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**“UNCONVENTIONAL HISTORIES”: THE POLISH HISTORIOGRAPHY
IN SEARCH OF NEW SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to determine the importance and place in modern Polish academic reflection concerning the historical science role issue in the life of the society of a number of new research directions and ideas, the historical knowledge social significance of which is in focus. The methodology of research is based on the application of historiographical analysis and synthesis methods. The scientific novelty consists in the fact that, for the first time in historiography, the contribution of the newest directions of the Polish professional historiography (the so-called “unconventional histories”) to the enhancement of its social role has been considered, the specific ways in the aspect of giving historical knowledge a practical meaning have been pointed out, probable limitations of such knowledge have been discussed. The Conclusions.* In modern Polish historical science, a whole spectrum of innovative approaches and directions was noted, one way or another oriented to the presentation of historical knowledge in the public space more broadly than it has been done before. These are “unconventional histories” that exist within the framework of “the new Humanities studies”, “the post-humanities studies”, “public history”. Each in its own way manages to strengthen the presence of historical knowledge in the public space. However, the question that is often asked by the representatives of the traditional part of the academic community of historians, including in Poland, remains open: concerning the ability of this type of “histories” adhere to the Truth about the past. As it seems, the supporters of the analyzed above “unconventional histories” do not attach as much importance to this issue as it is recognized in academic historiography. Hence, the cognitive function of historical knowledge (to acquire true knowledge about the past), from which the society can receive purely practical gains, is called into question.

Key words: “unconventional histories”, the social role of historical knowledge, modern Polish historiography, academic community of historians.

**“НЕКОНВЕЦІЙНІ ІСТОРІЇ”: ПОЛЬСЬКА ІСТОРІОГРАФІЯ
У ПОШУКАХ НОВИХ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПЕРСПЕКТИВ**

Анотація. *Мета дослідження – встановлення значення і місця в сучасній польській академічній рефлексії над проблемою ролі історичної науки в житті суспільства низки нових дослідницьких*

напрямів і пропозицій, у фокус уваги яких винесено соціальну значущість історичного знання. **Методологія дослідження** базується на застосуванні методів історіографічного аналізу та синтезу. Його наукова новизна полягає у тому, що вперше в історіографії розглянуто внесок найновіших напрямів польського професійного історієписання (так званих “неконвенційних історій”) у підвищення його соціальної ролі, вказано на конкретні шляхи, які запропоновано ними в аспекті надання історичному знанню практичного значення, обговорено ймовірні обмеження такого знання. **Висновки.** У сучасній польській історичній науці відзначається цілий спектр інноваційних підходів та напрямів, так чи інакше орієнтованих на ширше, ніж це було раніше, представлення історичних знань у суспільному просторі. Це “неконвенційні історії”, які існують в рамках “нової гуманітаристики”, “постгуманітаристики”, “публічної історії”. Кожній по-своєму вдається посилювати присутність історичних знань у суспільному просторі. Проте відкритим залишається питання, яке часто ставлять представники традиційної частини академічної спільноти істориків, у тому числі і в самій Польщі: про здатність такого типу “історій” триматися Істини про минуле. Як здається, прибічниками проаналізованих вище “неконвенційних історій” не надається настільки вагоме значення цій проблемі, як це визнано в академічній історіографії. Отже пізнавальна функція історичних знань (здобувати істинне знання про минуле), з якої суспільство може отримувати її сучасні практичні здобутки, ставиться під сумнів.

Ключові слова: “неконвенційні історії”, соціальна роль історичного знання, сучасна польська історіографія, академічна спільнота істориків.

The Problem Statement. In recent decades, historical science underwent some transformations that change its usual image completely. In particular, the processes of fragmentation and blurring of the traditional disciplinary field of academic historiography and, at the same time, the loss of its usual high place both in the system of the humanities (and science in general as a way of understanding existence) and in public life are evident (Yaremchuk, 2020, pp. 165–166). It is obvious that the mentioned crisis phenomena are related to each other in a certain way. For example, the growing importance of new forms and ways of reflecting on the past (audiovisual history, non-anthropocentric history, “public history”, etc.) indicates that the “traditional historiography” loses “ground under its feet”, gaining powerful competitors, which, in turn, alongside with other factors, work to force out science from its usual place as the main social institution that takes care of the past.

