning communication has for people involved in it. According to Mieczysław Adamczyk, the following stages can be listed in civilised countries: 'the era of traditional communication (with messengers and mail coaches); the Gutenberg era (the invention of print in the 15th century and its applications), the era of Morse's telegraph (from 1844); the radio era started by Marconi (1901); the TV era (from 1911); the computer era (from 1946), and the satellite era' (Adamczyk 2011, p. 24). Clearly, inter-human communication has kept transforming along with the appearance of new technical inventions, which have changed its forms and extended its spatial range. Starting with the direct face-to-face contacts, communication has proceeded into its mediated form, in which communicating individuals, aided by complicated devices, can see each other even while staying poles apart. Contemporary society of the satellite communication era is mostly associated with using technical and technological inventions, for example, the fax or the Internet, which have modified communication, the ways of participating in various events, and even modes of work.

In order to penetrate processes taking place in society as well as facts and events involving people, one must go beyond mere understanding of how modern devices can be applied. To comprehend the social texture, one must make account of various intentions lying behind the acts of the particular individuals who resort to them and create their unique inter-human space.² In counselling, identification of particular individuals' intentions is even more urgent, as the advisory activity is rooted in inter-human communication, addresses profound experiences of help-seekers and involves intimate relationships between a client and a counsellor. And this the major difference between counselling and other processes of social life.

What distinguishes counselling from other processes are the intentions of people who expect to be helped and of those who help others by supporting them with advice, guidance and consultation, or contribute to creating conditions essential for

¹ According to Katz and Kahn, several subsystems can be distinguished in the organization of social life: **production** – (technical) processing of energy and information, manufacturing of material and non-material goods; **support** – innovations, new technologies, placement of products; **consolidation** – keeping people in a system through recruitment, indoctrination or socialization (schools, courts of justice, churches); **adaptation** – investigating social trends, planning and internal transforming of organizations; **management** – exercising power, control, co-ordination and management of people's activities. Though it is not possible for counselling to be unequivocally classified, it can be located in the consolidation system (Katz, Kahn 1979, pp. 68-80).

² In explanations of events provided by social sciences, intentions play a role analogous to theoretical terms used to explain events in nature. The theoretical character of intentions is emphasised in rational choice theory (Grobler 2006, p. 230).

these facts, events and processes to arise. Although counsellors are usually not as much interested in the conditions and tools facilitating communication between aid-givers and aid-seekers as in what communication means for people involved in it, they cannot ignore civilisational developments which affect all social processes, including counselling.

Counselling in the era of telegraph, radio and television

To start with, I will outline the prevailing intentions of social agents of the previous periods, often – in the case of European civilisation – referred to as early capitalism, or ‘simple modernity’, which determined the development of counselling. This is when institutional counselling was born. The multidimensional spectrum of counselling was created not only by counsellors’ advisory activities, but also by the activities of state and local governments, elites, leaders of social, political and business organisations as well as prominent individuals, who played a key role in establishing or closing down particular social facilities. It mattered what was to happen with the potential clients of such institutions and, particularly, whether they would be useful for society. Driven by paternalistic attitudes, the organisers of social life were careful to precisely define the objectives of production, administrative, educational or judicial institutions and to effectively distribute tasks among particular employees. They also saw to it that various aid organisations, including counselling services, should have clear purposes and that establishing them should make sense. To check the level of professional competence of the staff employed and their usefulness for particular institutions, psychotechnics and scientific research on organisation and management were used.

Below, the whole counselling system is mapped to more precisely reproduce the intentions of particular social agents involved in counselling in that period.