Contemporary Polish historiography undergoes similar transformations. On the one hand, in the special literature there is noted the “national specificity” of the social status of Polish historical science, which consists in the excessive presentation of history in politics and politics – in academic history primarily (Dudek, 2011; Machcewicz, 2012; Wojdon, 2021, pp. 13–49; Pomorski, 2020). At the same time, we are talking about the Polish experience of a global trend – a dramatic decrease in public demand for academic history and profession prestige. Modern Polish researchers state about “falling from a high pedestal” (Brzezińska, 2021, p. 44; Kruszyński, 2016, pp. 149, 321), “clumsy and inefficient historians” and “impotent historiography” (Muchowski, 2021, pp. 32–33), about the reduction in the number of applicants to History departments at Polish universities (Wojdon, 2015, pp. 26–27). The social, cultural, intellectual reasons / prerequisites of the above-mentioned situation can be also traced. In particular, we are talking about the lack of direct benefit from history in the circumstances of the dominance of the applied understanding of science on the part of the government and society, the priority of natural sciences over the Humanities; about the false neoliberal methods of state policy regarding the Humanities studies, which discourage the study of history; technological innovations (personal computers that radically simplify processing, transmission, and presentation of historical information); democratization of historical knowledge (nowadays everyone can create historical sources and describe the past at their own discretion); demographic changes (a sharp increase in life expectancy, which,

in particular, turns ordinary people – the witnesses of historical events, into competitors of academic historians); finally, modern mass culture with its mediatization (which makes the media, primarily electronic, drivers of historical discussions, allows to raise some, more “attractive”, topics, and not attach importance to the others), commercialization with emphasis on entertainment, not educational purpose (history becomes part of the heritage industry), replacement substitution “language” culture with a visual one, which encourages the mind to work less and emotions – more (Domańska, 2014, pp. 19–36; Řezník, 2017, pp. 11–26; Stobiecki, 2021). It was noted that modern penetration of history into “broad masses” (from computer games to historical reconstructions) gives society “a rather vague idea of the past”, and “entertainment” component of historical presentations undermines authorities and replaces them with irony. It should be mentioned that the latter one releases modern “consumers of history” from epistemological rules, and this opens up space for “alternative facts” and “post-truth” (Řezník, 2017, pp. 25–26).

The Analysis of Sources and Recent Researches. A discussion of probable answers and scenarios for the development of scientific historical knowledge unfolds against the background of the modern world interaction in its new, previously unknown images, with professional historiography. It seems that in modern Poland historians and representatives of other fields of the humanities studies offer a diverse range of reactions to new challenges, in particular, to the challenge that concerns the vision of the role of a historian in a society. First of all, the above-mentioned issue is in the center of attention of historians, related to theoretical methodological and historiographical issues professionally, who are committed to go beyond the traditional standards of acquisition from the XIXth century and ideas about the social roles of historical knowledge. Instead, they offer an alternative in the form of “unconventional histories” (we will talk about the essential features of such an alternative in detail a bit later). Despite the presence of numerous reviews of individual texts or conceptual proposals of individual Polish supporters of “unconventional” historiography (Sklokin, 2012; Witek & Solska, 2017 and other) or individual statements of a predominant critical direction from the “camp” of “traditional” historians, nowadays there is no analysis of their contribution to the understanding of new social perspectives of history in modern world.

The purpose of the article is to determine the importance and place in the modern Polish academic reflection concerning the historical science role issue in the life of the society of a number of new research directions and ideas (“unconventional histories”), the historical knowledge social significance of which is in focus. The topicality of posing such research issue is due to the lack of systematic reflection in both Polish and other historiographies.