- ▶ **The intentions of the organisers of social life:** economic development, upholding of law and order, organisational coherence, productivity; counselling as an improving ‘implant’ located in a particular organisation or social environment.
- ▶ **The intentions of other society members (potential advice recipients – *homo consultans*):** assuming a particular place in the social structure: school, workplace, political organisations, associations etc.; being adequate, effective and useful in increasing productivity and sustaining the quality of social life.
- ▶ **The intentions of counsellors (counselling services professionals):** diagnosing the clients’ problems that interfered with their ‘adaptation to society’, fostering clients’ readiness to solve their problems, get out of their difficult situation and become useful society members.
- ▶ **The intentions of researchers (counselling experts and counsellors):** utilising new psychological findings in counselling, designing reliable tools for measuring the advised people’s traits, developing methods of diagnosing various

problems, indicating ways of establishing contact in counselling interactions by methods conducive to increasing the clients' adaptability to the existing social structures.

The intentions of counselling as outlined above, as well as its contexts and other social agents' intentions, were rather stable; the pace and scope of social changes taking place across society were relatively small and, in general, the social structure was clearly recognisable. There was a clear division of roles; preferred values and desirable objectives were well defined. It was easy to differentiate between 'good' and 'evil'. Consequently, the legible frameworks were shaped for operations of different social agents (organisations, institutions and individuals), and criteria for the evaluation of ongoing processes and events were firmly established. Different 'products of culture', such as schools, courts of justice, counselling centres, etc., were supposed to support, strengthen and refine that status quo. Counselling became a positive inherent element of that landscape because, from the perspective of the organisation of social life, it was a product of culture that aimed to defuse in an ethical way the tensions brought about by the transformation processes (cf. Drabik-Podgórna, ed. 2007). Designed to constantly search for the ways to fulfil human needs and desires, it relieved stress and anxiety. By removing helplessness, it was supposed to maintain, or even raise, the level of social optimism. It was assumed that counselling interactions could facilitate social integration at its basic level (Giddens 2003, p. 132), and that the adviser committed to upholding the existing social order would not only support it but also enhance its cohesion. Therefore, counselling practice at that time took place mostly through direct inter-human encounters supplemented with contacts mediated by letters or phone calls. The organisers of social life focused less on the very interactions occurring 'within counselling' (i.e. on the ways of initiating and maintaining the adviser-advisee relations) and more on the general role that counselling (one of the components of social life and products of culture) fulfilled for the remaining social agents and society as a whole ('machine' or 'organism'). Counselling was supposed to optimise the social functioning of organisations and people. It was believed that through mutual interactions between their biological and cultural identities bound up with their natural and social environments, counsellors and their particular clients (Castells 2008), would enter the social life in a desirable, i.e. natural and peaceful, way. The interaction based on the adviser's knowledge and experience was expected to make this adaptation easier. And such means of communication as radio and television were considered suitable tools for counsellors to reinforce their capability of conveying the images of desirable and model behaviours, or detrimental and unwanted ones.

Employed in different institutions and convinced of their missionary role, advisers sought to ensure high effectiveness of counselling and produce efficient members of society. They concentrated on improving their methods (especially the diagnostic ones). Looking for the best solutions, they were inspired by findings and

developments in psychology, especially in the psychology of personality and mind, social psychology and, sometimes, in psychoanalysis (cf. Bruner 2006). The types of counselling interactions, their procedures, techniques employed and specialist instruments (tests, measuring tools, counselling spaces, etc.) were the main concern of both counselling practitioners and researchers.

Chronologically, the first purpose of counselling in Western civilisations was identifying the advisee's traits and potential (the 1st period of the industrial era) and then – stimulating the clients to discover their values themselves and fostering their willingness to reproduce them while working on themselves (the 2nd period). In the first stage, counselling used to be one of the forms of assistance which was built on the traits of an individual expected to join the social life with others' help; and in the second stage, counselling helped individuals to assist themselves in becoming efficient participants of social life. In the industrial era, professional advancement was bound up with people's membership in one of the organisations or institutions of production, administration, service sector, art or politics. Career was usually identified with the cyclic or linear ascent up the social ladder of positions, from an apprentice to a master or even a CEO (Szumigraj 2011).