The Results of the Research. All trends of this type, despite their discrepancy, have a common denominator – they aspire to provide a new, fresh impetus to the development of scientific and historical knowledge. They consider one of the decisive means of its “acceleration” to be the renunciation of historians from their traditional ethos of “a dispassionate scholar” detached from modernity, proposing instead the model of a thinker consciously “involved” in social processes, who changes the world for the better by history. Another common feature of “unconventional histories” is the vision of traditional historical science developed on the basis of positivism only as one of the ways of reflecting on the past (at the same time, the place of academic historiography in the hierarchy of various forms of historical knowledge for various “new” historians is different – from preserving the idea of his exclusive place to the critique of “a privileged status”). The supporters of new approaches suggest (with the possible exception of E. Domańska), along with professional historians,

involving in such reflection non-historians – ordinary people, amateurs, popularizers, etc., to a much greater extent than is considered “decent”, giving such in the way of knowledge about the past again of a more “involved”, social nature and meaning. That is, it is not only about the purposeful inclusion of historians in solving pressing social problems, but also about a new approach to communication with the society. More symmetrical relations should emerge instead the paternalistic “expert-recipient” relations. For example, in one of the texts, its author, pondering over the appropriateness of such “demonopolization of history”, rhetorically declares the following: “Perhaps a historian, who sees himself in the role of a conductor should switch to the role of a listener? Do you realize at least that the basis of a conductor’s profession is the ability to listen?” (Brzezińska, 2021, p. 56).

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, the outlined innovative phenomena the term first introduced into the Polish historiography by E. Domańska in 2006 – will be called as “unconventional histories” (the historian herself borrowed it from a number of Western publications (Domańska, 2006). Actually, we consider such kind of a verbal definition to be the most appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it emphasizes for the “histories” collected into a single whole “under the roof” of the research perspective of our studio, the common point of lack of full academic legitimacy (in different spectra – from complete rejection to skepticism or partial agreement) on the part of “traditional” historians, which are currently the absolute majority in Poland. Second of all, it is necessary from a purely applied point of view – in view of the use of other terms (primarily the term “alternative histories”) in order to emphasize solidarity in quite different approaches. Third of all, it was E. Domańska with her famous book about “unconventional histories”, who initiated the Polish discussion concerning the drastic need to revise the usual ideas about the social role of historical science and remains an active participant to this day (Witek, 2016, p. 10; Muchowski, 2021, p. 27; Brzezińska, 2021, p. 42).

In addition to the “objective” decline in the role of professional historians in the modern world, which bothers all of them without exception, it is obvious that any intellectual trend, including the one associated with the appearance of “unconventional histories” in the Polish professional environment with their emphasis on the social role of historical knowledge, inspired by purely subjective factors that prompted relevant intellectual interests in the Polish context. Of course, we cannot state with certainty that historian X began to deal with the history of Y for the following reasons: and then he presented all of them without exception. Some of them, of course, are unspoken and unarticulated.

The “first place” is given to the relatively high level of reflexivity of modern Polish historiography among them. We mean the comparative interest of “practicing” historians in discussing “theoretical” issues (although the Polish colleagues often complain about the gap of the “theoreticians” from the practical history and, as Robert Traba once made a witty remark, while mentioning the theory of history squint condescendingly, (Domańska, 2014, p. 319)), as well as the fact of the exceptional status and prestige in the corporation of the Polish historians of such a historical subdiscipline as the methodology of history (and not only against the background of its complete absence in modern Ukrainian historiography, but also in comparison with the situation in the historical sciences of the East-Central European region) (Domańska, 2012, p. 186). For example, there are three purely “methodological / theoretical” journals published in Poland nowadays – “Sensus Historiae. Studia interdyscyplinarne”, “Historyka: studia metodologiczne”, “Historia@Teoria”, as well as a number of “hybrid” or serial publications related to theoretical history.

Probably, few people recognize the influence of intellectual fashion on his work. In this case, as we will cover later, the Western thinkers had and remain the obvious influence on the Polish “unconventional” historians, who are considered to be among the leading representatives of the widely understood so-called postmodernist thought (Hayden White, Frank Rudolf Ankersmit and the others). At the end of the XXth century in the world and in Poland by the middle of the “zero” years (millennium), it lost its importance as an intellectual mainstream, and in Poland its influence was limited almost exclusively to the methodologists of history and historians of historiography, nevertheless, the named sub-disciplinary group drew a lot from the long-time influential intellectual phenomenon (Domańska, 2012, pp. 20–21; Domańska, 2019). First of all, H. White is meant, who was in Poland several times, had quite fruitful contacts with some of Polish historians (primarily with E. Domańska), and, according to the observations made by the researcher of the ideas reception of the American theoretician of historiography in the works of his Polish colleagues, inspired almost all renowned Polish history methodologists (it is interesting that H. White is completely “not present” only in the texts of Wojciech Wrzosek) (Domańska, 2019, p. 88; Domańska, & La Greca, 2019). Taking into consideration the above-mentioned generalization about the “Polish” context of H. White’s activity and from his own observations, the influence of his ideas on “unconventional” historians was manifested primarily in the fact that, putting emphasis on the closeness of academic history to fiction, he caused a critical attitude to traditional vision of the academic narrative as unique in its ‘scholarship’, encouraged the exploration of ‘non-academic’ forms of historical representation, seeing them as equivalent to professional historical writing, and finally with his latest book “The Practical Past” (White, 2014) (by the way, his collection of essays with the same title, although largely with a different content, was also published in Poland in the same year) highlighted the importance for the historians to focus on those aspects of the past that are of practical importance in the present (Ahlskog, 2016).

It is likely that the Polish colleagues relatively serious interest (primarily the representatives of the younger generations) concerning the issue of the social role of history in the modern world was also related to the relevant discussions of a global level and resonance. In particular, a noticeable Polish echo of the so-called “Appeal from Blois” (2008) published by a group of renowned modern European historians, directed against legislative restrictions on the freedom of historical discussions (see: (2019) and the others)) and the eminent “The History Manifesto” (2014) by American historians Jo Guldi and David Armitage, the leitmotif of which was a call to return a vital role in the life of mankind to the professional historiography (Muchowski, 2017 and other). The fact that the issue concerning raising the social status of historical science is on agenda of the Polish colleagues can also be evidenced by the recent publication in one of the above-mentioned journals of a programmatic article, written by three famous American historians with a message about the drastic need for the history, which is being engaged in public discussions and political conflicts openly and consciously, which supports the building of a better future (Kleinberg, Scott & Wilder, 2019; Kleinberg, Scott & Wilder, 2020).

As it was mentioned above, the issue concerning the change of the traditional approach to the social role of history was first raised by E. Domańska in the work called “Unconventional Histories. Reflection on the Past in the New Humanities” (Domańska, 2006). The researcher is known as one of the leading spokespeople in Poland for the involvement of the Polish Humanities studies into the world historiographical discussions. The starting point of her

conceptual vision of “unconventional histories” is their consideration as a component of “the new Humanities studies”. It should be mentioned that the latter is considered as a spectrum of disciplines and approaches in the Humanities knowledge, which are designed to “rewrite” the traditional vision of the world with its support of European ideas and models of knowledge. The above-mentioned paradigm is of an “emancipatory, interventionist and often insurgent nature”; “is characterized by an instrumental approach to the practice of science, its politicization, consideration of its status in the categories of relations between knowledge and power, the involvement of the researcher, an ideological focus on participation in social changes and the struggle for justice, on unmasking the practices of power” (Domańska, 2018, p. 23). What is really important for “the new Humanities studies” – is its practical suitability for the implementation of projects to destroy all forms of oppression, but not so much the epistemological persuasiveness of knowledge (Domańska, 2018, p. 23). Hence, “according to the definition, neither it is about positively understood objectivity in the Humanities research, nor about the neutrality of a researcher, nor about the search of the truth as a research goal” (Domańska, 2018, p. 25). (It should be stated that the above-mentioned research paradigm was and remains, as we will show below, the basis for a number of other directions that we will analyze in this article). In particular, “unconventional histories” describe the experiences of diverse oppressed and excluded groups (sexual, ethnic minorities, “inferior classes”, disabled, etc.), and defend their subjectivity purposefully. Describing the victims, they intervene in the course of a social and political life directly, considering historiography as “a form of struggle against various forms of oppression” (Domańska, 2006, pp. 54–55).