Depending on the selected method of work (professional paradigm), the adviser applied directive guidance, used tests and employed psychometrics and special technical devices to help a client make career. Advisers planned with their clients further intellectual work on their problems, entering into dialogues and keeping them up by means of diverse methods (careful listening, paraphrasing, telling stories in different tenses, mirroring emotions, asking open questions, modelling, clarification, changing roles, etc.). Alternately, advisers adopted the attitude of a 'secular confessor' and building on the clients' emotions let them work out their own solution to their problem. Regardless of which position was assumed by counsellors, their job entailed domination over their clients because the counsellors were supposed to possess 'verified' knowledge about the human being and his/her relations to the world. Firstly, academic psychological knowledge enabled the adviser to efficiently diagnose and conduct a conversation, i.e. to initiate contact, listen, paraphrase, encourage the client to experiment with him/herself to identify and mentally solve their problems. Counsellors' knowledge, which usually equipped them with unambiguous answers, made them believe that they were competent to advise others on how to cope with their problems (Wojtasik 1997). The challenges that counsellors faced in the era of early industrialism pertained to their technical skills and personalities (cf. Ertelt, Schultz 2010; Guichard, Huteau 2005; Wojtasik 1993; 2011 et al.).

According to Manuel Castells, the emergence of the network society as a result of the technological and IT revolution caused the emergence of new social values incompatible with the established patterns of behaviour both in business and in the world as such. The relatively cautious tradition of the corporate world of the industrial era has been radically abandoned (Castells 2008, p. 23). This change was

followed by what can be described as a peculiar terrorism of the devices and modes of action dominant in the satellite era, which runs parallel to the culture of individualism (cf. Zierkiewicz, Drabik-Podgórna, eds. 2010). All these developments imply that it is necessary to revise the current conception of and to devise new methods of counselling.

The post-industrial network society and the society of the satellite communication era

Bearing in mind the new civilisational developments, Shmuel Eisenstadt analyses the multiple modernity and contends that irrespective of all differences among countries, nations or 'civilisations' across the world, all of them face a similar challenge. The challenge consist in inexhaustible openness and flexibility of the cultural-political program of modernity and the processes of its institutionalisation as well as in intensification of demands for inclusion and integration of large social sectors (Eisenstadt 2009, p. 391). He believes, however, that the global situation is highly diversified. Though some sectors in different civilisations share many features and even cope with the same problems, they apply remarkably different solutions. Writing about the new civilisational ramifications, M. Castells – a Spanish sociologist and researcher studying the influence of new technologies on social life (also on a global scale) – uses the term 'the network society'.³ He cites evidence for the fluid condition of various communities and emphasises their striving for sustaining their cultural, economic and political identities.

Referring to Eisenstadt's thought, one may assume that the best way to understand the contemporary world and the history of modernity is to view them as a process of constant construction and reconstruction of a multitude of cultural programs (Eisenstadt 2009, p. 397). Being a global www society, the multitude modernity is in fact a society of multiplied modernities. It is society with a specific form of organisation, in which producing, processing and transmitting information on a global scale is a fundamental source of productivity and political power. It is characterised by emphasis on the role of personalised devices, interactivity, networking and searching for new technological solutions (Castells 2008, p. 23). Undeniably, it is relevant to human communication in its mass form, which relies on increasingly sophisticated devices and enmeshes people in condensed information networks. In such context, interactions among people are becoming increasingly complex and their development – unpredictable, as the creative potential of the interactions

³ The morphology of the Web relies on the ease of adding particular elements to and separating them from it. As such, the Web with its susceptibility to alterations seems perfectly adjusted to structuring what is unstructured in social space. Networks are suitable instruments for the capitalistic economy based on innovations, globalization and decentralised clustering. It favours flexible and adaptable businesses and workers and makes it possible to endlessly construct and deconstruct culture and instantly transform new social moods and values for political communities (Castells 2008, p. 468).

themselves grows. As Anna Wachowiak puts it, *various social groups engaged in a given of activity are autonomous and hence no fixed centre of reference exists for people involved in a particular type of activity* (Wachowiak 2007, p. 20).

Whereas industrialism was oriented towards economic development, i.e. maximising production and involving as many human groups as possible in this process, Western 'informationism' aims at developing knowledge and enhancing the level of information processing technology based on a reduced number of performers and a flattened management hierarchy. In fact, information management has no boundaries, is not restricted to a specific organisation or to a delimited territory, and is shaping an increasingly global economy with the aid of satellite communication. As Eisenstadt observes, more and more frequently organisation of basic forms of production and styles of consumption, as well as management of their basic components (people, materials and machines), seems to be identical all over the world. Castells defines it as a dynamically and strategically planned, decentralised and coordinated network of self-programming individuals capable of self-regulation. All the participants of a given network are equally responsible for their tasks, and authority moves from one group to another depending on properties of a particular task. In such reality, the linear or cyclical development of professional competence is out of the question because people are expected to find individual solutions to problems and put them into practice, using their individual skills and tools (Bauman 2009).

Evidently, the post-industrial network society entails a complete transformation of the intentions of both variously placed social organisms as well as individuals. It is clear that the structures formed to maintain the social order or provide assistance are becoming less significant, and are being replaced with people's personal responsibility for coping with the ambiguities inherent in the social space of the satellite era. Social, business, political and cultural networks are open and temporary structures which take in external elements as long as they are able to communicate with other elements of a particular network, and as long as they are useful for its other participants. The rules regulating integration of the global information society are not created in advance, planned and systematically implemented, but they appear and are changed in deliberate activities and specific interactions. Therefore, in global terms, the Web is composed of many cultures, many values and many projects, which overlap in its participants' minds and strategies (Castells 2008). At the same time, as if despite the technological development and changes in business and organisation of production, the fundamental values (language, law, religion, customs, etc.) in particular societies prove exceptionally stable, which is articulated in Eisenstadt's multiplied modernity concept cited above. Thus, the general globalisation of power and influences breeds resistance. People manifest this resistance in upholding their culture and values they have grown up with as well as in seeking membership in communities which operate in recognisable, clear and predictable ways and are founded upon stable values.

Consequently, the culture of the network society is ephemeral. It resembles a mosaic of experiences and interests rather than a charter of rights and obligations (Castells *ibid.*), which could delineate the frameworks of social life and provide individuals with advice on how to choose from available modes of action. Such dispersal is visible both in institutions and in people's private lives.⁴ It concerns not only business organisations but also educational and medical services, as well as those providing assistance, advice or psychological support. The diffusion refers thus to different forms and types of counselling. Now in the network society, the significance of counselling, whose tasks have always involved 'management of uncertainty', seems to increase. At the same time, the recent changes have altered ideas behind and approaches to and in counselling. Currently, counselling is considered not so much a tool for fulfilling demands of business or politics as an instrument for satisfying the needs of an individual client. The client, in turn, is seen as a 'self-programming' and 'self-regulating' entity seeking satisfaction in life. And such satisfaction may ensue from one's choices, including the decision to use the counsellor's advice. Developing conceptions of counselling which could produce a more individualised approach to the advice-seekers and address not only their problems, but also the contexts in which they arise, researchers such as R. Vance Peavy, Mary McMahon and Wendy Patton, Norman E. Amundsen, Mark Savickas, Richard Young and Jean Guichard, have resorted to contextual conceptualisations of the world (cf. Savickas et al. 2009). This is a well-timed initiative as the new order is perceived by most people as a meta-social lack of order that affects us all. We painfully miss solid and reliable points of reference and trustworthy guides (Bauman 2009), and are compelled to seek help. And as uncertainty is increasing, we resort to erratic and even dangerous help forms.⁵

Changes in the organisation of counselling in the globalised world

Relying on familiar values in an attempt to come to terms with globalisation, people usually look for help by engaging in direct interactions. Previously, such interactions used to take place in families, but now more and more frequently they occur

⁴ From the perspective of particular institutions, the organisational development of the net relies, at least partly, on certain old values, such as dedication of workers to producing and processing of knowledge or permanent personnel. Nevertheless, it clearly prioritises new strategies, such as transition from vertical to horizontal bureaucracy, which is associated with the processes-oriented – and not task-oriented – organization of production, group management, the evaluation of results based on clients' satisfaction, effect-dependent staff payment, close contacts between service-providers and clients, permanent information transfer and training and retraining employees at all levels (cf. Castells 2008; Eisenstadt 2009).