Since the beginning of the 2010s, the researcher has adjusted her research priorities slightly. Attention is refocused, firstly, to the universal human values defense (and not the oppressed groups’ values) as an applied goal of the Humanities studies and historical science in particular (especially, it is reflected in the title of her next major work “Existential History” (Domańska, 2012)), searching for inspiration in French existentialism (Domańska, 2012, p. 11). The following issues emerge for the researcher “providing a reflection on the history of the search aspect of wisdom”, (Domańska, 2012, p. 11), “giving the opportunity of creation and strengthening the sense of a human community, [...] strengthening the desire to be a person” (Domańska, 2012, p. 189), “adapted to the realities of modern world of science concerning living together” (Domańska, 2012, p. 190). Second of all, it seems that the researcher had already disapproved of the postmodernist historiography relativism and “the new Humanities studies” openly. The researcher emphasized, in particular, that the importance of historical science as a reservoir of knowledge “for the individual and communities survival [consists in] that history, on the one hand, interprets changes, but on the other hand – shows constancy, and as such can give hope simultaneously (nowadays it is so, but tomorrow it could change, be different), and a sense of security (*there are universal truths and values* (our italics – V. Ya.), and it allows us to plan the future))” (Domańska, 2012, p. 12). Third of all, from that time until nowadays, under the influence of another turn in the Western Humanities studies, E. Domańska tried to build and promote the value of a new paradigm, which was in a state of creation and contained a number of trends, approaches and perspectives, outlined by her as “the non/post-anthropocentric Humanities studies”, “the post-humanities”, “the ecological Humanities studies”, “the bio-Humanities studies”. The above-mentioned paradigm is characterized by opening the doors to an extra-human level of analysis, interest in extra-human manifestations of existence on our planet (animals, plants, inanimate objects). In particular, the researcher spotted in it an opportunity “to make our

research work a part of future-oriented humanitarianism, which restores a sense of security and supports interpersonal and interspecies connections, trust and respect for other people and other forms of life (ethics of care, ethics of solidarity, ethics of respect and reciprocity), harmony with nature, ultimately the idea of a social life, which is understood in terms of a collective of human and non-human subjects” (Domańska, 2018, p. 32). At the same time, it is interesting that the value of such reorientation for the Polish historian lies not so much in the plane of new possibilities of knowledge, but in increasing the social significance of scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the researcher, declared herself a “supporter of the emancipatory Humanities studies” as before, and the corresponding historiography (“rescue history”, “history with potential / affirmative history aimed at the future”) (Kruszyński, 2016, pp. 217–221, 225).

At the end of a brief presentation of E. Domańska’s views in terms of the topic of this article, it is worth adding that the researcher herself (whose scientific interests, we remind you, lie mainly in the field of methodology and history of historiography) not only noted/notes and summarizes certain trends in the Humanities / historical knowledge, suggests interesting and non-trivial ideas about their role in modern world. Recently, E. Domańska has published her own original not only “theoretical” but also purely “practical” research in the field of “the post-humanities studies” (Domańska, 2017).

One more not only interesting, but also fruitful direction in the field of “unconventional histories” is the activity of a group of researchers from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin), Jan Pomorski’s students, the renowned Polish specialist in the field of theoretical history. In 2011 modern research credo of Lublin methodologists was formulated in an extensive collective work, which was written by other renowned Polish specialists from other universities of the country (Witek, 2011). The authors for the first time substantiated theoretically the issue of heterogeneity of modern representations of the past in the collective work. They called their current interests “alternative histories” (Witek, 2011, p. 9), and began to impose their activities on the category and term “unconventional histories” and the trends of “the new Humanities” initiated in the Polish context by E. Domańska (Witek, 2011, p. 9; Witek, 2016, p. 10). In this manifesto of “Lublin methodologists” it was stated openly that owing to the “linguistic means” and creativity of a number of Western sociologists of science (Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, etc.) Clio was “disappointed”, because, in their opinion, “it turned out that both science and conceptual language, which is its cognitive tool, are not so much neutral means of discovering the objectively existing world, but are largely culturally determined by existing methods of construction and modelling of social reality” (Witek, 2011, p. 10). Hence, according to one of the most prominent spokesmen of this milieu, Piotr Witek, their reflection on the past “is characterized by criticality regarding the dominance of institutional science, which excludes other, non-academic ways of creating knowledge”; thereby, it “supports alternative types of knowledge in relation to official science, created in various areas of culture – literature, film, computer games, theater, photography, comics, etc.” (Witek, 2016, p. 10). Already in the book of 2011, the research programme of this group of historians was outlined, which involved both theoretical understanding and practical research of such “secondary” / “non-scientific” methods of historical representation in the view of academic science, such as audiovisual / visual history, multimedia, virtual and interactive history, various forms of oral history, commemorative history, performative history, historical writing (Witek, 2011, pp. 11–12). In fact, on the pages of the above-mentioned collective work, the approaches of this collective to the theoretical foundations of “alternative histories”