⁵ According to M. Castells, many people perceive the world around them as an automated, random sequence of events, originating from the uncontrolled logic of markets, technology, geopolitical order or biological determinants (Castells 2008), which is felt as an impact of the trajectory of suffering.

in new communities. Polish sociological studies show that family support networks still prevail in the rural areas, whereas members of open big-city communities typically expect assistance from other communities and institutions, including their workplaces (cf. Jacyno 2007; Wołk 2009 et al.). Nevertheless, the interactions they initiate do not give them sufficient confidence because, like other relations in the network society, they tend to be transitory, fluid, changeable, ephemeral and short-lived. This is mostly the case in communities in which communication is mediated by electronic devices typical of the satellite era, often referred to as virtual ones, e.g. mobile phones and the Internet.

The number of such relations is growing rapidly. Although they are unreal, they are becoming a site of personal support, both material and emotional. They foster so-called weak social bonds among people of different personalities and backgrounds who are often strangers to each other. Participation in such communities ensures anonymity. At the same time, it also facilitates frankness, exchange of advice and psychological closeness. The new communities, thus, spread extend socialisation, i.e. they sustain the social life in previously known forms, though – as research shows – they can produce misunderstandings and disappointments (cf. Zielińska-Pękał 2007).⁶ Both casual observations and social research provide evidence that almost all TV-viewers and Internet-users surf social websites and blogs offering help, and they encounter different kinds of advice (Zielińska-Pękał ed. 2009). More and more frequently, employers complain that their workers indulge in virtual contacts not only in their free time but also in their working hours, using office equipment and wasting time that should be devoted to their professional responsibilities. Such abuse of work time is a bane of modern companies. Some participants of the network society resort to other sources of virtual help than the Internet and give in to tempting tips and seductive offers of countless guides, how-to books (Zierkiewicz 2004) and numerous intrusive experts. This is how counselling is carried out in the maze of various organisations and both visible as well as latent processes of social life. Sometimes it assumes the shape of institutionalised professional activities, and at other times it proceeds through coincidental interpersonal contacts or virtual messages (Siarkiewicz 2010, Zielińska-Pękał ed. 2009 et al.).

If one attempts to outline the intentions behind specific components of social life, it is possible, as in the case in the now ending industrial era, to map the spectrum of counselling in the epoch of satellite communication and the global network society.

- › **The intentions of the organisers of social life:** computerisation, development of networking, development of knowledge, enhancement of information processing based on streamlining production and flattening management hierarchies, achievement of full contribution of all social life participants to

⁶ A network connection enables the immediate transmission of information about accidents, unexpected events and the like to other Web users. Sometimes, such messages specify the meeting place of a particular group wanting to instantly manifest their unity, which may resemble an urban game.

producing and processing knowledge, promoting the idea of life-long education, globalisation, upholding counselling as a self-regulating 'pivot' connected to and disconnected from an organisation.

- ▶ **The intentions of other society members (potential advice recipients – *homo consultans*):** (1) gaining a sense of transparency, clarity, and certainty as regards organisation of social life, belonging to community, knowing 'Who I should become', alleviating fear, achieving satisfaction with one's present life, creating a satisfying personal network vs. (2) isolation, exclusion, passive acceptance of fate.
- ▶ **The intentions of counsellors (counselling services professionals):** stimulating clients' reflectiveness, developing their self-analysis skills, increasing resistance to changeability and unpredictable life situations, vs. (2) providing ready-made identities, seeking marketability of one's products, expertise.
- ▶ **The intentions of researches (counselling experts and theoreticians):** explaining the influence of new information technologies on people's lives and the problems they confront, that is diagnosing cultural determiners of human problems and the ways of solving them proposed by counselling; applying interdisciplinary scientific studies; participating in the collective effort (together with innovative practitioners and clients) to observe, analyse and theorise; developing counselling methodologies aimed at meeting particular clients' needs; seeking to solve methodological dilemmas: (1) teaching clients to reflectively analyse the trajectories of their biographies, face transitions and master strategies of coping with them, vs. (2) providing them with guidelines channelling immediate temporary changes and satisfaction.

Evidently, apart from the tasks discharged by the industrial era counsellors and the practical solutions based on psychological theories, new tasks for counselling are arising, which entails confronting certain moral dilemmas. It also cannot go unnoticed that the intentions of the organisers of social life only partly coincide with the intentions of potential counselling clients. Because, if we agree with Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede that the point of human life is usually the same as it was for our grandparents (i.e. we want to make money and a good impression on others, make our lives easier, punish and attract others), it seems obvious that not all of us identify satisfaction with the constant learning or flexible adaptation to the new conditions of employment in the network society (Hofstede, Hofstede 2007). Nevertheless, today's network clients are conscious of at least two things: (1) the possibility of taking up different roles, which go beyond the established and assigned ones (this is why they are so susceptible to messages promoting various open possibilities and visions); (2) the possibility of belonging to wider, changeable, international communities (Eisenstadt 2009).

Thus, in the satellite communication era the social foundations of counselling have ceased to be unambiguous, and the ambiguity has been 'privatised', which is

clearly felt by counselling researchers, advisers and clients. It is so because our social reality has unexpectedly undergone unanticipated and violent shake-ups. The changes that have ensued from them are not evolutionary and still keep emerging, which reshapes the inter-human space and breeds special dilemmas.⁷ Even if it does not make the organisers of social life feel very apprehensive, it considerably complicates the counsellors' position and makes them confront problems they have not faced before. One can hardly disagree with Anthony Giddens that most rules involved in constructing and reconstructing social practices govern social actors in rather implicit ways. They just know what they should do (Giddens 2003). However, one should bear in mind that the sudden and abrupt onset of the information technology society, along with the development of communication mediated by the Internet, fax and the mobile phone, has invalidated the majority of well-known principles without offering alternative clear and explicit standards. It has not formulated precise and unequivocal rules of playing our 'social game'. It has only multiplied the number of 'toys' we can use in this game (Hofstede, Hofstede 2007).⁸

Apparently, the activities of counsellors are relied on the previously accumulated, but not always critically verified knowledge. In other words, they still depend on practical consciousness structured by the rules and tactics used in the former epoch to construct and reconstruct the time and space of social life. However, we do not know how satisfying this is for the new clients – disoriented members of the network society – and to what extent it meets their current needs. All the more so because, like his/her client, the professional adviser is also a disoriented member of the network society deprived of explicit rules of conduct which used to be provided by academic psychological knowledge. The possibility to ask for immediate advice at the other end of the world does not contribute to reducing one's sense of uncertainty. Additionally, people who claim to be 'specialists in helping' are legion, with those among them whose goals might be inconsistent with the professional ethics of counselling. These developments generate a series of queries. Firstly, it is not certain whether counselling is able to keep up with the on-going changes. And, secondly, it is not certain whether a member of the network society will be prepared to make an adviser part of his/her personal network or whether s/he will prefer to

⁷ It is explicitly visible for example in socialization, which used to consist in reception of the ancestors' culture and acceptance of pre-existing rules of social life. Today, it is a complex and impermanent product of the continuous struggle between the desire for individual freedom and self-creation and, an equally strong need for safety, which can only be assured by social approval corroborated by the acceptance of a chosen community (Bauman 2009).