were outlined and the above-mentioned “subdivisions” of them in the Polish context were analyzed.

It seems that the researchers of audiovisual / visual history work most fruitfully in the outlined direction. In particular, P. Witek’s latest work on the historical cinema of Andrzej Wajda is noted for its high level of theoretical culture and the involvement of a large amount of empirical material (Witek, 2016), as well as the work of Poznan-based researcher Dorota Skotarczak on the theory of visual history (Skotarczak, 2013).

Instead, Lublin historian Andrzej Radomski develops actively the issues of the so-called historiography 2.0, or historiography, which is created in the virtual space, and which exists in the context of the so-called “digital Humanities” (Radomski, 2006; Radomski, 2012; Stańczak, 2021). In his latest works, he emphasized that, in his opinion, “the digital Humanities” “integrates all new trends” of modern humanitarianism, including “the engaged Humanities that work for certain social changes” (Stańczak, 2021, p. 130). According to the researcher, the main advantages of such historiography as the absence of a sharp divide between ordinary people and professional historians, “this approach uses the potential of the collective intelligence and has a partnership character”, because in the network “everyone can be a historian”, “to be involved in the development of attitudes towards the others – generalize, to comment, to be a participant in joint research projects”, doing this “from the general conviction: no one knows everything, everyone knows only something” (Radomski, 2012, p. 135). Historiography 2.0 creates new opportunities for professional historians as well – “it makes their work more dynamic, on the other hand – it gives an opportunity to find out how it is evaluated and what the general public expects” (Radomski, 2012, pp. 139–140). It is essential to understand (recognize?) A. Radomski that it performs “partially other social functions: a significant part of it (computer games, digital visualizations, multimedia or films) belongs to the components of a new field of activity – the entertainment industry” (Radomski, 2012, p. 139).

The so-called “university studios” and scientific culture in general in the modern world are the focus of attention of another Lublin historian, Ewa Solska (Solska, 2011; Solska, 2019). One of the leading ideas of her research is the need to return to science the educational ideal of the practical value of knowledge. If we talk about her own historical knowledge, then the researcher positions herself as a supporter of those trends in historical reflection that allow “to put history into practice” (Solska, 2019, p. 130). In particular, with regard to the connection of historiography with a practical life, the researcher sees the two most common positions, which, in her opinion, should be revised: 1) “positivist-Rankean”, which is characterized by the desire to be free from values; 2) “narrative”, according to which the historian “must be in society in the role of an informer, a reporter”, always ready for the “revision of established idealizations” and “exposing the fraud committed by the authorities with history” (Solska, 2019, pp. 130–131). Instead, E. Solska offers the third way, which is based on the idea of the “axiological reflection” of the researcher (i. e., his attachment to certain values). It is about “the dialectic of loyalty and nonconformism in the social sense, traditionally defined as commitment to liberal democracy” (Solska, 2019, p. 131). Such dialectic, according to E. Solska, should be more specifically expressed in “a researcher’s loyalty” (“observance of political correctness”, “corporate loyalty” – not opposing the conventions of one’s research environment, but also the possibility of changing these conventions) and “a researcher’s non-conformism”, which should consist “in something opposite, in what we can generally call a revisionist and / or alternative discourse”, which “has already turned out to be the most unconventional in history [...]” (Solska, 2019, pp. 132–133). Among such stories, which are

important in the sense of giving historiography a practical meaning, E. Solska highlights the role of “public history” as a new research trend in the Polish historiography (Solska, 2019, pp. 197–198).