⁸ According to Shmuel Eisenstadt modernity has spread all over the world but has established neither a single institutional pattern, nor a single modern civilization. It has created many constantly changing modern civilizations, or at least some civilisation patterns, i.e. societies with a certain common core. Though they are usually developing at a different pace, they are ideologically and institutionally related to each other (Eisenstadt 2009). Their dynamics, however, neither continue some patterns of activity, nor lead to the development of a common pattern, which makes it difficult to settle on the meaning and social role of counselling.

solve his/her problems in a different manner. Which of these options prevails is unpredictable because members of the network society are aware of the countless possibilities offered by various communication sources (cf. Siarkiewicz 2010; Siarkiewicz, Trębińska-Szumigraj, Zielińska-Pękał 2012; Skałbania 2012; Szumigraj 2011; Zielińska-Pękał, ed., 2009; Zierkiewicz, Drabik-Podgórná, eds., 2010; Wojtasik 2010). This is why reflectiveness, as a tool to be applied first of all by those engaged in helping others, is becoming more and more significant. Of course, the same refers to the members of the global information technology society who should or want to use such help. Hence, the emphasis on biographical learning is growing (Alheit 2011).

However, the networked life in the satellite communication era and the role the networked counselling plays can be fully comprehended and explained only through *collective* effort of both researchers and reflective practitioners. Their joint effort of observing, analysing and theorising should involve diverse methods of conceptualising the new reality we are steeped in, drawing on both available evidence and preliminary theories. According to David Silverman (2009), developing such theories seems to be necessary since they provide an ordered set of concepts, a framework in which to define and explain certain events. As such, they offer an option of making sense of our own existence in contemporary reality, understanding the role counselling plays in it and communicating with others in the globalised world.

In keeping with the views of the aforementioned author, the theories of counselling can be (1) sets of assumptions, (2) systems summarising and ordering facts, processes and events, (3) outcomes of the procedures aimed at formulating generalisations and predictions. As such, they can be the driving force of research. As humanist theories are concerned with people and deal with their intentional (mental) activities (and not with the results of such activities), they have to include assumptions about human nature and recognised values and be anchored in philosophical, cultural and social anthropology. Thus, like the theories of counselling formulated mainly by psychologists, they will also pose questions about mental and social processes pertaining to participants of counselling (which means drawing on philosophical anthropology), facts and events counselling consists of (which means resorting to social anthropology), and values that can be attained through counselling (which indicates that the support people offer each other is embedded in culture as counselling is a product of culture). Currently, various theories of counselling occupy different positions in the satellite network of knowledge and are at different stages of development.

In career counselling, the search for new approaches has culminated in the conception of life design counselling which has been developed for several years now. Led by Mark Savickas and Jean Guichard, European and American researchers have cooperated since the early 21st century, trying to fuse and apply in one concept, the ideas and theories of constructivism, social constructivism and the narrative approach. Their aim is to develop an effective, theoretical background that

would meet counsellors' needs and provide them with solid grounds for designing adequate, consistent methods and tools (Savickas et al. 2009, pp. 239-250).

The anthropological theory of counselling that has developed in Poland sets different tasks. It relies on the studies on counselling which, in broad terms, describe and interpret diverse ways of advising, coping, counselling and consulting. On the one hand, it develops through defining and specifying its own research subject, i.e. counselling, and on the other – through utilising findings of the mature sciences, which have identified certain rules of human behaviour. Sometimes understood in Polish studies as an institutionalised phenomenon, a fact or a process of social life, counselling is part of everyday life and a component of an individual's experience (participation in relations). As such, counselling constitutes a subject of research which is specific enough to require special empirical studies and a specialised language to produce scientific descriptions. While developing counsellogy, it is assumed that 'scientific laws and theoretical descriptions can be regarded firstly as explanatory instruments and, secondly, as instructions of conduct when science is applied' (Grobler 2006, p. 251). Of course, the world of objectified products of culture and of problems, arguments and solutions to problems develops owing to human ingeniousness. And, it depends, to a large extent, on attributing meanings to different phenomena, processes and facts. But it also involves the facts and processes that depend neither on human will nor on the content of human thoughts, and this is exactly what contemporary counsellors deal with in their work.

Creating a global society, the era of satellite communication has not actually built a 'global village,' which would bring inhabitants of the opposite ends of the world closer to each other. Although it has prompted the emergence of virtual assistance communities as well as exchange of scientific knowledge and research on counselling, it has not eased social tensions and the sense of helplessness people experience. The support provided by communities does not suffice to alleviate uncertainty and eliminate the need for professional counselling.

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