Thus, another innovation on the market of socially oriented histories in Poland is a new subdiscipline (?) in the system of recognized components of professional historical knowledge, often known here as “history in the public space” (*historia w prześci publicznej*), “applied history” (*historia stosowana*), and in the Western professional and didactic tradition – as “public history”. For the first time, the importance of this direction of modern thinking concerning the role of history in the society was signaled by the Polish historian and public intellectual Robert Traba at the end of the 2000s, and in 2014 he published the first thorough research with the analysis of the place of “applied history” (in his terminology) in the system of modern historical knowledge and its prospects in Poland (Domańska, 2014, pp. 143–164). In particular, there were two reasons why the researcher saw the need for it: “openness of communication space in which all the Humanities function” and the modern “demand for storytelling, visualization and museum representation of the past” (Domańska, 2014, p. 144). His restrained attitude towards the thesis of some Western researchers about the ability of “public history” to contribute to the harmonization of relations between both forms of creating history – academic and social – is interesting. Based on the personal experience of “a public historian”, he believes that it may rather be about “the skeptical tension that arises from observing too many populist trends and the play of local interests in their cooperation” (Domańska, 2014, p. 157).

From the mid-2010s, the foundations of the infrastructure of “public history” began to be created in Poland, and the discussion of its disciplinary face continues to this day. The actual definition of the concept of “public history” remains, according to the author of a number of special publications on this direction, Joanna Wojdon, “a serious difficulty for both theorists and practitioners of this discipline and is considered one of its weaknesses” (Wojdon, 2015, p. 29). The researcher supported the outline of the American historian Barbara Franco, who offered to consider “the history for the public, by the public, with the public and about the public” as “public history” (Wojdon, 2015, p. 30; Wojdon, 2018, p. 12; Wojdon, 2021, p. 7). In addition, Joanna Wojdon also emphasized rather transparent boundaries of “public history”, because it “can be considered any history that is made outside of academic circles and schools, at least to the extent that these two institutions play their traditional role in the transfer of knowledge from professionals to professionals and from teachers to students/pupils”; it is “a *sui generis* umbrella covering research and activities from various other sub-disciplines such as history didactics, museology, cultural heritage, public archives, oral history, historical tourism or visual history” (Wojdon, 2021, p. 7). In one of her latest publications, J. Wojdon emphasized the relevance of involving the issues of historical memory and historical politics in the research field of “public history” (Wojdon, 2021, p. 7). In 2018, the first Polish textbook on “public history” was published under the editorship of Y. Wojdon (Wojdon, 2018), and in 2021, the collective work of a group of Polish specialists was published under her editorship in a leading world scientific publishing house, which summarized the first achievements of the Polish historians both in the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and in the understanding of individual manifestations of history presence in the public sphere of modern Poland – from the historical policy of government circles after 1989 and its public reception towards the movement of historical reconstructions and board games with historical themes (Wojdon, 2021).

The Conclusions. Therefore, we can note a whole spectrum of innovations, one way or another, oriented to a wider, than it was before, presentation of historical knowledge in the public space in modern Polish historical science. In our opinion, all of them, especially when it comes to “public history”, will have prospects for establishing themselves as scientifically legitimate directions or subdisciplines of historiography, because each responds in its own way to modern challenges to professional history. Each in its own way manages to strengthen the presence of historical knowledge in the public space. However, the question that is often asked by the representatives of the traditional part of the academic community of historians, including in Poland itself, remains open: concerning the ability of this type of “histories” to hold on to the Truth about the past. As it seems, the supporters of the analyzed above “unconventional histories” do not attach as much importance to this issue as it is recognized in academic historiography. The spokespeople of certain areas deny its objective existence, insisting on a complete cultural / social construction of historical knowledge (like some Lublin methodologists), while the others assert that “familiarity with the specifics of historical periods” is the issue that “is in the sixth place” among competencies, at which the historian must be good (in this case “public”) (Wojdon, 2015, pp. 34–35). Hence, the cognitive function of historical knowledge (acquiring true knowledge about the past), from which the society can receive purely practical gains, *volens nolens*, is called into question. Instead, the past as a narrative acquires the features of a field for obtaining a single practical benefit in order to satisfy the demand for the entertainment concerning certain “innovative trends” implementation.

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